

Ethiopia:

The second most-populous country in Africa (>110 million people), a mosaic of culture & linguistic groups (>80), home of coffee & oldest fossil, and the third diplomatic hub in the world.

Formed by a war of conquest itself, Ethiopia has defeated the Italian invaders in 1890s & the fame derived from this has contributed in completing territorial expansion. But, informed dialogue, accommodative changes & reconciliation to fix internal issues remain alien to Ethiopia today.

Inclusive Dialogue:

In politics, inclusive dialogue, is a structured & facilitated conversation on issue of concern by representatives of the various political groups & institutions who are affected by or can affect the issue positively or negatively.

Reform:

A gradual improvement of what is wrong, corrupt, unsatisfactory in a given structure and/or system. Reform seeks to improve the system as it stands, never to overthrow it wholesale.

Reconciliation:

Reconciliation can be an outcome (improvement in the relations among parties formerly at odds with one another) or process (recognition for & sharing of past pains, grievances & losses). As an outcome, it is oriented toward a future marked by peaceful & just relations. As a process, it is oriented towards past bad feelings, suspicions, or harms that were created by the conflicts & injustices.

**INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE, REFORM & RECONCILIATION IN ETHIOPIA: A META-MODELING****Introduction**

Ethiopia has suffered a structural as well as human identity crises for over a century. The Ethiopian political structure has been in a dilemma of being an empire, nation state, multinational state and even a complex chiefdom.

Similarly, Ethiopian identity has suffered from a crises of being a citizenship or a nationality, as the result, the question of nationalities has remained an unanswered question in the country.

Many Ethiopians have sacrificed their life to resolve these dilemmas while not few choose to remain in denial. Finally, it seems that Ethiopia is ready to accept “what it is” and to communicate that to the world through a clear language. National dialogue, consensus building & reconciliation are key to open Ethiopia to itself and to the world equally.

Inclusive national dialogue

In politics, inclusive dialogue signifies a genuine representation and contribution of diverse stakeholder to ensure that a wide cross-section of views and perspectives are represented, opportunities are harnessed and challenges are dealt with in a sustainable ways.

Inclusivity entails that the negotiation process and its outcome will be owned, not only by the signatories, but also by the people represented as a whole. But this does not mean inclusivity is always the right thing in political dialogue.

In this issue:

- Few facts about Ethiopia
- Meaning of concept
- Approaches to dialogue & reform
- Modeling reconciliation, and
- Tips for implementation

Inclusivity, can also ironically be divisive. It may mobilize groups into cohesive forces and by stimulating specific positions, it may generate more entrenched ‘us’ and ‘them’ identities and lead to division.

Thus, inclusivity does not necessarily imply the direct participation of all stakeholders. It is a subjective concept and it can be interpreted in various ways. Inclusivity can be quantity of representation, it can also be interpreted through the lens of capacity, influence, diversity and voice, thus a quality of representation.

A successful national dialogue and consensus in Ethiopian needs to ensure a chorus of different voices to become a united front that advocates for a common agenda of peace, unity and prosperity. For this context sensitive dialogue roadmap is necessary.

One of the prerequisites for this context sensitive dialogue roadmap is ensuring participation of the major political and social stakeholders. They must submit their contribution on the format and the content of the national dialogue itself.

Then, thoroughly discuss the ideas presented by each political and social stakeholders and use that as an input to develop an inclusive roadmap, model and its implementation strategy. This step can also be used to define “inclusivity” itself.

National reform in Ethiopia

Reform is a must step in Ethiopia. It symbolizes the journey towards taking necessary measures to address the long-standing issues of poor governance with the goal of fostering democratic transition. Thus, it is not a luxury choice rather the situation in the country is the prompter for fundamental reforms.

A roadmap for this process should epitomizes renewed optimism and confidence in the people of Ethiopia, as they embark on restructuring their governance system and the country. A key plank in this process is the need to restore integrity and faith in different government branches. Especially in the country where lack of good governance and partiality of the judiciary system is the source of the problem, restoring integrity and faith in government is very critical.

In this process, safeguarding the independence of the judiciary, the military, the intelligence, the media and the electoral system is bedrock for democratic transition in Ethiopia. More than anything, it is very important to bolster judicial and institutional reforms in the country. There are already major steps taken in this regard but more needs to be done to boost the confidence of the Ethiopian people in the judiciary system.

Supporting the process with evidence and experiences from other countries and by developing context specific models, it is possible to make the reform both acceptable and sustainable.

Reconciliation

“One of the hardest things for a nation to do is to come to grips with the evils it has done. But people who fight fire with fire usually ends up with ashes” ~ Dear Abby

Although Ethiopia experienced no major conflict, dispute and disagreement between its diverse people, the grievance is very high between the Ethiopian people and the rulers, where the people are the victim and the rulers are the perpetrators. Conflict often threatens different psychology of victims and perpetrators, which in turn push them to maintain conflict.

Conflict threatens the status and power of victims' while it threatens the moral and social images of a perpetrator. An effective reconciliatory model, therefore is one that understand and satisfies the differential emotional needs of victim and perpetrator i.e. restoring victim's sense of power and perpetrator's sense of public moral image.

To satisfy this needs, Ethiopia needs a new reconciliatory model that can enhance the interaction between victims and perpetrators and to remove their threats. A restorative justice system assembled in South African in 1990s, provide a very good example. But Ethiopia has its unique structure and context that needs critical attention in the reconciliatory process.

Context specific facilitative skills and behavioral games that accommodate the existing group dynamics, for instance can be used to smoothen interaction between different groups and remove their actual or perceived threats and which ultimately enhance their willingness to reconcile. Behavioral scientists and modelers can help in designing a new reconciliatory model that addresses the historical threats in Ethiopia and speed up national reconciliation.

A Meta-Model 4 Moving Forward

An analysis, construction and development of frames, and models can be used as an important entry point for mapping urgent areas for dialogue, reform and reconciliation in Ethiopia.

The success of interventions for national dialogue, consensus building, and reconciliation depends on the design and management of the process and how issues are addressed in each specific context. Thus, meta-modeling is an important tool to map and understand complex problems and suggest solutions.

Successful reform is the result of a well-designed bargaining model. A reformists group in Ethiopia, for instance bargain with the guardians of the status quo. In this process, supporting the reformist group is increasing their bargaining power and thus ultimately ensuring the success of their reform agenda.

In general, having roadmaps and models, an abstraction of phenomena in the real world, that involves studying the relationship between an input and output and fitting it to an existing context is an important step in moving forward with the national dialogue, reform and reconciliation.

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