Civil Society Support Programme
Partnerships for people

Read-out from CSSP's Learning Seminar: 'One Size Doesn't Fit All: tailoring services so that no one is left out'
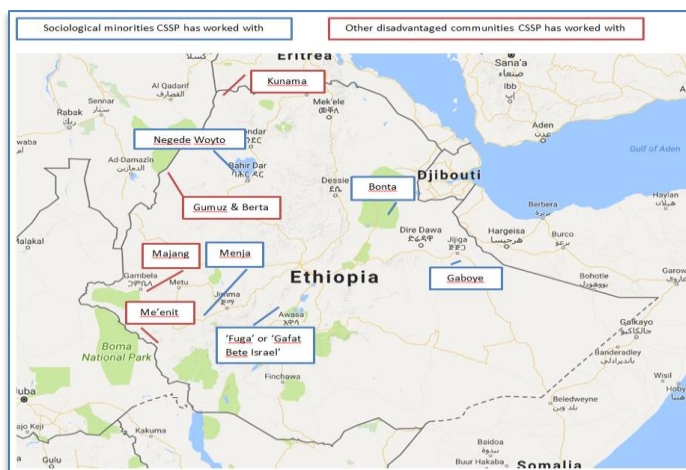
Introduction

On June 27th and 28th 2017, over 80 representatives from government, civil society, hard to reach communities, and development partners came together in Addis to listen to and debate learning from CSSP's experience of working across the country with disadvantaged communities affected by different forms of stigma and social discrimination. (See adjacent map for locations of work.) This note provides an overview of the debates, tentative conclusions and proposed actions by different stakeholders coming from the seminar.

Inputs to the seminar*

- The CSSP Radical Inclusion Framework looks at how a system of 'outsiders' and 'insiders' is created through ideologies that sustain and self-perpetuate, despite laws that make such discrimination illegal;
- An in-depth case study of the experience of people from the 'Fuga' (or 'Gafat Beta Israel') community in Hadiya zone, and the response from their own CSO, mainstream CSOs and government;
- An anthropological analysis of three different types of 'left out' minorities: sociological, indigenous groups affected for historical reasons, and groups affected by an overlooked issue such as epilepsy. This showed the different causes of exclusion, but also deep similarities in the effects on each group – low education, low health, depression and poverty.
- A study of the impact of poorly treated epilepsy on the Me'enit community in SNNPR, and what needs to be done to address this;
- Testimonies from individuals from the 'Fuga'/'Gafat Beta Israel', 'Negede Woyto', 'Menja', Me'enit and Gumuz.

"We have just accepted the situation of the Negede Woyto for years; yet, when we see what has been happening in SNNPR, there is no reason why we cannot address their problems – and now."

Senior Government official from Amhara Regional State

Key findings

- Strong and unchallenged prejudices and myths have sustained ideologies that continue to undermine the rights and interests of minority communities, despite laws intended to leave no one behind. Many seminar participants from all sectors were shocked and ashamed that this persists in 2017; other participants experience this every day.
- Minority communities have begun to benefit from basic social and development services (for example, education, health, agricultural extension). But these communities, compared to other adjacent mainstream communities, still lag far behind access to services.
- Local government does pay some attention to problems facing minority communities; the extent of the interventions vary, however, from one Regional State to another or from one zonal administration to another within the same Regional State.
- However, all interventions are low and slow compared to the severity of the problems.
- Cooperation between the local Government and Civil Society actors is beginning to stimulate more constructive and practical engagement on such issues, and this may pave the way for more intensive collaboration required to address entrenched problems.

Key debates and conclusions

These revolved around three core issues:

a) Whether or not the government legal and policy frameworks and subsequent guidelines adequately address challenges and problems facing these minority communities and whether plans and budgets reflect their needs;
b) Whether or not the depth and severity of exclusion for these communities is sufficiently well understood by the government and the wider population; and
c) What can be done and by whom to redress the suffering of women, men, boys and girls from these communities in view of injustices committed against them for several decades.

The consensus was that legal and policy frameworks of government *at this stage* are adequate *enough* to provide for all-inclusive development to all segments of the society, including these hard to reach communities. However, a big gap persists in the translation of these policies into workable actions that transform their lives and livelihoods to meet reasonable expectations for an equitable society. Apparently, the extent to which these communities can overcome the challenges and problems they face seems to be unintentionally undermined by the government's 'one model fits all' approach to development. It was also agreed that not adequately addressing these problems will deter the development process to the extent of undermining ambitious plans the country has to join lower middle income countries by 2025.

More, and more customized, interventions have to be made by all stakeholders, with special attention and leadership from the government.

Key lessons for the future

- **Small but big:** Each disadvantaged community represents a small population; but added together the number of minority people being left out across the country represents a relatively big population of unfulfilled potential and lost opportunity for society as a whole.

- **Knowledge and understanding is the first step:** Deepened knowledge and understanding by everyone (civil servants, service providers, mainstream communities) on the experience and rights of these communities is a priority for addressing barriers to inclusion.

- **Constructive challenge is the next step:** Many of the challenges faced by these communities result from lack of critical awareness to question fundamentally the ideas, beliefs and discriminatory behaviours that sustain their marginalisation. Supported, structured dialogue needs to take place among government actors, faith based organizations, CBOs and community representatives at different levels.

- **Radical inclusion a win-win:** As emphasized by the government participants, Ethiopia's goal of joining lower middle income countries by 2025 will be hampered if the key interests and development needs of these minority communities are not fairly addressed. Tackling centuries-old problems of these communities is no longer a matter of choice. Radical inclusion of these communities in the social, economic and political spheres remains one of the necessary conditions for the country's stability and sustainable development.

- **Case-by-case approach:** The extent of marginalization and discrimination of the minority communities is deeper than realized, and varies from one context to another. This requires in-depth understanding of the specific condition of each and a case-by-case approach to support their uplift from the present unacceptable level.

- **Special attention to excluded groups *within* minorities:** The social structures of these minority communities, and the pressures on them, can further segregate some of their own members (for example, women and girls may be doubly excluded). These demand special attention. Education, when properly accessed, is considered as a crosscutting instrument to help overcome the challenge in the long term.

Key lessons for the future (cont'd)

- **Policies into practice:** Government legal and policy frameworks are all-inclusive and intend to leave no one behind. But minority communities have not been able to benefit as much as they should from these, largely because policies have not been translated into progressively inclusive and doable activities down at the grassroots. Experience indicates absence of accountable systems to implement affirmative actions that were meant to redress decades of injustice. Implementation of affirmative action varies from one administration to another, depending on personalities of individuals within the government authorities.

- **Promoting values of equality and non-discrimination:** In some cases, religious institutions (both modern and traditional) knowingly or unknowingly perpetuate divisions among people based on groundless prejudice. Religious institutions whose purpose is to teach and promote moral values of human dignity and equality need to be more proactively engaged in positive and constructive roles.

- **Helping Hard to Reach civil society to flourish:** Civil society organisations established by relatively enlightened people drawn from minority communities (e.g. Harotessa) will have special significance for self-awareness and confidence building of their respective communities. They can make an important contribution to lay the foundation for their social, economic and political emancipation. In this regard, government and development partners can play a pivotal role in building the organisational capacity of these CSOs and funding their activities.

Key actions and results proposed – by actor

The strong desire for radical inclusion of the minority communities in all social, economic, political and religious affairs was emphasized particularly by representatives of the respective communities and CSOs. Each of the stakeholders has a role to play to attain equality and justice for all in the long term, largely under the leadership of the government.

Each actor group was asked to identify what change it could achieve within the next 12 months, and what needed to be done to achieve this. These are summarised here, with a full breakdown of activities on the next page.

Government actors…

… from Regional States for Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz and Hadiya and Keficho Zones for SNNP want to see the priorities and interests of their respective minority communities mainstreamed in the 2017-18 budget year.

Representatives from Hard to Reach communities…

… with which CSSP has worked want to sensitize their own communities to be conscientised (helped to become aware), and to make their priorities and interests better known to local government for action.

Civil Society Organisations…

… from mainstream groups working with HTR communities, and from hard to reach communities, want to establish platforms of stakeholders at Regional State level to build on existing interventions and learning, and to anticipate and discuss emerging issues relating to hard to reach minority communities, as well as implementing specific projects that aim to address livelihood and other concerns of minority groups.

Development Partners…

… from CSSP want to see much stronger promotion of discussion, cross-country learning and dialogue at higher government levels on issues of the Hard To Reach minority communities, as well as enabling the dedicated work to continue within other programmes supported by them. Comparative experience from other contexts outside Ethiopia (such as India and Nepal) can also be explored.

The table on the final page provides more detailed description of actions that each actor proposes to take. These actions will be monitored through a follow-up process after the end of CSSP.

What each actor would like to see within 12 months	What each actor plans to do to achieve this
Government actors from Regional States for Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz and Hadiya and Keficho Zones for SNNP want to see the priorities and interests of their respective minority communities mainstreamed in the 2017-18 budget year.	By mainstreaming, respective governments will at least: • Identify priority areas of intervention and allocate additional budget to implement some of the priorities; • Ensure that **all** (more than half of eligible ones) their children attain schools and ensure the school environment is friendly to the children in consultation with school administration and the user community; • Ensure that access to health facilities is free from inhibition and promote good practices from previous interventions; • Ensure both women and men from these HTR communities get appropriate extension services to boost their production; • Facilitate access to market to sell their products; • Ensure fair access to justice though providing legal aid and other support; • Increase number of people hired in the government offices at different levels from minority groups; • Undertake two or more discussions and dialogue sessions with key government officials and relevant actors on the matter; • Establish appropriate body (or committee) dedicated to monitoring and follow up of the implementation of the government plan.
Representatives from Hard to Reach communities with which CSSP has worked want to sensitize their own communities to be conscientised, and to make their priorities and interests better known to local government for action.	• Organize three separate workshops/forums for selected members (one for men, one for women and one for youth) of the HTR communities to discuss and identify priorities and actions that they should submit to the government and also implement themselves to change the stereotypical attitude of mainstream society) towards them; • Organize one community-wide conference to deliberate on and endorse action points of the three workshops to reach out the mainstream communities as part of changing their attitude towards them; • Engage government on identified priorities and mainstream communities and their institutions such as *idir*, *mahiber* using appropriate channels/structures.
Civil Society Organisations from mainstream groups working with HTR communities, & from HTR communities, want to establish platforms of stakeholders at Regional level to build on existing interventions, & to anticipate emerging issues relating to HTR minority communities, as well as implementing specific projects that address livelihood and other concerns of minority groups.	• Organize at least one workshop at Regional State level to build on gains of the learning seminar and address some emerging issues; • Organize religious leaders workshop to reflect on their present activities in relation to the HTR minority communities and develop action points to make constructive contributions to help emancipate the HTR minority communities from their present way of life; • Continue designing HTR-people centred projects that focus on practical improvements.
Development Partners want to promote discussion, dialogue and learning at higher government level on issues of the HTR minority communities, and to enable the work to continue.	• Support policy dialogue at Federal level with MoFEC, NPC etc. eg on how GTP actions reach or not these groups; • Support activities that aim at sharing best practices of other countries on the matter; • consider how this can be incorporated into other programmes supported by DPs such as ESAP3; • – Building on what has been done in CSSP I and EP on this issue.