

# SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ETHIOPIAN PRIVATE ORGANIZATION: THE CASE OF AYEHU AND BIRSHELKO PRIVATIZED FARM WORKERS

## PROTECCIÓN SOCIAL Y GOBIERNO LOCAL EN LA ORGANIZACIÓN PRIVADA DE ETÍOPA: EL CASO DE LOS TRABAJADORES AGRÍCOLAS PRIVATIZADOS DE AYEHU Y BIRSHELKO

Alemu Asfaw Nigusie<sup>1</sup>; Mulunesh Dessie Admasu<sup>2</sup>; Yayew Genet<sup>3</sup>.

1. Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. alexasfaw@gmail.com
2. Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. muluneshdessiel@gmail.com
3. Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. yayew.genet@gmail.com

\*Corresponding author: Yayew Genet. e-mail: yayew.genet@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

This paper tried to investigate the social protection dimension in terms of the nature of citizenship and local government among the workers of Ayeahu and Birshelko privatized farm investments in Amhara National Regional State of Ethiopia. Methodologically, a mixed research approach with a sequential exploratory design was used, whereby qualitative data was first collected, followed by quantitative data. Such methods of data collection as interviews, focus group discussions, observation, document review and questionnaires were employed to gather empirical data. Accordingly, the study found out that the workers in these two farms are organized under a kebele government administrative structure, just like other citizens of Ethiopia; they obtain some governmental services and social provisions. However, the workers also face serious challenges by virtue of being located on farms that are delinked from the neighboring rural communities, and they are at the periphery concerning basic government services. These predicaments basically emerge from the structural fault lines of kebele administrative logic and the lack of proper implementation of the citizenship rights as stipulated in the constitution.

**Keywords:** Workers; Social Protection; Right; Local government; private organization.

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## RESUMEN

Este documento trató de investigar la dimensión de la protección social en términos de la naturaleza de la ciudadanía y el gobierno local entre los trabajadores de las inversiones agrícolas privatizadas de Ayehu y Birshelko en el Estado Regional Nacional Amhara de Etiopía. Metodológicamente, se utilizó un enfoque de investigación mixto con un diseño exploratorio secuencial, en el que primero se recolectaron datos cualitativos, seguidos de datos cuantitativos. Se emplearon métodos de recopilación de datos como entrevistas, discusiones de grupos focales, observación, revisión de documentos y cuestionarios para recopilar datos empíricos. En consecuencia, el estudio descubrió que los trabajadores de estas dos granjas están organizados bajo una estructura administrativa gubernamental kebele, al igual que otros ciudadanos de Etiopía; obtienen algunos servicios gubernamentales y prestaciones sociales. Sin embargo, los trabajadores también enfrentan serios desafíos en virtud de estar ubicados en fincas que están desvinculadas de las comunidades rurales vecinas, y están en la periferia en cuanto a los servicios básicos del gobierno. Estos predicamentos surgen básicamente de las fallas estructurales de la lógica administrativa de kebele y la falta de implementación adecuada de los derechos de ciudadanía según lo estipulado en la constitución.

**Palabras clave:** Trabajadores; Protección Social; Derecho; Gobierno Local; organización privada Introduction.

## INTRODUCTION

Social protection is closely related to human rights and human security, as the former is interested in fulfilling some of the basic human rights and the empowerment of individuals as it is stipulated in different international, regional, and national instruments. In this regard, social protection can be delivered by both state and non-state actors. The state provides social protection provisions through its government structure by meeting the basic needs of the people as citizens of the country. This state responsibility includes the supply of basic and emergency needs like the supply of food and non-food assistance to the vulnerable sections of its society. But, social protection by the state goes beyond this narrowly-defined economic and poor-oriented assistance practice. The adoption of relevant and appropriate political organization of the society and its concomitant government structure that responds to the societal interest and the various services it is providing like social provisions (education, health, water electricity, telecommunication and the like), justice, and order and security are some

examples that shows the wider interpretation of state's social protection responsibilities.

By the same token, private investors have an obligation to provide social protection services to their workers as well as to surrounding community at large through what is called corporate social responsibility logic. Such sort of non-profit oriented and selfless support by the private investments would create and strengthen the industrial peace that is badly need by the investors themselves to continue their operation without any major problem as well as by the state and society to achieve economic growth and prosperity in general.

Located in Amhara region, Ayehu and Birshelko<sup>1</sup>, the focus of the current study, are two of the nine Ethio-Agri-CEFT farm investment across Ethiopia. As the company's brochure reveals, Ayehu and Birshelko Farms were purchased from the Ethiopian Privatization Agency in

1 In this paper, the words Birshelko and Bir are used interchangeably. While Birshelko is the name of the area where the farm is located, the farm is known to its owners and workers also as simply Bir.

March 2001. At the moment, these farms produce various kinds of agricultural outputs, including cereals, essential oils, fruits and vegetables (Ethio-Agri CEFT, 2018).

Workforce for these large-scale farm investments<sup>2</sup> comes from the nearby and remote rural and urban Ethiopian places through labor migration. The two farms now have hired thousands of workers, with varying employment status. While the bulk of the workforce is made of temporary and seasonal workers, a few hundred are solely considered to be permanent employees. Such sort of labor migrations and arrangement in search of wage employment in commercial agricultural investments is known internationally, with Latin American nationals crossed the border to work as seasonal labor migrant in the USA and Canada as well as migrants from Pacific Islands to Australia and New Zealand being the typical cases in point (Martin, 2016).

By virtue of their work location, the workers in these two farms have established their residence within the farm, making them different from any other workers who work in urban or rural locations, but then go to their residence among the other Ethiopian citizens after the end of the daily routine. These individuals migrate from different places of Ethiopia to work in these two rural farm investments and reside within these farms, which are private properties of the investor. As such, these individuals have dual identities – as workers in the farms and also citizens of the country. Such dual identities have impact on how these individuals relate to, navigate and experience citizenship and local government, quite different from the neighboring rural people, while carrying out their farm activities as per the wage employment contract.

However, there is a dearth of literature on this field. There are some works on decentralization, local government and state-society relationship

<sup>2</sup> According to the Ethio Agri-CEFT Company, these two farms are estimated to occupy a total of 12,514 hectares of fertile, flat and mainly undulated land, which is suitable for mechanization.

in the post-1991 Ethiopia, but none of them investigated this particular case – citizenship and local government among people who work and reside in privatized farms. Assefa (2019) examined the level of autonomy of woreda level local governments to formulate and implement autonomous policies and bring development by taking the Tigray region as a case. Yeshtila, Kjosavik, and Shanmugaratnam (2016) explored the nature of state-society relations in the post-1991 Ethiopia via a political-economy perspective by selecting rural localities from three major regions of Ethiopia (the Southern Nations and Nationalities Regional State (SNNPRS), Amhara National Regional State, and Oromia National Regional State). Merko (2015) assessed the constitutional as well as the practical aspects of self-determination and local governments among the Sidama people in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS). Likewise, Misganaw (2014) explored the practice of self-government among the peoples of Segen area in SNNPRS.

This paper made attempts to address the right of workers how they are acquiring social protections and provision from the local government specifically its focal points is on administration structure and nature of government-worker relationship, opportunities like the rights workers cherish as citizens and challenges workers face in exercising their citizenship rights.

## **Conceptual Framework and Review of Literature**

The notion of social protection emerged as a reaction to the reductionist 'safety nets' programs (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p. 1) and has widely been circulated and discussed among development scholars and policy makers since the 1990s, so that it has been recognized in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and its successor Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whose goals are specifically designed to address the needs of the poor and vulnerable groups in the society (Handayani, 2016, p. 1).

However, for a long time, the application of the concept was limited to economic protection by neglecting its social character and its attendant “social” risks like gender inequality, domestic violence and social discrimination (Holmes & Jones, 2009, p. 2).

Unlike the hitherto held view, which sees vulnerability or risk in terms of a certain unit of analysis (that is, the characteristic of a person or group, an event affecting a person or group, or a point in a person’s life-cycle), in this paper, vulnerability is understood as a complex issue that emerges from and embedded within the socio-political and socio-economic context, rather than something that is external to be ‘managed’ (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p. 6). Vulnerability can be also “influenced by individual and household demography, age, dependency ratios, location, social capital, the ownership of assets, and access to resources” (Holmes & Jones, 2009, p. 2).

Thus, the central concern of social protection in broad terms is to reduce vulnerability of the poor through protective, preventive, promotive and transformative measures; and such measures could in the end enhance the capacity of individuals and play a vital role in achieving inclusive, sustainable and equitable development (Handayani, 2016, p. 1). It follows then that social protection is closely related to human rights and human security, as the former is interested in fulfilling some of the basic human rights and the empowerment of individuals as it is stipulated in different international, regional, and national instruments.

Social protection can be delivered by both state and non-state actors. And in this case, private investors have an obligation to provide social protection services along with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), families and other social institutions (Amdissa, et al, 2015, p. 1; Holmes & Jones, 2009, p. 2). Therefore, one of the methods employed to minimize the vulnerability

of individuals and increase their capability is employment opportunity (labor market), where individuals become wage earners by getting a certain job. Labor market can provide the much needed social protection and its associated benefits through only work, not assistance, due to the fact that work is the most desired scenario to enable individuals to have the right to make choices, decisions by themselves, and be an active member of the society (Handayani, 2016, p. 1). It is in this context that privatization, which offers formal employment, comes into the scene of social protection.

Likewise, social protection promotes citizenship; as a result, the quality of the institution of social protection has implications on the realization of citizenship. Therefore, a weak institutionalization of social protection would restrict the realization of citizenship, while a strong institutionalization would assist the latter’s fulfillment (Goudjo, 2020).

Social protection is analyzed in this paper in terms of the nature the socio-political organization and local government structure with respect to the workers at Ayehu and Bir farms.

Following the demise of the Derg regime by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) forces in 1991, Ethiopia was transformed from a unitary state and its associated centralization of power into an ethno-based federal state that calls for a decentralization of power. The 1995 FDRE constitution introduced this decentralization idea formally in the body-politic of the country by establishing nine regional states and two city administrations. But this sort of power decentralization was limited to regional states and decentralization further down to the local people and level remained an issue. Thus, it was not until 2001 that regional constitutions were revised to address this challenge and that full devolution of power was adopted to include all levels of government beyond the regional states. With this, power is transferred effectively and constitutionally from federal and regional

states to local government and people, who are better placed to bring development and provide basic social services in ways it reflects their local interest and they deem it necessary.

Accordingly, the post-1991 local government and governance structure in Ethiopia includes five levels of administration, namely, federal (the federal state), Kilil (national regional state), Zonal (provincial administration), Woreda (district) administration and Kebele (neighborhood or peasant associations). The Kebele administration is the lowest level of local administration. Hence, it represents the natural extension of the state power. In a democracy, the Kebeles are run by elected local people who serve on a voluntary basis. However, local officials have considerable political power at their discretion “in relation to land administration and preserving social order in their respective localities” (Yeshtila, Kjosavik, and Shanmugaratnam, 2016, p. 8).

As to the Revised Amhara National Regional State Constitution, zonal administration is not legally recognized and does not have real political power, even if it exists as administrative hierarchy in practice. Instead, it is the woreda level local government that is given self-governing authority and autonomy by the Constitution. As per Article 84 (1), woreda administration is bestowed with the power to “prepare and decide on the economic development and social service plans as well as to implement policies, laws, regulations and directives issued by the regional state organs,” while according to Article 84(2) it also has the right and power to “exercise self-administration, facilitate local development, and render decisions with regard to its own internal affairs”. This means that woredas are legally empowered and have the jurisdiction to govern themselves within the territorial area of their organization, as they have political, administrative and fiscal autonomy by law.

Framed in this manner, this paper tried to examine the nature of the local government at kebele level, the rights and duties as well as

participation and challenges of workers at this level.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed mixed methods research design composed of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Since the current study was new to the area, sequential exploratory research design was employed to collect the necessary data. Based on the qualitative data obtained in the field, variables for survey questionnaire were identified and constructed to the target groups. Variables identified include: relationship between the kebele administration and farm workers, individual rights and responsibilities, individuals perception towards the performance of the kebele administration.

**Sampling techniques:** For the study, the target populations were individuals who work and reside in Birshelko and Ayehu farm enterprises in Amhara Region. The two farms have a total population of 6568 of which 3350 was from Birshelko and the rest was from Ayehu farm enterprise. In determining the sample size for the survey questionnaire, Yemane (1973) sample size formula was applied as shown below.

$$n' = \frac{N}{1 + N} \cdot 2 \text{ Where,}$$

$n$  = the sample size,

$N$  = the study population (6586),  $e$  = error term (0.05)

Applying the sample size determination formula, 377 sample households were selected to fill the survey questionnaire. However, because of fear of missing data the appropriate sample size was determined to 442 (which is an increment of 15%) for fear of missing data/non-response rate. In relation to this, it is considered advisable to oversample by 10% - 20% in case there are non-responses. Five respondents (1.1% of the total sample) were not correctly filled for the final analysis. This reduced the total respondents for the study to 437 in the two farm enterprises.



The qualitative participants, on the other hand, were selected using a mix of non-probability sampling technique, namely, convenient, snowball and purposive sampling techniques based on their experiences, positions and knowledge. In this regard, farm managers, woreda and kebele administrators, and workers labor union leaders were included in the study. When it comes to individual participants, individuals from different ages and sex groups as well as work contract types (permanent, temporary and seasonal) were considered for the study.

**Method of data collection techniques:** The primary data were collected using questionnaire, key informant interviews, FGDs and participant observation. The questionnaire was pre-tested with randomly selected individuals. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews were conducted and participants were selected based on their knowledge, experience, positions, status, and other relevant emerging criteria. Besides, pertinent documents, like legislations, proclamations, policy documents, and letters were collected and reviewed.

**Method of data analysis:** For the presentation of the qualitative data, thematic data analyses

method was employed. First, the raw qualitative data obtained from interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and direct observations were translated from Amharic to English and the raw data were coded and organized based on its dimension. Then, the description, classification and triangulation of raw data were made and analyzed qualitatively. The quantitative data, on the other hand, were coded, edited and entered into the statistical package; SPSS version 22 for analysis. For the quantitative data analysis, tables, percentages, mean and standard deviation were employed. The data collected from Likert scale were presented and analyzed using mean and percentages. Finally, the information, perspectives and insights from the primary data collected in the field were integrated with the secondary data sources for the purpose of data validation.

**Analysis of the Socio-economic Background of the respondents**

Based on the SPSS analysis result, the socio-economic background of the respondents and the relation between such variables as education, sex, and service year of the respondents is presented below.

**Table 1. Socio-economic background of the respondents (N=437)**

Background	Category	N	%
Farm Enterprise	Ayehu	218	49.8
	Birshelko	219	50.1
	Total	437	100
Sex	Female	191	43.7
	Male	246	56.3
	Total	437	100
Marital Status	Married	249	57.0
	Unmarried	117	26.8
	Separated	42	9.6
	Widowed	29	6.6
	Total	437	100
Education	Illiterate	173	39.6
	Primary Education	61	14.0

Background	Category	N	%
	Secondary Education	79	18.1
	College Diploma	98	22.4
	University Degree	26	5.9
	Total	437	100
Annual Income	<10,000	72	16.5
	10,001-20,000	215	49.2
	20,001-30,000	51	11.7
	30,001-40,000	15	3.4
	>40,001	84	19.2
	Total	437	100
Service Year	<10	191	43.7
	11-20	98	22.4
	21-30	52	11.9
	>31	96	22.0
	Total	437	100

Table 1 below indicates that almost equal number of respondents are selected from both farms, with Ayehu (49.8%, N=218) and Birshelko (50.1%, N=219). The same table indicated that the number of male respondents (56.3%, N = 246) were slightly greater than female respondents (43.7%, N=191). Majority (57%) respondents were married followed by unmarried/single households. This indicated that majority of respondents are living in a stable life. This is also true in many parts of Ethiopia in which marriage is an indicator of society's norm reference. In terms of education, most of the respondents are illiterate (39.6%, N = 173), followed by college diploma holders (22.4%, N=98) and secondary education (18.1%, N=79). Given the nature of the job in the farms and the type of qualification they seek, it is not surprising to find a small number of university degree holders (5.9%, N=26) in the farms. About half (49.2%, N = 215) of the individual workers earn an annual income of between 10,000 and 20,000 Ethiopian Bir (USD 285-571). Nearly 34.3% (N= 150) of the respondents described their income as greater than 20,000 Ethiopian Bir and 16.5% of individuals with less than 10,000 Ethiopian Bir

annual income. Finally, when it comes to year of work and residence in the farms, the survey shows that workers have been living in the farms for several years, with close to half (43.7%, N=191) of them serving for up to ten years, while more than one-third (34.3%, N= 150) of the respondents have worked and resided between eleven and thirty years. A significant proportion of them, 22% (N=96), have lived in the farms for more than thirty years. There are some workers who have lived and worked in Birshelko for more than 30 years, almost their entire life, while there is barely an individual worker in Ayehu that has lived in the area above 20 years.

### Administration Structure and Nature of Government-worker Relationship

As per Article 45 of the Revised Amhara National Regional State Constitution, the regional state is hierarchically organized along regional, woreda and kebele administrative units, which have their own respective powers and duties. And these workers are organized under a kebele structure in Awi and West Gojjam zones. While Ayehu farm is under Ayehu Guagusa woreda (Awi zone), Bir

farm is under Jabi Tehnan woreda (West Gojjam zone).

Administratively speaking, the workers of these two farms are organized in uneven manner. While the workers in Ayehu are placed under one kebele that is administered by themselves and the kebele is also located within the farm, the workers in Bir are placed under two different neighboring rural kebele administrations that are located outside of the farm. Workers in Bir are thus embedded within an existing kebele administration that serves the neighboring rural residents. Given the size of the farm and the workers, Bir farm has also a divided management: Lay Ber (Upper Gate) and Tach Ber (Lower Gate). And so is the placement of the workers to two different kebeles: workers at Lay Ber are assigned to Weynma-Worqima kebele, while individuals at Tach Ber are connected to Ergib-Kebero Meda kebele.

When it comes to the nature of relationship between the kebele administration and the workers, this study found out what could be termed as a slackened relationship. While kebele administration allows every citizen of the country to engage in issues that matter to the state and the people at local level, the researchers observed a weak interaction between the two bodies and almost no tie between them.

As to the participants of the study, the central issue that connects the workers with their respective kebeles are issues around documentation only. Here is how a worker at Bir farm stated:

We usually get marriage and birth certificates, kebele ID and other supporting letters from the kebele. Our children are also getting such services. But we do not regularly contact the kebele officials due to our work burden and geographical reason.

The provision of a kebele identity card (ID) that shows that someone is a legal resident of a certain kebele has been highlighted as the single

most important reason why workers visit the kebele; and perhaps, the single most important connecting point between the two actors. The majority participants stated that they would only go to the kebele whenever they seek to secure this ID. The other second most important moment workers would definitely go to the kebele is when they want to get official supportive or reference letters about various issues that ranges the whole gamut of their marital status; to be witness; vital events registration; when they leave to reside in another kebele; to their unemployment status when seeking to get a job somewhere and the like documentation issues.

This data collected from the workers has been supported by the kebele administrators of Weynma-Worqima kebele and Ergib-Kebero Meda kebele:

Regarding our relationship, it is poor and workers are not happy with us. It revolves around just ID card. We give them ID card. When the youth search for a job, we also give them a support letter indicating their unemployment status. And we give them meshegna (reference letter) when they leave this kebele for another one.

This has been reflected in the quantitative survey data. As it can be seen in the table below (Table 2), when respondents were asked whether the relationship between the kebele administration and the workers was strong, a significant proportion of the respondents (48.1%) replied NO. Still worse, 38.2% of the respondents do not even believe they are being administered under a kebele level administration at all, revealing the detachment of the individual workers from the local level or kebele administrations in particular and from the state in general. This is almost tantamount to feeling of absence of local government. The majority of the respondents (59.2%) indicated that they are not organized and administered under their own kebele administration, whereas as 40.7% of the respondents have affirmative response.



**Table 2. Kebele administration and its relations with the workers**

Question	Response in percentage	
	Yes	NO
Are the workers at the farm being administered under a <i>kebele</i> level administration?	61.8%	38.2%
Have the workers at the farm been organized along their own <i>kebele</i> administration?	40.7%	59.2%
Is the relationship between the <i>kebele</i> administration and the workers strong?	52%	48.1%

Such sort of evaluation of the relationship between the two actors in turn questions the real relevance of this administrative unit among these people and the kind of ownership and the engagement that comes out of it among them. Such sort of finding has also severe implications on the nature of relationship between the state on the one hand and these workers on the other hand. Of course, the state is collecting revenue from these people in the form of income taxes, but are these people also getting in return what they ought to get from the state is questionable.

**Opportunities: The rights workers cherish as citizens**

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) constitution stipulates both democratic and human rights for citizens of the country. The fundamental rights that have direct relationship to the workers as citizens, *inter alia*, are the right of thought, opinion and expression (Art. 29), right of access to justice (Art. 37), the right to vote and to be elected (Art. 38), the right to property (Art. 40), and economic, social and cultural rights (Art. 41). These similar rights resonate also with the rights stipulated under the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS) constitution of 2001, where the farm and the workers are located.

As to the data collected from the participants, workers are enjoying the above mentioned rights, but in an uneven and limited manner. While some rights are implemented to some extent properly, other have been found to be difficult to be realized by the participants. In this regard, the workers are mainly privileged with the access to social services and the right to elect and be elected.

With all their limitations, the rights workers enjoy as citizens are linked to social provisions. As per Article 42 of FDRE constitution, every Ethiopian national has the right to equal access to publicly funded social services, like education, public health, water, electricity, housing, food and social security. This article has been consolidated further by Article 90 of the same constitution. Accordingly, workers have access to health services that are offered by the farms, not by the government. But, these services are not limited to permanent workers. Health coverage is also offered to elderly and temporary workers by the *kebeles*. The *kebele* administrator of Ergib-Kebero Meda stated that

We provide some vulnerable groups like elderly women with free health care coverage from our own quota. We pass over our own share to these vulnerable groups from the farm.

Similarly, education, justice, and security provisions are available for Bir and Ayehu farm workers. In Bir farm, both the children of the farm workers and the farmers in the vicinity are getting education in the high school built within the farm. There is also elementary and junior school within the farm. The government is paying the salaries of the teachers that work in both schools. In Ayehu, the children of the farm workers as well as the local community pursue their education together in a nearby high school, located outside of the farm.

Workers are able to access the justice system of the country at the *kebele* and *woreda* levels.

Justice is served to the people at the kebele level through social courts. As to the *kebele* administrators at Weynma-Worqima and Ergib-Kebero Meda, they execute any decisions of the court at these two levels.

When we are asked to carry out decisions passed by the court, we do that. When the court says, do that, we do that. For instance, when couples get into fight, we try to sort out the payment for their children and the like as per the court decision inside the farm investment.

That being said, social courts are open only twice a week and serve their community only on these designated days. Workers also stated that they get security and related protection from the government and the farm.

A police man has been assigned and stationed in the farm to keep us safe. The farm also has its own security force. Now, the police is also supported by other armed soldiers from the Amhara regional state's special force. (Worker, Bir farm)

We are effective in ensuring the security of community by coordinating the Special Forces, the local police and militia. (Chairperson of kebele administration, Ayehu)

Bir is home to one of the national defense forces training camp, which is located at the Tach Ber of the farm. There is no doubt this military camp provides not only additional, but also vital protection to the farm and its workers. In fact, workers highlighted that the mere existence of such camp by the farm has been used as intimidating weapon by the previous farm managers against vocal workers and their union, not assurance, in the past.

Workers also engage in election activities that are conducted at different administrative levels. They exercise the right to elect and be elected as it is stipulated in the federal and regional constitutions. Participants from the Bir farm stated that

We take part in the national elections. We do not go to the rural kebeles. We conduct elections in four locations within the farm: Bukay, Dezbay, Zeway, and Mehal camps.

Similarly, workers in Ayehu farm also exercise their rights to vote and be elected, like the other *kebeles* in the region. As to the chairpersons of Ayehu's workers labor union and *kebele* administration, workers appoint people from among them who would represent them in each level of administration. But in Bir farm, such election activities are carried out in coordination with the rural *kebele*, as workers do not have their own independent *kebele* administration.

Finally, workers are also allowed to construct their own houses within the farms. This has been one of the thorny issues workers have with the farms and the government for so long. They have been demanding to have their homes, now it has been answered. In the past, some people from Bir farm were able to form associations and construct a house for residence in Finote Selam, the seat of the Jabi Tehnan woreda. But, this was possible only for those individuals who can afford to contribute the money required to acquire the land from the government. Those who were not in a position to afford the monthly payment missed such opportunities. Now, for every worker in Bir farm, 200 m<sup>2</sup> has been allocated to build a house inside the farm and more than two thousand one hundred seventy workers are given this size of land. Yet, some participants of the study have also indicated irregularities with the implementation of this new law, as some individuals are excluded from the list of beneficiaries. This land grant inside the farm is the result of the change that took place in the country as a whole with the coming of a new Prime Minister and administration in April 2018 and need to be seen in that perspective, however. Perhaps, it might not have been even possible had it not been for this change.

## Challenges workers face in exercising their citizenship rights

Workers are facing serious problems in enjoying their rights and carrying out their obligations as citizens of the country. But, while they share some similar obstacles and unaddressed issues, the challenges workers face are not the same in both farms, mainly because of divergent administrative status the two farms have. Compared to the situation at Ayehu, the predicaments workers face at Bir were profound and arose mainly from their kebele level administrative arrangement and the complex membership related privileges and duties that emerged out of it.

“Being in a limbo” is one of the most repeatedly highlighted problems among the Bir participants of the study. As to the workers, the formation of the *kebele* administrations has created huge problem on them to enjoy their rights and feel happy about their membership. Here is how a participant from Bir farm put it:

We don't have our own *kebele*. We are neither urban dwellers, not rural dwellers. The *kebele* does not view us a member of the kebele. Our sons are not beneficial to any government support that is allocated to the *kebele*. They [*kebele* administrators] say they are going to take care of their members first, not us. They say, ‘you do not own a land in our community; so, we don't know you’. As a result, we are in a limbo. The people with HIV in the rural *kebele* have received various assistances in the form of cash and in kind such as cattle, sheep, goat and others from the woreda's HIV fund. But, we did not get any of these because we are not recognized in the *kebele*.

This lack of membership recognition has been also shared by Weynma-Worqima's kebele administrator:

When we are asked to send the list and number of our residents, we send only the list of our rural residents. The farm workers are not with us. They are out of our government structure. ... Because they get ID card does not mean they are residents of our *kebele*.

Such restricted membership has also implications on resource allocation to the residents of the *kebeles* and the (un)employment of the youth in the farm and enjoy available benefits. As to the workers, they are not getting any benefits from their membership to the *kebeles*, and neither are their children. Here is how a participant from Bir farm stated this problem:

The youth in the Farm are not able to access jobs from the rural *kebeles* through the formation of association of unemployed youth. Our sons are not beneficial to any government support that is allocated to the *kebele*. They say they are going to take care of their members first, not us.

The rural *kebeles* have organized unemployed youth groups and confiscated land for them to engage in various business activities. However, when we, the unemployed youth from the farm enterprise, asked the *kebele* administrators to get support just like other youth residing outside of the farm enterprise, they often rejected our requests. This is a clear discrimination that the *kebeles* have committed against us. (Unemployed male youth, Bir).

Still another one noted

We are interested to get medical service from the clinics found in the surrounding community because they are well equipped in materials and medicines compared to the clinic of the farm enterprise. But the kebele forced us to only use the clinic of the farm. (Aged farm workers, Bir farm)

Kebele administrator from Weynma-Worqima consolidates workers' claim and highlighted how it is a serious issue to get a plot of land for the unemployed youth who are based in the farm investments and how their livelihood depends on the other rural residents' good-will. Of course, this also signals the poor role the kebele plays in addressing youth unemployment for the farm workers:

When we try to bring the youth and establish a group of unemployed youth for farm work, we first have to ask the rural residents for their permission ... 80% of the rural residents should approve first.

Without their permission, it is not possible to find a piece of land for the group of youth to work in the farm and earn their livelihood. ... The youth have not so far secured farmland. Rural residents will not allow youth from another Gote, let alone from the Farm.

The kebele has shortage of medical equipment and medicines. We get health budget from the woreda though it is not ample to meet the demands of our community. Under this condition, we do not provide health service for the farm workers though they are members of the kebele. Our assumption is that the farm enterprise is better than the kebele in terms of financial capacity. Hence, the farm enterprise should at least cover all health costs of its workers than pushing its workers to come to the kebele health centers located outside of the farm enterprise. (Kebele administrator)

*Kebele* administrators, though cognizant of the youth unemployment situation, are of the opinion that the farm investment should help these group of people, not the *kebele*:

We are not in a position to support those unemployed youth who come from Bir farm enterprise. My kebele does not have ample land to distribute for the youth. The only available land in the kebele is the communal grazing land. When the youth of the kebele asked us to give them land, we conduct discussions with the residents and if we arrive at a consensus to give communal grazing land to the youth, we give the communal plots of land to the youth. Here, you can see that members of the community contribute their own share to support the youth groups. But if we want to apply this system in the farm enterprise, we cannot do it because the farm enterprise is governed by the federal government. I personally do not believe that the unemployed youth group of the farm enterprise should get land outside their farm enterprise, rather they should ask the farm enterprise to give some plots of land for them like what surrounding community did for the unemployed youths. The interest of the kebele is that the farm enterprise should give land for the unemployed youth as they are the children of the farm workers. (Male kebele administrator)

Likewise, the workers at Ayehu, even if they

have their own kebele administration, they have complained that they are not getting the governmental services and resource allocations they should get by virtue of being as a citizen who resides in that kebele. They also revealed the irregularities of administrators while giving ID card to individuals. They say that non-farm residents are also given this kebele's residence document via corrupted practices and this, in turn, has become a security threat to their community:

The kebele has serious problems in delivering social service for us residents, especially in the proper distribution of such subsidized goods that are in short supply as sugar and oil. ID cards are also given illegally for non-residents of the kebele. (Chairperson of labor union, Ayehu)

By the same token, the kebele has been accused of not providing support to vulnerable groups of their community. Unlike the view of the officials at Ayehu Guagussa woreda and Ayehu kebele who stated that they are providing assistance to some vulnerable groups like the elderly women, people living with HIV/AIDS, and people who have disabilities with services like free health care, FGD discussants and key informants from vulnerable groups claim to get nothing from them and that they are not treated well as citizens and there is no any especial care and support for them.

The other problem the study found out is related to the provision of security. Participants highlighted the partiality of the security apparatus in the farm towards the farm managers than to the workers when disputes happen between the two. As to them, this is the result of lack of support and protection from the kebele. As to the workers, their security is protected during times of peace, but the same security forces would become sources of insecurity during times of conflict between the farm and the workers:

The kebele militias and security forces are not functioning in the farm enterprise. The farm enterprise has its own security officers and when



there is confrontation between the workers and the farm enterprise officials, the security officers of the farm are always biased in favor of their bosses instead of treating fairly both groups. If the kebele security officers were working in the farm enterprise, they would not become biased and we would get fair verdict (Male workers, Bir)

while 28.8% neither agreed nor disagreed. Yet, compared to the government, the farms are found to provide workers with social services, as 17.6% of the respondents agree while 3.9% strongly agree that workers obtain social services from the farms, compared to the 4.1% the respondents who agreed and the 3% who strongly agreed that the government is providing basic services. Also, 28.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the kebele administration is distributing governmental assistance to the workers fairly, 21.3% disagreed, and 27.7% neither agreed nor disagreed. Concerning the assistance given to vulnerable groups, 39.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the vulnerable sections of the community are provided with fair and adequate governmental assistance, while 27.2% disagreed, and 26.3% neither agreed nor disagreed.

The survey data also supports these limitations that are linked to unemployment of the youth, the provision of social services and its concomitant inadequate allocation of resources to the workers. As **Table 3** below shows, the majority of respondents believed that the kebele administrations are not closely working with the woreda and zonal levels and also are not working to address the youth unemployment problem. 30.4% and 23.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that workers are getting social services properly,

**Table 3. Provision of Social Services**

Questions	Alternatives and Responses in Percentage				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	To some extent	Agree	Strongly agree
The Kebele administration is working with relevant bodies to address youth unemployment	50.1%	36.8%	10.3%	1.4%	1.4%
The Kebele is working in collaboration with Woreda and Zone	25.6%	45.8%	24.7%	3.2%	0.7%
The workers are getting social services properly	30.4%	23.1%	28.8%	14.9%	2.7%
The workers are getting social services properly from the government	31.1%	28.8%	33.0%	4.1%	3.0%
The workers are getting social services properly from the farm	16.7%	16.9%	44.9%	17.6%	3.9%
The kebele administration is distributing governmental assistance to the workers fairly	28.6%	21.3%	27.7%	15.6%	6.9%
The kebele administration is distributing governmental assistance to vulnerable community fairly	39.4%	27.2%	26.3%	6.4%	0.7%



There is also the red-tape in the bureaucracy to access the kebele administrators due to the remoteness of the kebele office from the farm, the time and money spent in the process to access administrators. These problems, hence, have created havoc in the workers lives, making it very difficult to obtain the services easily. A participant from Bir has succinctly put the impact the bureaucracy on the workers lives as follows:

My son got a job as a DA (Development Agent) worker. He was required to bring a support letter from the rural kebele that shows his membership to the kebele and that he is unemployed. When I tried to secure this letter from the kebele administrator, it took me weeks to finally get it, as the administrator was saying he was busy; he would say come tomorrow, come after three days and come next week. Because of this hectic process and the delay to get the letter, the job was given to the second person in the waiting list. My son had to wait for one more year to get a job because of this bureaucracy.

The farm administration has been also found to be problematic to the interests of the workers among the Bir workers. Workers stated that the bureaucracy involved in securing a support letter to be used to access government offices from the farm itself has not been easy and straight forward. It has been said to be very difficult.

## CONCLUSION

The internal labor migration of Ethiopians in search of a better wage employment opportunities into the now-privatized farms of Ayehu and Bir was not only accompanied by positive chances of employment (with varying status), but also the establishment of workers residence in the farms. This establishment of residence then entailed the

need to place these people under an appropriate government administration structure by the state; and as a result, they have been organized and placed under a kebele level administration and have been getting some basic services from the government as well as from the farm. The nature of relationship between the workers and the kebele administration is weak and limited, as it is apparently based on publication of ID cards and some support letters; and the workers do not feel part of the administration, as they lack active participation in the affairs of the kebele. Particularly, the workers at Bir have found themselves in 'limbo', as they are unrecognized by the administrators as members of the kebele. This problem around the kebele in turn affected the provision of quality social services and access to employment chances for the youth. However, these challenges are not being felt by the workers of the two farms evenly, as the two farms are located in different locations, led by different farm management, and surrounded by different rural community and environment. By virtue of being placed under the neighboring rural kebele, workers at Bir viewed their current situation as neither residents of urban nor rural kebele, while the workers at Ayehu who are placed within their own exclusive kebele in the farm do not think they are running the kebele administration in their interest. The local governmental institutions have not been also accountable to the workers. This problem has created havoc on the youth to access job and government supported benefits, just like any other person in the surrounding rural community. The farm should also improve the quality of services it is offering to the workers. Such infrastructures as water, electricity, telecommunication, and health should be expanded and improved.

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