

Relief Society of Tigray (REST): From **Drought** Mitigation to Development plus

Zesilase Gedai (Mekelle) 12-29-16

Relief Society of Tigray (REST) had achieved three international standard best practices in its three paradigm shift periods: the drought mitigation period, Rehabilitation and Disaster prevention middles to the development plus stage. According to Professor Mitiku Haile, former president of Mekelle University, Rest is the unique local NGO in Africa regarding the so-called 'thinking out of the box'. The **farm based insurance** introduced by REST in Tigray is one among others that is being scaled up not only in Ethiopia but also in the rest of Africa. Such intervention is important to assure post hock risk averse to small land holders in the process of creating advanced society. In addition, REST commenced Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in Ethiopia.

The organization's efficient utilization of resources had enumerated it among the top local NGOs. For this case REST is the unique local organization in receiving direct donations or funds from UNHCR and USAID in the world. This achievement enables REST to be trustworthy for many INGOs and IGOs in resource mobilization. Getatchew Kalayou, Head of Planning and Organization of REST said that international stakeholders of the organization are innumerable. Accordingly, he mentions some of them: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Charity Water, Development Fund of Norway (DF, Trocare and Cafod, Bread for the World (BfW), Oxfam America, World Vision (through ICRAF), UNOCHA, European Union (EU), Civil Society Support Program (CSSP), Norwegian Church Aid - NCA, Water to Thrive, Well Wishers.

REST is an organization of emanating pragmatic Human Resource Development for professionals working environment. Such working conditions made REST to stage and extend many programs which improve the livelihood of the public. Among the known programs of the organization are Productive Safety Net (PSNP), Water supply, hygiene

and sanitation , Integrated programs of GRAD – that focus on livelihood improvement , R4 – micro-insurance – Weather index insurance, POTENTIAL – that focus in youth skill development, HVC program – that focus on Highly vulnerable children, Social protection – focus on older people, Social accountability program – in governance improvement.

The organization creates employment opportunity in the region. There are more than 1,100 employees in the organization as full time workers, and more than 500 on contractual basis from 9 to 6 months every year. These professionals are additional asset to the region, in terms of knowledge transfer.

The organization’s vision is to see ‘A future where poverty has been eradicated and all people enjoy equitable access to development opportunities and benefits’ could be easily understood in the detailed activities sofar achieved.

Regarding Environmental Rehabilitation and Agricultural Development, REST is engaged in integrated natural resource management such as Catchment treatment, Big Gully Reclamation, Bench Terrace, Rural Access Road, Forestry Program, Nursery Management – tree nursery, Plantation in communal, private lands and Agro-forestry, Area closure and Agricultural Development Program.



Moreover, it supports for income generating activities such as Livestock production – Dairy, Fattening (cattle and shoats), poultry, beekeeping, Crop production – Fruit nursery management, vegetable and fruit production, other high value crops production, Development of different products through a value chain approach, development of different water supply technologies across the region. REST develops nearly 1,500 water points/schemes every year. All types of technologies (Piped System, Shallow borehole, Hand Dug Well) are applied to ensure tap water intervention every year in about 28 Weredas in addition to Spring Development.



From Hand Dug Well to deep well water technology in remote area of Seharti Samera Werda

Tigray is defined as Arid and Semi Arid Agro ecological zone. But through the Integrated Environmental Rehabilitation the surface and ground water level potential increases and promising Irrigation Infrastructure Development came to scan. REST develops different irrigational infrastructures across its intervention areas. The technologies managed by the organization are Dam construction, River diversion, Irrigation Check-dam, Sub surface dam, Spring for irrigation, Underground tanker, and Open hand dug well.



Gelebeda Irrigation development scheme and Interview with Ato Tekleweyni Assefa Chief Executive of Rest

In a similar way, REST supports in the Health and Education: Hygiene and sanitation, Reproductive health, Nutrition promotion, Alternative basic education, Additional class room construction , Water and sanitation facilities, Reading rooms, Educational materials, , Literacy program - Functional adult literacy and women literacy are the activities that REST had got involved.

To recapitulate and the way forward, at least the three Universities in Tigrai and the fourth one under construction (Raya University) should utilize the capacity of REST in the fields as a Center of Excellence and Research. The social capital created by REST in the ground in turn could be sold via publicity to advance the organizations resource mobilization capacity.

SOME OF THE ENVIRONMENT REHABILITATION ACTIVITIES OF THE PROGRAMS IN PICTURES

