

Full Length Research

Environmental Policy of Ethiopia: Implementation and Challenges

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This article analyses the Ethiopian Environmental Policy by looking in to the contents in general and its implementation in particular. The study is based on secondary data sources. It examines and synthesizes different relevant documents. The study introduces you with background information about environmental policy of Ethiopia .It then tries to assess the rationales for introducing the policy. In addition, it examines the policy formulation and implementation process .It also describes the overall policy objectives and principles of the environmental policy of Ethiopia. Furthermore, it explores the environmental policy instruments used in implementing environmental policy of Ethiopia to achieve its purposes. Finally, it assesses the strengths and weakness of the policy as per the “the good policy criteria “and provides policy implications.

Key Words: Environmental Policy, FDRE Constitution, Policy Analysis, Environmental Protection Authority

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INTRODUCTION

The role of international agreements on environment gave birth to the concept of sustainable development. Having understood the reinforcement between environmental protection and development, policies have been made in such a way to observe the environment in development endeavours of every nation. The international agreement named the Agenda 21 also known as ‘The Earth Summit’ puts certain guidelines like considering the environment, reducing over consumption and production, and recognizing the value of indigenous community knowledge in managing the environment (Mellese & Mesfine, 2008).

In Ethiopia, environmental problems have been a serious problem affecting the socio economic dynamism.

Population growth without economic advancement has been causing serious environmental damages. Some of the noticeable challenges are land degradation, soil erosion, loss of natural resources and biodiversity which are exacerbated by the current world wide issue of climate change (Mesfin, 2010). Renewable natural resource like land, water and forests and other forms of biodiversity have now deteriorated to a low level of productivity especially in the highland areas of Ethiopia. Estimates of deforestation, expansion for economic activity vary from 80,000 to 200,000 hectares per annum. The burning of dung as fuel instead of using it as a soil conditioner is considered to cause a reduction in grain production by some 550,000 tons annually. In 2010,

accelerated soil erosion caused a progressive annual loss in grain production estimated at about 40,000 tons, which unless arrested, will reach about 190,000 tons by 2020 (Getu, 1998).

Consequently, the Ethiopian government since 1995 has adopted a new federal constitution. The constitution has generally pinpointed some principles that have to be observed in the relationship between the people and the environment. The constitution provides some rights of the people and the responsibilities associated to protect the environment. It also provides the responsibility of government to the healthy functioning of the environment.

For example

article 44 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) asserts

"All persons have the right to live in a healthy and clean environment". ‘

In addition, article 92 of FDRE constitution states that...

"The role of government to ensure all Ethiopians live in a clean and healthy environment". The government should ensure the formulation and enforcement of programs for development shall not destroy the environment.

More importantly, article 43 of FDRE constitution provides the right to sustainable development. The constitution noted that *"the people of Ethiopia as a whole and the nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia in particular have the right to improved living standards 'and the right to sustainable development"* (Constitution of The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994)

The other important reason for adopting environmental policy in Ethiopia is the Millennium Development Goal (MDG 8). This goal advocates ensuring environmental sustainability and thus urges countries to establish policies and programs to reverse the loss of environmental resources (FDRE, Environmental Protection Authority, 2012).

The Rationales for introducing the Policy

There are external and internal factors contributing for the introduction of environmental policy of Ethiopia. It is also obvious that most members of the UN through international agreement are striving to make their development sustainable bearing in mind that environment is becoming critical for the overall development one country wishes. Development is multidimensional aspect. It includes economic development, social development and environmental sustainability. Therefore, environmental protection is

nowadays associated with human security because of the fact that environmental hazards like deforestation, climate change and global warming are threatening the life of human beings (Tamiru, 2007). The international actors and scholars also believe that human beings are dependent on environment. So it became necessary to protect it. Ethiopia's natural resources and cultural heritages are intertwined. The rich natural and cultural heritage infuses satisfaction in daily life and provides a powerful and socially cohesive force in the national consciousness. It also serves as a major tourist attraction and thereby contributes for the development of tourist industry. However, much of this heritage and culture is under threat through neglect, decay, removal or destruction. In a nut shell, the main rationales for introducing environmental policy of Ethiopia are market failure, externality, and equity and government failure.

Market Failure

Naturally, people have different values and perceptions towards the environment. Some people tend to be eco-friendly, and some have exploitative values. According to liberalists, the environment is created for people such that people have an authority to exploit it. That's why every individual tries to satisfy its interest by exploiting the natural resources at competitive means. At the end, when demand to natural resources increased, supply of natural resources decreased. The people exploit the environment without afforestation practices, so that the environment will not be resilient. Consequently, the people without discrimination will be negatively impacted. This phenomena is known as 'tragedy of the commons' in which every people rationally exploit the environment based on its unlimited wants ignoring that natural resources are limited with no common ownership of land. At this time the private marginal cost is greater than private marginal benefit, and the social marginal cost is greater than the social marginal benefit (M. Cheever, K. Graichen, D. Homeier, O. Kefauver, 2011).

Externality

Negative externality occurs, when, for example factory produces waste pollution which may be dumped into river ultimately contaminating water and the water is after used for consumption purposes. The negative impact of such action is for society at large. This problem is common in Ethiopia. Most factories which produce wastages are dumped in to agricultural areas and rivers. The society at large and private individuals who are nearer to the factories are victims of such waste disposals. The poor quality waste management of factories affects other people residing near to the factory without giving any

compensation (Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority, 2011).

Government Failure

There was no comprehensive environmental policy in the past regimes and the environmental management regulations were centralized till the 1990s. Both internal and external instability were the factors for neglecting the environment. But, since 1995, though there are gaps in implementation process the government give emphasis to the environmental protection and conservation. Policies and programs of environmental protection were set at different levels of governments particularly at Federal, Regional, Zonal, and District levels taking into consideration the indigenous community knowledge (Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority, 2011).

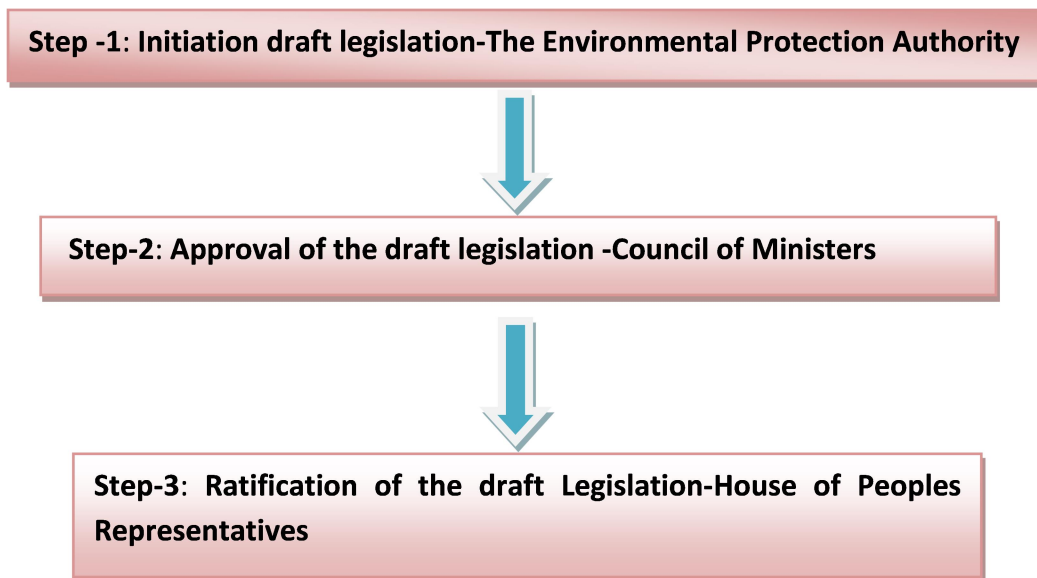
Equity Issue

As stated in article 44 of the FDRE constitution, every Ethiopian citizen has the right to live in a healthy environment and to acquire natural resources for leading his/her life decently. For the sake of fairly distributing

resources among all citizens of the state, the Ethiopian government provided a policy framework which asserts equitable share of benefits and burdens(*Constitution of The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*, 1994).

Environmental Policy Formulation and Implementation

The environmental policy of Ethiopia was formulated in 1997. The main actor in developing the policy was -The environmental protection authority which is one of the ad hoc committees in the Ethiopian parliament. The authority based on data and evidences from different sectors and levels of governments initiates draft legislation and submits to the council of ministers .Then, the council of ministers endorsed it and submitted to House of people’s representatives (HPR) for ratification. In addition, environmental protection authority is responsible for the administration of environmental issues like environmental pollution and environmental impact assessment. In regions of Ethiopia, environmental organs are established to oversee the environmental management in their respective places. In a nut shell, the environmental policy formulation process is figuratively expressed as follows (Environmental Protection Authority Establishment Proclamation, 1995).



Source: Own design, 2020.

Environmental Policy: Goal and Objectives

The Overall Policy Goal

The overall policy goal of the Environmental Policy of Ethiopia is directly in support of Brundtland and (1987) definition of Sustainable Development (UN, 2012). The policy goal asserts that, to enhance the health and quality of life of all Ethiopians, and to promote sustainable social and economic development through the sound management and use of natural, human-made and cultural resources and the environment as a whole, so as to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Policy Objectives

The specific objectives of environmental policy of Ethiopia are: efficiency, equity, liberty and security. Each policy objectives will be discussed as follows:

Efficiency

The policy suggests wise use of resources. It discourages over consumption. It recommends the careful observation of resources in making decisions and actions. The policy considers the future generation's ability to meet their own needs. It suggests the use of renewable resources and related environmental friendly technologies.

Equity

The policy recognizes women as main actors in formulating, decision making and implementing environmental policies, and asserts equal treatment of women with men in holding natural resources like land. Besides, the policy states recognition and protection of where ever possible the customary rights of access to and use of land and natural resources which are constitutionally acceptable ,socially equitable, and preferred by local communities .More importantly, it discusses about social and gender issues subjecting all policies ,programmes and projects to impact assessment in order to maximize equity for economic, ethnic, social, and cultural, gender and age groups, especially to socially disadvantaged groups.

Liberty

Every person has the right to live in a clean and healthy

environment .The policy seeks to ensure the empowerment and participation of the people and their organization at all levels in environmental management activities .It seeks to undertake regular and accurate assessment and monitoring of environmental conditions and the information widely disseminated within the population. Policy makers, government officials and the people should promote increased awareness and understanding of environmental and resource issues and the adoption of conservation culture in environmental matters among all levels of society should be encouraged.

Security

The policy notes impossibility of sustainable environmental conditions in the absence of peace and human security. This can be assured through the acquisition of power by community to make their own decisions on matters that affect their life and environment .The policy gives the opportunity for the community to use resource for their livelihood. For example, land is distributed to the farmers of Ethiopia, and they have the right to cultivate land and thereby satisfy their needs. As per the equity policy, farmers have the right to own land, and not to be deprived their land with no reason.

In general, the four objectives of environmental policy are complementary to each other. This is to mean that, there is some sort of trade off among the objectives for the effectiveness of the policy. For example, a farmer is given a land by government in the name of equity for cultivation. But, this farmer is obliged to use fertilizer to increase productivity with the objective of efficiency. In addition, the policy attempts to balance the right to access natural resources and security. For example, ensuring social equity is one principle of environmental policy so that it was declared that all citizens have the right to access to land and natural resources. But, even though a person has the right to access to land and natural resources, he /she is obliged to use the land wisely for the sake of security. He / she is not allowed to use the land excessively. Exploiting the environment until it's incapable to adapt to shocks is not guaranteed in the policy because every person has the right to live in a healthy environment. Moreover, for the sake of ensuring equity other people who own a lot of resources may be deprived even though they have the right to access to resources.

Environmental Policy Instruments

These instruments are methods employed to control the behaviour of individuals and other institutions and to implement the environmental policy of Ethiopia. According to the discussed as follows:

Laws and Regulations

Regulations of environmental issues are incorporated into the supreme law of the land. The current Constitution of Ethiopia with a large environmental scope has defined the environmental values to be preserved and protected. The 1994 Constitution of Ethiopia under Articles 44 and 92 proclaim that all citizens shall have a right to live in a clean and healthy environment. Government and citizens shall have a duty to protect the environment. The design and implementation of programs and projects shall not damage or destroy the environment.

For successful implementation of the environmental policy, certain laws and regulations that control behaviour of individuals are essential. The broad environmental policy of Ethiopia is implemented and the objectives achieved when laws and regulations are adopted. The important instruments to implement environmental policy of Ethiopia are included in the environmental law of Ethiopia. This law mainly discusses about pollution control. Pollution is not a major environmental in Ethiopia, but it is becoming a growing environmental challenge in Ethiopia. It has also been put by the government that in the FDRE constitution and investment proclamation a requirement for the production of an environmental impact assessment before a development project is given an investment license (Environmental Protection Authority Establishment Proclamation, 1997).

The Environmental protection authority and other regional environmental agencies are empowered to take administrative or legal measures against persons that release any pollutant in violation of laws provided regarding the control of environmental pollution. For example, in relation to environmental policy, there is a rule known as "the polluter pays principle". This principle states that development activities that likely cause pollution or other environmental hazards shall have an obligation to install sound technologies or adopt practices that avoid or minimize the generation of waste and to promote the re-use of or recycling by effluents, discharges and wastes in general. In addition, environmental protection authority or regional environmental agencies are empowered to require any person causing pollution to clean up or pay the cost of cleaning, and to prevent any harm including closure or relocation of operation that cause imminent danger to health or the environment (Ibid).

Information

The environmental policy of Ethiopia in its guiding principles states that regular and accurate assessment and monitoring of environmental conditions shall be undertaken and the information widely disseminated within the population. Information is disseminated through

mass Medias through formal education in high schools and universities. The Medias and interest groups play great role in awareness creation about the value of the environment to human well-being as well as to development. People are being trained about the link between environment and development.

Incentives

In case of market failure with regard to pricing of natural and human made and cultural resources, and failure in regulatory measures should be corrected through the assessment and establishment of user fees, tax reductions or incentives like subsidies. Firms are advised to use advanced technology that minimize cost and maximize output, and are provided with subsidies and tax reduction. The government, when necessary provides latest technologies to the firms and farmers with low cost to prevent environmental degradation or deforestation. The materials provided by government are like Stoves, and biomass technologies based on the expectation that they can contribute to the reduction of imbalance between production and consumption and help for environmental rehabilitation.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Policy

Its undeniable fact that environmental policy of Ethiopia is not the same with environmental policy of developed countries. The policy of developed countries more or less emphasis on industrial and car emissions considering the level of technology they reached. But, the environmental policy of Ethiopia is more concerned with reducing environmental hazards like deforestation soil erosion and different types of pollutions.

One of the strengths of the Ethiopian environmental policy is that the policy has clearly defined the problem. It has understood that environment is critical to development and it is deteriorating from time to time at an alarming rate. The policy is forward looking and out ward looking. When we say forward looking, it is to mean that the policy is based on sustainable development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs. It is also out ward looking because the policy is framed based the motto of sustainable development introduced by the United Nations. Besides, the government has gave it much focus such that it has established an ad hoc environmental protection authority in the parliament for assessing and reporting implementations, causes and consequences of the environment. The policy is also implemented having its own laws and through creating another sectors which have closer relationship to environmental policy to

achieve its goal. For example, it is integrated with agricultural and rural development policies, national capacity building program, sustainable development and poverty reduction program, and food security program. The policy is also directs the people towards achieving sustainable development. The government is aware that the people have exploitative values towards the environment. The policy seems to apply the 'downward spiral hypotheses'- on environment which says poor people are the causes and the victims of environmental degradation. Since most people of Ethiopia are poor, they are dependent on the environment. The environment later affects the people through drought and famine. Hence for solving such vicious cycle, the government has been giving training and awareness creation to the society.

As far as the weaknesses of environmental policy are concerned, the first limitation is in its measurability (vagueness) in terms of who is damaging the environment. It is obvious that, Environmental losses are not estimated at one time and it's difficult to identify who is really exploiting the environment in a specific community. For example, if serious deforestation occurs at certain community by the whole community, how can it be possible to apply polluter pays principle? First, the community is not willing to report that caused the problem. Second, it is difficult to punish the whole community because it may not share the same principle with the adopted policy. Thirdly, the policy doesn't put the time limit of implementation. It is not clear from when to when this policy has to be used and it doesn't show any alternatives to be used for the future if things changed across time. There are also problems in enforcement of this policy. It states that the federal and regional agencies are entrusted to implement the policy. But, there seems to be a problem in both agencies because of the fact that these agencies are more concerned in politics than protecting the environment. For example, there is a practice being applied annually in Ethiopia based on the theme of 'Green Revolution' which says- "one person - two -plant principle". Every agency of environmental policy is expected to implement this principle in its specific target groups. But, when we come to practice, almost all citizens participate in planting trees but they fail to take responsibility in growing the plants. The policy seems to consider efficiency as the basic goal, but it is stated without considering the environment and the availability of technology i.e. the policy states the importance of building waste management, public and industrial hygiene, and techniques to enable cost - effective implementation but currently we can see that most of urban areas in Ethiopia are without waste management tools, releasing dirty stuffs to the community. Failure to use renewable resources also remains a bottle neck to efficiency. environmental hazards like drought are affecting the community. For

example, almost 10.2million Ethiopians are suffering from drought because of environmental hazards and the El Nino impact of 2018 have been serious. To sum up, the overall policy goal of Ethiopian environmental policy is to enhance the quality of life of Ethiopians through sound management and conservation of natural resources, but the people is still suffering from environmental hazards.

The way forward

Generally, environment is becoming necessary condition for development. World leaders have agreed that development endeavours of any state shall not ignore the environment. As a consequence, Ethiopia one of member state of the United Nations has introduced environmental policy designed as per the program of Green Revolution and Sustainable Development Goals. Having the UN guideline at hand, tremendous environmental management and conservation practices have been made at deferent levels of governments. The environmental policy has been practiced by integrating with different sectors of the country. Although, this policy was introduced in response to market failure still the problem continue to pose a threat. Therefore considering the highly increasing population growth of the country, more attention has to be given to policy implementation. Good environmental governance should be exercised. The government at all levels should give more concern for environmental conservation rather than politics. For tackling the recurrent drought and famine environmental protection activities like reforestation, soil conservation practices should be improved. In urban areas waste management practices, and sewerage materials should be provided. In rural areas, the community should get alternative renewable energy sources.

Abbreviations:

FDRE-Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
HPR- House of People's Representatives
MDG- Millennium Development Goals

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