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Social Work in Ethiopia: Historical Endeavors and Contemporary Status

A Scoping Literature Review

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Abstract

This exploratory scoping review has been conducted to fill the gap of comprehensive evidence on the historical endeavors and contemporary status of social work in Ethiopia. Accordingly, various literature (both academic and grey literature) were included in the analysis to uncover the scenarios. Social work in Ethiopia constitutes the age-old Indigenous Social Support Systems (ISSSs) and the formal social work.

The ISSSs endured throughout generations while the formal social work had started as a practice in 1955 and scholarship in 1959. Formal social work in Ethiopia experienced seesaw existence and its evolvement went through four successive phases of Early (1959-1974), Dead Decades (1974-2004), Renaissance (2004-2007), and Contemporary Phases (2007 – 2023) classified based on historic turning points of early inception, closure, re-emergence, and expansion respectively. This contributed to its stunted development and current infancy. Unlike the ISSSs, formal social work has formal structures and stakeholders to function.

In a nutshell, the contemporary social work in Ethiopia is a 'Discorded Social Work' that lacks synergization - the complementary integration of local (ISSSs) and global social work (formal social work) constituents and realities, thereby seeks the collaboration of Global-North and Global-South social work stakeholders and actors to synergize it.

Keywords

Social Work, Ethiopia, Social Support Systems, Scoping Review

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1. Introduction

Ethiopia – formally 'Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia', is a landlocked republic in northeast Africa (Horn of Africa). The label 'Ethiopia' can be retraced to Greek origin of meaning 'Burnt-Faced' used to describe the dark-skinned people. Ethiopia claims the land of origin (the cradle of humankind), as it hosted the world's oldest hominid fossils and human developments evolution (Stone Age tools) ever discovered (Marcus, 1994; Zewde, 2002; and Briggs, 2015). Ethiopians are multiethnic societies (Abbink, 1991; and Vasudeo, 2021) and the country has a projected population of 107 million by 2022 (Central Statistical Agency, 2013); as population census has not been conducted yet since 2007 due to the endured national dynamics. Ethiopia is a country of contrast; bearing a dazzling ancient civilization (Marcus, 1994; and Briggs, 2015), contemporarily underdeveloped as well as citizen's antagonistic stance about its historical accounts and evolvements (Legesse, 2006; ዐቢይ አሕመድ, 2012 ዓ.ም.). Accordingly, the historical 'Northwestern Ethiopian (Abyssinian-Christian) Empire' fanatic group identify themselves with the Oriental and mythological[1] legitimacy of the Solomonic dynasty, while the other majorities (mainly the Oromoo and other nations and nationalities in southern and eastern Ethiopia) reject the myth and retrace their root to the African background of egalitarian community. In general, Ethiopia's culture was mainly influenced by two cultural sources: oriental civilizations and African background (Legesse, 1973).

Historically, Ethiopia had long-existed interactions with external civilizations that invited foreign socio-cultural and economic practices like religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), modern education, trade, and other facilities due to its strategic presence. This facilitated access to modern weapons that were utilised for internal wars; thereby the country's medieval and early modern history was dominated by instability for competition over state power and foreign interference. The country took its modern shape during Emperor Menelik II (r. 1889-1913), that secured state power by culminating the chaos in the north amongst regional lords and incorporating the states in the western, southern, and easternmost tips of the country (Marcus, 1994; and Zewde, 2002). Particularly, modernisation – the practice of urban land registration and the granting of land charters (as of 1907), modern education (the first school in 1908), financial system (the first bank in 1905), and infrastructure (the first railway in 1917), were ushered following the Adwa victory in 1896 and Addis Ababa City securing the state's permanency sit. Likewise, the 'modernisation' dynamism kept the momentum during the last Solomonic Dynasty - Emperor Haile Sellassie I (r. 1930-1974) rule and impacted the country's socio-economic, cultural, and political milieus enormously. From the regime's achievements, Ethiopia's strong presence in international diplomacy (League of Nations membership in 1923) and higher education inception - instituting the University College of Addis Ababa - UCAA in 1950 (Zewde, 2002) mentioned. In the meantime, the impact of modernisation (i.e. the gradual urbanisation, meagre urban-based industrialisation, rural-urban migration, and clan/family support system deterioration) resulted in a range of socio-economic problems (unemployment, destitution, prostitution, homelessness, etc.) that was worst, particularly in urban centres. As a result, the Haile Sellassie I government responded by introducing the first formal welfare services in 1955 and social work training in 1959 (Tesfaye, n.d). However, comprehensive evidence compiled on the historical endeavours and contemporary status of social work in Ethiopia can hardly be found despite its existence for a quarter of a century.

As a result, we have reviewed the evidence and addressed the following main questions.

- How did social work evolve in Ethiopia?
- What are the contributions, challenges, and status of social work in Ethiopia?

1 The myth states that the first Ethiopian king -Menelik I (founder of the Solomonic Dynasty), was the son of King Solomon of Israel due to a clandestine engagement with Queen Sheba/Saba/Makeda of Ethiopia (Legesse, 2006).

We have searched both empirically sound and grey literature on "Social Work in Ethiopia" from Google, Google-scholar, African Journals Online (AJOL), ASWnet, and JStore - online journal databases and local libraries using various search words that include *Social Work and/or Social Welfare Training, Research, Practices, Services, History, Contribution, Challenges, Opportunities, Status, and Prospects in Ethiopia*. Then, we manually analysed the evidence. The themes of analysis were social work education, training, research, practice, stakeholders, status, and challenges. Finally, we organised and presented the review chronologically and thematically as: social work in Ethiopia constituting the ISSSs and formal social work, formal social work and its evolvement phases (i.e. early [1959-1974], dead decades [1974-2004], renaissance [2004-2007], and contemporary phases [2007 – 2023]), social work stakeholders, social work contemporary status, and challenges and prospect.

2. Social Work in Ethiopia

Historically, social work evolved out of volunteerism in the global north (Europe and North America) in the late 19th century and became an occupation and profession by 1900 and 1930 respectively (Stuart, 2019). Afterwards, it was diffused to other countries and regions – particularly within Africa - first in South Africa in the 1920s (Vishanthie Sewpaul & Antoinette Lombard, 2004), like other social sciences (Legesse, 2006) via the work of missionary, colonisation, scholarship and internationalisation program (Mazibuko and Gray, n.d; and Ibrahima and Mattaini, 2017). Now, it is a global profession – having global definitions and standards for education and training (IASSW-IFSW, 2020).

In Ethiopia, formal and higher education is a recent phenomenon that began with the foundation of the UCAA in 1950 (Zewde, 2002 and Ahmed, 2006). It was triggered by the external influence (UNESCO) and the domestic need for an educated workforce (Zewde, 2002 and Negash, 2006). With higher education initiation, the first formal training of social work in Ethiopia took place in 1959 by the then Ministry of Public Health in collaboration with UNICEF (Tesfaye, n.d; and UNECA, 1964). Second, after a decade - in 1961, by the integration of various colleges and the then School of Social Work formed Haile Sellassie I University (Zewde, 2002).

Besides formal social work, there are long-existing Indigenous Social Support Systems (ISSSs) and practices that are noteworthy concerning social work in Ethiopia. These ISSSs were widely practised among various socio-ethnic groups in Ethiopia before and alongside formal social work to address the bio-psychosocial and spiritual needs of its members. The following table briefly depicts the landscape of social work in Ethiopia.

Social Work in Ethiopia	
Social Work Constituents	**Evolvement Phases**
Indigenous Social Support Systems (ISSSs)	Practiced informally since ancient time
Formal Social Work	The Social Work Early phase (1959-1974)
	The Social Work Dead Decades Phase (1974-2004)
	The Social Work Renaissance Phase (2004-2007)
	The Contemporary Social Work (2007 – 2023)

Table 1. Brief summary of social work constituents and evolvement phases in Ethiopia.
Source: Authors

2.1 Indigenous Social Support Systems (ISSSs)

Currently, the social work profession is promoting indigenous knowledge as core potential areas for social work scholarships and practices to broaden and strengthen its knowledge, skill, value, and ethical pile (IFSW & IASSW, 2014). In line with this, Ethiopia is a habitat for diverse social and ethnic groups (Abbink, 1991; and Vasudeo, 2021) that have various ISSSs (Tesfaye, n.d; Stavropoulou, Holmes, and Jones, 2016; Kebede, 2019; and Gebremariam, 2021). These ISSSs evolved from the long-existing communal socio-cultural and religious practices of welfare and support systems rooted in African (Ibrahima and Mattaini, 2017) and oriental pro-welfare Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and backgrounds (Briggs, 2015; and Legesse, 1973 & 2006) to address the affairs of their needy members. Thus, the lion's share of the welfare services for the needy members of the society - orphan children, beggars, persons with disabilities, vulnerable elders, and patients - has been distributed by the ISSSs and their institutions of extended family, neighbourhood, clan/ethnic group, religions, and community (Tesfaye, n.d; Stavropoulou, Holmes, and Jones, 2016; Kebede, 2019; and Gebremariam, 2021). They play a range of social, economic, psychological, and cultural roles to achieve survival, empowerment, conflict resolution, peace promotion, positive socialisation, and development endeavours in the community/society.

ISSSs in Ethiopia are diverse based on the type of needs they address, practice settings and affiliations. They include *Iddir* - which serves as social capital and insurance for its members during calamity/bereavement (Pankhurst and Haile Mariam, 2000; Aredo, 2010; Teshome et al., 2014; and Mekonen & Asfaw, 2015; Stavropoulou, Holmes, and Jones, 2016); *Ekub* – an informal grouping for saving/credit that offer rotation based services for members (Mekonen & Asfaw, 2015; and Stavropoulou, Holmes, and Jones (2016); *Mahiber* – a socio-religious self-help association/organisation (Weldu, 2017; Mekonen & Asfaw, 2015) related with Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Flemmen & Zenebe, 2016 p. 3); and *Zakat* - an obligatory charity among Muslims that serve social welfare end (Endris et al., 2017; and Stavropoulou, Holmes, and Jones, 2016). In addition, there are indigenous health care practices that include: *Kitel Betash* - Herbalists, *Awalaj* - Indigenous Birth Attendants, and *Wogesha* - Bone Setters (Kahissay, Fenta and Boon, 2015); Indigenous Knowledge of Medicinal Plant Practice (Regassa, 2012; and Workneh, King, and Kloos, 2020); and *Faith Healing* (Kloos et al., 2013; and Kahissay, Fenta and Boon, 2018).

The ethnic groups affiliated with ISSSs include *Gadaa* System in *Oromoo* - a comprehensive system that governs the nation's socio-cultural, economic, political and spiritual functioning (Legesse, 1973 & 2006; Udessa and Gololcha, 2011). Additionally, other Cushitic language-speaking ethnic groups like Konso, Gedeo, Hadiya, Kembata, and Sidama also share their own version of this system. The *Gadaa* System was functional across the whole Oromoo nation in the olden days – almost until the seventeenth century, but now it is loosely functional or active in a few moieties of the nation like Borana and Guji Oromoo. The *Gadaa* System has in it: *Guddifacha* and *Moggaasa* – individual and communal adoption and broad-based assimilation respectively to incorporate aliens into themself, *Handhuura* – Gift (Cattle) given for children (Legesse, 1973 and 2006; and Udessa and Gololcha, 2011); Indigenous Counseling System (Abeshu, 2019); '*Dhibaayyuu*' - Thanks Giving Ritual (Duressa, 2022); *Raagaa Wogii* - Indigenous Early Warning System for Climate Resilience (Dedefo, Wakayo, and Aman, 2020); Natural Resource Management (Bedada, 2021); Community Development Endeavors (Watson, 2003); and so on.

Furthermore, the Sikkoo-Mandoo Arsi Oromoo has also indigenous community self-help practices of "....*Ameesa dabarsu, Dabaree kenuu, Gegawo-gegesaa, Soruu, Hirphuu, Gumaata, Liqii, Qabdoo qabuuf, Qote-qotii, Sanyii kennuu, Woliif Tiksuu, Dhoofsisuu, Daboo, and Eddir and/or Ekub*" (Dedefo, Wakayo, and Aman, 2020 p. 29) – transliterated, Milk-Cow offer, Revolving Gift, Bride Gift, Sorting, Contribution, Special Gift, Lending, Mutual Labour Service in Crop Gathering, Mutual Labour Service for Land Plough, Seed Gift, Mutual Cattle Keeping, Bridegroom Gift, Mutual Indigenous campaign Work, Indigenous Social Insurance for Calamity and/or Rotation-Based Money Saving, respectively. Endris et al. (2017) also identified Indigenous mutual support practices of kin and family-based networks (Gumata and Kalu), mutual support networks (Guza network), mutual aid association (*Mandara*), religiously motivated obligations (*Zakat*), and gender-based groups (women's *Afosha*) as social capital for resilience against Livelihood Shocks in Babille district of Oromia region. Likewise, Stavropoulou, Holmes, and Jones (2016) described collective rules and mechanisms that govern access to available assets and opportunities - Sharecropping, and *Dabare*; reciprocity networks or gift exchange arrangements – including labour-sharing groups, informal mutual aid associations and gift exchanges, including remittances; semi-formal insurance mechanisms that include Indigenous reciprocity based burial societies (Iddirs) and rotating savings and credit associations (Ekub); and religious-based support that includes Zakat in Islam and in-cash or kind assistance in Christianity.

Correspondingly, the rural communities of Gedeo ethnic groups have long-standing social values, norms, and belief systems of respecting and taking care of their older members through families, extended families, and neighbours (Alambo and Yimam, 2019). Likewise, the 'Awi People' also have three indigenous institutions; "Awi Equestrian Association", "Head of Cow", and "Head of Water" that play socioeconomic affairs management of social welfare, cattle, and irrigation water resources respectively, besides managing conflicts between people in their respective sectors (Genet, 2022), while the Tullo community of southern Ethiopia practice Ego social networks for community development (Abebe, Kebede and Alemie, 2019). Similarly, the 'Awramba Community' has unique socio-cultural practices of gender equality, socio-economic justice, good ethics, conflict management, elderly care, and communal welfare services. They also have universal solidarity promotion mechanisms of strange inclusion and immersion in their community (Ekimie, 2021; Mulatie et al., 2014).

Furthermore, there are bounties of conflict resolution and peace-building Indigenous institutions and practices in various communities of Ethiopia to fulfil the social protection needs of members. These encompass the *Gadaa* system of Oromoo (Legesse, 1973 & 2006); '*Siinqee* Practice' of the Arsi Oromoo (Gena and Dibaba, 2022); '*Abegar'* in North Wollo Haberu Woreda (Yimer, 2021); '*Tolfena Chaffee Chanicho'* in Oromoo community of Dibate District (Mossie, 2019); Indigenous Social knowledge and institutions (Debarte - institution of women, Demer Ahiwat - at family level up to 7th line, the church and Gereb - usually at inter-group level) of Wejerat community of East Tigray (Asmerom, 2016); Amara Council of Elders of Jama Woreda in Amhara Region (Tesfaye, 2021); *Shimgelena*, *Tommo* and *Eqqo* systems in Kaffa society (Wolde, 2018); and '*Mengechaha'* of Gumuz Ethnic Group in Mandura District in North West Ethiopia (Reshad, 2017).

Hence, the vast arenas of social work or welfare services have been covered by those ISSSs since ancient times in Ethiopia. Still, these ISSSs play significant roles alongside the recently introduced formal social work in Ethiopia to address the social protection and welfare needs of communities, vulnerable groups, families, and individuals.

2.2 Formal Social Work and Its Evolvement Phases

The modernisation of Ethiopia shaped by emperor Menilek II (r. 1889-1913) based on feudal monarchical aristocracy, continued its journey of socio-political change with emperor Haile Selassie I (r. 1930-1970). The expansion of imperialism (Italian Occupation of 1936-1941 and the post-occupation influence of England), the increased diplomatic engagement, and access to modern education (scholarship abroad and the beginning of higher education in Ethiopia) were the main forces that influenced the politico-legal and socio-cultural landscape of the country (Zewde, 2002). Those change forces accompanied by natural calamities (recurrent drought and famine) induced expansion of urbanisation, the establishment of few industries and infrastructure (road), rural-urban migration, unemployment, delinquency, culture fusion, the practice of prostitution, displacement, deaths, and disintegration of the family and other ISSSs (Tesfaye, n.d; Zewde, 2002; and Kebede, 2021). Consequently, those segments of the society hard-hit by the problem (industry workers, the educated elites, peasants, and urban dwellers) waged pressure against the emperor, demanding reform during the post-Italian occupation (Zewde, 2002). Hence, this endured chain of social, economic, and political challenges laid the foundation for the initiation of formal social work in Ethiopia in the middle of the last imperial rule.

Accordingly, Emperor Haile Sellassie I's government started formal social work in Ethiopia by founding the first formal social work services (i.e. Haile Sellassie I Welfare Foundation) in 1955 and training (i.e. instituting the first School of Social Work) in 1959 (UNECA, 1964). Since then, the profession witnessed seesaw existence (i.e. as per its compatibility with the ruling regime) and stunted development under various regimes. The following table concisely presents its historical evolvement based on its historic turning points (i.e. inception, closure, re-emergence, and expansion) vis-à-vis the corresponding actor regime.

Social Work Phases	Duration	Regime	Political Ideology	Social Work Status
Early	1959-1974	Imperial	Feudalism-Monarchism	Inception
Dead Decades	1974–1991	Darg[2]	Garrison Socialism	Shutdown
	1991 – 2004	EPRDF	Revolutionary Democracy	Absence
Renaissance	2004 – 2007	EPRDF	Revolutionary Democracy	Rebirth
Contemporary	2007-2020	EPRDF	Revolutionary Democracy	Expansion
	2020 – 2023	Prosperity	Medemer[3]	Uncertain[4]

Table 2. Chronological evolution of formal social work under different ruling regimes.
Source: Authors

The Social Work Early Phase (1959-1974)

The early phase of 'Social Work in Ethiopia' covers the period from the initial inception of the formal social work training program in 1959 during the late years of the last imperial regime – characterised by feudal monarchy (Zewde, 2002), up to its closure by the Darg regime (1974). Historically, the practices of social work preceded its training (UNECA, 1964; Tesfaye, n.d; and Sedler, 1968). Hence, formal social work services began during the second half of the 19th century with few voluntary and government welfare institutions. Particularly, Emperor Haile Selassie, I instituted the 'Haile Selassie I Welfare Foundation' in 1955 to respond to the then-bourgeoning psychosocial and economic problems in urban centres. In addition, the institution served as a trust fund to administer other welfare institutions that included old people's homes, schools for the blind, orphanages, free hospitals and clinics for the needy and also operated a sheltered umbrella factory staffed by the physically handicapped. Likewise, the government strengthened social welfare programs by establishing the then 'Ministry of National Community Development and Social Affairs' under Order Number 15 of 1957 with the mandate of providing social welfare services and rural community development programs (Tesfaye, n.d). It was also followed by the development of a five-year (1963 to 1967) partly successful social welfare plan that included the development of social centres (health clinics, day nurseries, recreational and educational facilities) in major towns, the establishment of homes for children (delinquent and needy), and the passing of Children's Act, labour legislations and system of grants-in-aid to voluntary agencies (UNECA, 1964). To implement the program, the Ministry utilised a range of service centres like 'Training Centre and Remand Home' for the rehabilitation of delinquent boys; and 'Rural and Urban Community Development Training Centers' for women, youth, and children welfare services. Besides, UNICEF also assisted in the training on childcare and nutrition for women (Tesfaye, n.d). Moreover, both foreign and domestic voluntary organisations, with the support of Haile Selassie I Foundation were also engaged in the program implementation (UNECA, 1964).

Concerning the scenario of social work practices during this phase, Sedler (1968) asserted that the social welfare services in Ethiopia during the early phase were need-based focusing on the health needs of the population, persons with disabilities, homeless children, and community development issues that were mainly supported by the government. In addition, Tesfaye (n.d) summarised the nature of social work in the Early Phase as follows.

2 'Darg' is a committee of military parliament comprised of military units (Zewde, 2002).

3 'Medemer' is Amharic word for 'Coming Together or Synergy' - is propagated by PM Abiy Ahmed (ዐቢይአሕመድ, 2012 ዓ.ም.).

4 We are skeptic about the current status of social work due to the recent educational reform dynamics.

> *In general, social welfare programmes were given the least emphasis and, in times of government cutbacks of funds, they were the first to suffer the consequences. As a result, social welfare services remained to be run on a piecemeal basis and scattered among a number of government organisations and Ministries, and voluntary welfare organisations, with little coordination (p. 366).*

Similarly, formal social work training began with the establishment of the School of Social Work and Community Development Training and Demonstration Centers to fill the social welfare workforce demand of the country by training social workers and community development workers. Following that, the first School of Social Work was established in Addis Ababa in 1959 under the auspices of the then Ministry of Public Health with the assistance of the United Nations to develop and render medical social work services in hospitals (UNECA, 1964; Tesfaye, n.d; and Sedler, 1968). Some pioneers of social work education in Ethiopia during this phase were Seyoum Gebreselassie & Andargatehew Tesfeye (Kebede, 2011), who joined with other foreign faculties (Baynesagn et al., 2021). Initially, the school offered a two-year diploma program and then was incorporated into the UCAA Faculty of Arts in 1961 and secured the membership of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (Sedler, 1968). In 1962 it became an independent academic unit (school) under Haile Selassie I University (Tesfaye, n.d). At the time, the school was first directed by Helen Castel - a Canadian, and then followed by an Ethiopian - Andargachew Tesfaye with the aim of training social workers primarily employed in agencies doing casework, group work and/or community organisation activities (Selassie, 1971 as cited in Andargatchew Tesfaye, n.d). In 1966, the school was upgraded to a full-fledged faculty to offer a bachelor's degree in generalist social work based on the recommendations from expert group meetings of African social work educators. The school initially enrolled 11 students who completed secondary education (Sedler, 1968) and then kept the average number of graduates to ten per year while it graduated only 98 social workers from the year 1959 to 1970, though in 1970/71 it reached 15 social workers a year. In the meantime, the school revised its curriculum in 1971 to produce social workers who carry out development endeavours in Ethiopia and remained in operation until the 1974 revolution (Tesfaye, n.d).

Besides, the government launched a few community development training and demonstration centres in 1960 in selected areas of the country to address the rural and urban social welfare services and community development affairs of the country under the auspices of the then 'Ministry of National Community Development and Social Affairs'. Accordingly, the ministry established a training and demonstration centre in a rural area south of Addis Ababa to train young men and women recruited from rural areas for community development work (Sedler, 1968). Similarly, the Hawassa Community Development Training and Demonstration Centre started in I960 with the assistance of the then United States Operation Mission – USOM (now USAID). The certificate-level community development workers training aimed to train village-level workers, district development officers, and technical personnel to conduct refresher courses and seminars and to function as the headquarters of the unit of operation to demonstrate the field program (UNECA, 1964). In addition, the Rehabilitation Agency for PWDs was established in 1971 to train various skills.

Furthermore, the officially known social workers during the early phase of social work in Ethiopia were graduates of the Haile Selassie I University School of Social Work or somebody holding a social work degree from recognised foreign educational institutions. Concerning employment, the school of social work, placement agency and government offices (civil service structure) played crucial roles, even though the then Ministry of Health employed the most social work graduates. The major challenges were the absence of social welfare policy, shortage of domestic faculties, low awareness, and foreign dependence. Besides, the school had a good novice presence in both social work scholarship and practice - engagement in extracurricular activities of supporting agencies to improve practice standards and designing of new programs (UNECA, 1964; Tesfaye, n.d; and Sedler, 1968).

In a nutshell, social work in Ethiopia flourished in its early phase with the support of the government and foreign actors, though locally grounded to the ISSSs. Unfortunately, it was doomed prematurely in a decade and a half (1959-1974) with the change of regime.

The Social Work Dead Decades Phase (1974-2004)

The Social Work in Ethiopia Dead Decades Phase represents the three decades (1974 2004) from the Ethiopian Military-Socialist Darg Regime (1974-1991) to the first half of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) rule (1991-2004)

characterised by the gradual emptying of social work in Ethiopia (Kebede, 2019). The 1974 Ethiopian revolution (characterised by massive violence and rapid social change) ended the imperial regime. As a result, the Darg regime, spearheaded by Colonel Mengistu Haile-Mariam controlled state power. The totalitarian regime of Darg soon embarked on unprecedented human rights violations due to terror and civil war, and the shift of diplomacy and political alliance from the Western (USA and its allies) to the Eastern (USSR and other socialist-communist bloc) world (Tiruneh, 1990; and Zewde, 2002). Instigated by the leftist revolution and slogan of the time - 'Land to the Tillers'[5], Darg relentlessly tried to implement socialism in Ethiopia by undertaking radical reforms. The "Ethiopia First" slogan that later evolved to 'Ethiopian Socialism' was a binding philosophy for the time (Zewde, 2002).

The years 1974-1991 witnessed radical socio-cultural, economic, and politico-legal changes (Girma, 2018). Primarily, Darg ended the longest reigning and most remarkable Ethiopian monarchical aristocracy of the Solomonic Dynasty (Zewde, 2002) and dismantled its institutions, including the Haile Sellassie I Welfare Foundation (Tesfaye, n.d). Then, the regime introduced a command economy and social planning that enforced redistribution, collectivization, villagization, and resettlement (Clapham, 1987; Zewde, 2002). Subsequently, the long-existing socio-political structures were radically transformed into new structures of peasant associations in the countryside and urban dwellers associations in the towns. Hence, farmers dwelling within 800 hectares formed Peasant Associations and joined Service Cooperatives that, in turn, developed into *Producers Cooperatives* in the rural areas of the country. Likewise, urban dwellers formed *Kebele Associations*, and then a number of kebeles formed Kefetegna or Higher Kebele, whereby its representatives, in turn, formed the *City Council* in the urban context. In both contexts, these structures had their own considerable self-administration, a defence squad to keep law and order, and a judicial tribunal to adjudicate petty offences and provide basic services to its members (Tesfaye, n.d; and Clapham, 1987). In addition, *Darg* nationalised rural lands in 1975 without compensation; a scenario that completely reversed the socio-economic situation of the country and ended landlordism. Then, it continued with the nationalisation of financial institutions and private commercial and industrial enterprises, urban land, and extra houses. Moreover, the regime tried rural transformation via campaigns of implementing various rural development programs by sending high school and university students and their teachers to rural parts of the country (Zewde, 2002).

The regime cleansed social work in Ethiopia despite the skewed social welfare services in three areas: the rehabilitation of war victims, expanding day-care centres for preschool children, and services to women. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was mandated with the provision of social welfare services via policy formulation, providing services in those areas, and coordinating the activities of public agencies and private organisations. Besides, very few civil society organisations like UNICEF had played significant roles in supporting women and children, though the regime was devoid of civil society engagements. Predominantly, Ethiopia under the *Darg* suffered from double incidents of natural (prolonged famine) and man-made (war with Somalia in the East and the secessionist in the North) problems (Tesfaye, n.d). Moreover, due to the shift in governing ideology and diplomatic allies, more emphasis was given to education for development (value production), which compromised the attention given to social sciences (Negash, 2006). As a result, Darg closed the only emerging school of social work in Ethiopia and merged three disciplines (social work, sociology, and anthropology) to form the then 'Department of Applied Sociology' with the objective of creating a program that revolutionises society via interdisciplinary integration of scholarship and practice of Marxist loaded social theory (Tesfaye, n.d; and Kendall, 1986). Nevertheless, even though some courses of social work were initially included in the curriculum of the newly merged program, later, its critical aspect (like field education) was gradually washed out. Then, the curriculum was revised, and the department was renamed the 'Department of Sociology and Social Administration' in 1984/85. Hence, this ended the scholarship of Social Work in Ethiopia during the Darg government. The cessation of the program was attributed to the stance of the regime towards social work as a profession that serve the bourgeois class and stunted the proletariat revolution on the one hand and the socialist government's mindset of taking responsibility for citizen's social welfare services on the other hand (Kebede, 2019).

In general, the second phase of social work in Ethiopia - Social Work Dead Decades (1974 - 2004) was characterised by the suppression and gradual cleansing of secular and impartial social work scholarship and practices and limited practices having weak social work favours rendered to a few needy clients. In addition, the existing ISSSs were sabotaged, and formal social work was appropriated to serve the totalitarian Darg regime. Thus, the growing shoot of Social Work in Ethiopia planted during the

5 Students' slogan of revolution that demand the end of landlordism and solidarity with anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggles

imperial regime was hindered by the transient inundation.

History repeated itself, and EPRDF overthrew the Darg government in 1991 (Zewde, 2002) and again, the radical reform recycled in favour of multiethnic federalism (Abbink, 2011). However, the dormant status of social work scholarships continued during the first half of the EPRDF rule (1991-2004) since the early years of EPRDF rule focused on government power consolidation, recovery and stabilisation, structural reforms, and designing sector development programs (Abegaz, 1999). Consequently, it took the country a decade and a half to restart social work scholarships in 2004 under the EPRDF rule (Kebede, 2019).

The Social Work Renaissance Phase (2004 -2007)

The Social Work Renaissance Phase is the third phase in the historical evolution of formal social work in Ethiopia. It represents the biography of re-born social work in Ethiopia at Addis Ababa University (AAU) until its expansion to other higher education institutions (2004 -2007). The EPRDF government controlling power in 1991 designed and implemented various radical political, socio-cultural, and economic reforms (Abbink, 2011; Negash, 2006; and Vasudeo, 2021). It introduced a new constitution in 1995, an education and training policy in 1994, and a Developmental Social Welfare Policy in 1996. These legislations enhanced opportunities for citizens previously denied rights to education and other social services and, in turn, contributed to the growth of higher education in the country (FDRE, 1994; 1995; Negash, 2006). Particularly, the formulation of the Developmental Social Welfare Policy triggered the training of the social service workforce. As a result, Community Development Workers - the imperial regime legacy of social welfare workforce (Sedler, 1968) was reinstated. In this regard, the Bishoftu Community Development Training Centre, under the auspice of the Oromia Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs, actively offered the certificate level training of the 'Community Development Workers' program. Later, this program was tailored to the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualification Framework (NTVETQF) and revised benchmarking the Austrian model to train Para Social Workers called 'Community Service Workers' in 2006 (Daniel, 2014). This training has been offered with levels (level I, II, & III - arranged in ascending complexity) as per the NTVETQF and then expanded to other regions of the country, including Addis Ababa and Diredawa City Administration, Amhara, Tigray, Somali and Southern Nation, Nationalities and people's Regions.
The re-birth of formal social work in Ethiopia was initiated by the visit paid to AAU by the team of faculties from the University of Illinois in 2001. The training commenced with Ethiopia's first-ever master's degree in social work in 2004 and a doctoral program in 'Social Work and Social Development' in 2006 via a partnership project entitled "Social Work Education in Ethiopia Partnership (SWEEP)". Then, it was followed by the Bachelor of Social Work program in 2009 (Butterfield, 2007; Kebede, 2011 & 2019; and Baynesagn et al., 2021). Professor Butterfield (2007) - who was the forerunner of the project, described the situation as:

> *... The Jane Addams College received $99,000 to partner with Addis Ababa University to establish Ethiopia's first-ever master's degree in social work. Through the Social Work Education in Ethiopia Partnership (Project SWEEP), we completed an assessment of needs and planning, curriculum development and faculty exchange, and program development, including syllabi and teaching materials [http://www.aboutsweep.org]. A five-year Memorandum of Agreement was signed by the two universities to collaborate in teaching, research, and service (p.239).*

Mainly, the renaissance of social work education in Ethiopia emerged from the profession's and its agencies' mission of serving the disadvantaged segments of society throughout the world by contributing to social change and development (Drucker, 2005; Butterfield, 2007; and AAU, 2007). The iconic contributors for the re-birth were Abye Tasse, Melese Getu, and Alice, K. Butterfield, in collaboration with volunteer faculties from Europe, USA, and Australia (Kebede, 2011). The re-born school had initially admitted forty (40) students from various backgrounds like sociology, public health, agricultural engineering, and psychology; out of which eight maintained PhD enrolment in 2006 (Kebede, 2011). Besides, the school managed the shortage of social work educators by utilising volunteer foreign faculties that taught courses on block-teaching methods. Baynesagn et al. (2021) also added that:

> *Between 2008 and 2010, a co-teaching model was introduced to the block teaching of MSW courses. ....a local faculty member who was a PhD candidate was assigned to work with an international faculty member" (p.100).*

In 2006 and 2007, the school hired PhD students as faculty members to curb the challenges. The admission of students to all of the school's three degree programs were competitive since the school served as the sole hub of social work graduate supply

for academia and human and social service agencies in Ethiopia for at least a decade. In the meantime, with the graduation of a couple of batches from AAU, other Ethiopian public and private universities cascaded the program (Baynesagn et al., 2021), with Gondar and Jimma University being at the forefront.

Briefly, the Social Work Renaissance Phase (2004-2007) was characterised by a euphoric state among the actors and stakeholders, who were filled with an ambivalent mix of hope and fear. This phase also featured an unusual approach, characterised by flexible bureaucracy, to address challenges. Accordingly, the training started with the postgraduate program (MSW in 2004, then PhD in 2006) and was followed by the undergraduate (BSW) program. In addition, students were admitted from related disciplines for the MSW program like sociology, psychology, health sciences, law, economics, etc. Moreover, since social work was absent for three decades, the rebirth was seen as a new beginning, while many institutions did not differentiate between sociology and social work (USAID, 2010). Furthermore, the management and administration of the program did not adhere to the formal bureaucracy of the academics (i.e. students put on double hats – as learners and staff, the learning schedule was too flexible, excessive program completion time was given to PhD students, etc.). In general, the program was pilot-tested during this phase, and the phase concluded as the number of graduates increased, and the program cascaded to other universities.

The Contemporary Social Work Phase (2007 – 2023)

The Contemporary Social Work Phase is the fourth phase in the historical evolution of social work in Ethiopia. It covers the time period from the re-born social work expansion up to the present day (2007 – 2023). Recently, Ethiopia became a fertile ground for social work (Baynesagn et al., 2021) due to its continual aspirations and efforts for poverty reduction, social protection (FDRE, 2014), and higher education expansion (FDRE, 2009). Particularly, the country has issued legislation and policies that support social work scholarship, practices, and workforce development like national social protection policies to expand social services via workforce development. Leveraging this high market demand, the re-born social work program at AAU was expanded and introduced in other higher education institutions.

Consequently, Social Work scholarship in Ethiopia has expanded rapidly since its rebirth in 2004 and has been instituted in 13 universities around the country within a decade and a half - from 2004 to 2018 (Kebede, 2019). In addition, following the assessment conducted in 2013, approximately 1,500 social workers degree holders had served a population of 90 million and 2000 para social workers served in the government structures (Huebner, 2016). Moreover, “Ethiopia currently counts 36 PhD holders, who are employed as social work educators in different public universities (Baynesagn et al., 2021 P. 95)”. Besides, the government is also training ‘Para Social Workers (Community Service Workers) that engage with communities at the grassroots level to halt the shortage of social work workforce in the social service sectors. Furthermore, non-governmental organisations or development partners are also engaging in the field. In this regard, “a USAID-funded project managed by PACT-Ethiopia has trained and deployed over 20,000 “incentivized volunteers” of Para-Social Workers under its national project called Yekokeb Berhan” (Daniel, 2014, P. 394).

Regarding research, there are meagre fragmented efforts by Ethiopian and foreign scholars. In support of this, Kebede (2021) argued for research evidence on the role and contribution of social work in Ethiopia for social change. The few locality-specific enquiries conducted on social work in Ethiopia can be themed as social work history (Tesfaye, n.d; Sedler, 1968; and Gebremariam, 2021), community and social development practices (Kebede and Butterfield, 2009; Yeneabat & Butterfield, 2012; Mengesha, Meshelemiah & Chuffa, 2015; Abebe, Kebede, and Alemeie, 2019; and Butterfield, Tafesse, and Moxley, 2016); family practices (Adnew, Berhanu, and Kotecho, 2021); Health care practices (Addis, Abate and Batista, 2020; and Gebru, Berhanu and Hajji, 2021); education (Kendall, 1986; Drucker, 2005; Butterfield, 2007; Kebede, 2011 & 2019; Baynesagn, 2020; Baynesagn, et al., 2021; Gebru and Doja, 2021; and Amanu and Aredo, 2022); policy appraisal (Huebner, 2016); clinical practice (Northcut et al., 2020; and Wario and Alemayehu, 2020); professional development and management (USAID, 2010; and Hailu, 2014); and social change (Kebede, 2021) though the list is not exhaustive.

As a framework for social work practices and to realise the citizens’ constitutional social and economic rights (particularly issues addressed by the constitution’s articles 41 and 90), Ethiopia crafted the National Social Protection Policy (by revising the developmental social welfare policy of 1996). The policy was designed to bring socio-economic justice and sustainable development to the vulnerable groups in society, including “…children, women, persons with disabilities, elderly, labour

constrained unable to make earnings and the unemployed…" (FDRE, 2014 p. 23). Hence, Ethiopia has been exerting efforts to implement the policy (since 2014) focusing on five areas of:

> *Promoting productive safety net, promoting and improving employment and livelihood, promoting social insurance, increasing equitable access to basic social services, and providing legal protection and support to those vulnerable to abuse and violence (FDRE, 2014 p. 24).*

Likewise, this policy is a framework for multi-sectorial engagement, coordination, and collaboration of social protection services. In addition, the policy gives structural direction for its execution from the top national level platform to the grassroots level structures of the Community Care Coalition (FDRE, 2014). Accordingly, social workers are filling the service sector workforce for the implementation of the policy. Hence, various humanitarian and social service agencies (both governmental and nongovernmental) mandated to implement the policy are hiring a substantial portion of social work graduates (Daniel, 2014). Moreover, the government has issued various legislations that support the engagement of social workers in its sectors. To this end, the Ministry of Health has issued standards for general hospitals that force hospitals to have social work positions. Furthermore, the government has been training and directly deploying Para-Social Workers for 'Kebeles'[6] to implement the Social Protection Policy via engaging them in the grassroots structures of the 'Community Care Coalitions'.

Regarding contemporary social work practices in Ethiopia, fragmented evidence produced by scholars on specific localities exists. To this end, Northcut et al. (2020) explored the practices of clinical social work in Gondar City, which include: "counselling, empowerment training, psycho-education (awareness raising and training), advocacy, parent training, psychosocial support, fundraising, case management, and provision of school supplies and financial support for clients or people in need (P. 7)". Similarly, Kebede (2021) and Baynesagn (2020) had claimed their students' engagement in social work practices. Kebede (2021) described the engagement and contribution of social work graduates in community development, health education, and family empowerment activities. He also added that post-graduate students and faculties have engaged in short-term psychosocial support during the crisis - mentioning the 2013 Saudi Arabia mass deportation of Ethiopians and the 2017 collapse of squatter houses (Koshe) in Addis Ababa. Additionally, he described the AAU School of Social Work's contribution in facilitating the university–community partnership via mini-project implementation in Gedam Sefer community in Addis Ababa. Likewise, Baynesagn (2020) indicated that the AAU School of Social Work had engaged in policy practices by supporting the Ethiopian Parliament Standing Committees in revising the Developmental Social Welfare policy; preparing the National Mental Health Strategy; contributing to technical and vocational training about community services and social work; introducing social work in the court system; and serving as board members of the school feeding program via student and faculty assignments. Furthermore, an assessment of the Public Sector Social Service Workforce in Ethiopia jointly conducted by UNICEF, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, USAID, and IntraHealth (n.d) indicated that social workers are serving in the social service sectors to implement the Ethiopian National Social Protection Policy.

2.3 Social Work Stakeholders: Government, Civil Society Organisations, and Alumni

Since its inception, the Ethiopian government has been the primary investor in the country's education sector (Negash, 2006). Consequently, academic, and educational activities in Ethiopia have been shaped by the government's political and ideological decisions regarding academic disciplines and the balance between quantity and quality. (Negash, 2006; Berhanu, 2014; Alemayehu; 2021; and Tadele; 2021). As mentioned earlier in the phases of social work evolvement, social work in Ethiopia has suffered the wrong decisions of regimes to the extent of program closure (Kebede, 2019). Likewise, its current scenario is intertwined with the government's demeanour and stance that plays the role of patronage by regulating education and training, research, and practices via its controlling agencies. Subsequently, the current Ethiopian government, via its three branches (legislative, executive, and judiciary), executes its mandate as a collective agency to serve its citizens. So far, it has issued and implemented various legislations and policies that are directly or indirectly related to social work scholarship and practice. Some of these frameworks include the Constitution (FDRE, 1995), Education and Training Policy (FDRE, 1995)**,** Higher Education Proclamation (FDRE, 2009), Developmental Social Welfare Policy (1996), National Social Protection Policy of Ethiopia, and Organisations of Civil Societies Proclamation (FDRE, 2019). In addition, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education has been mandated

6 'Kebele' is the lower government administrative structure in contemporary Ethiopia.

to oversee the education and training of social work graduates in the country's higher education institutions. In the same way, the Ethiopian Ministry of Civil Service and Human Resources's mandate is the recruitment and promotion of social workers in the government civil service offices. Moreover, the Ethiopian Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (the former Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) enacted a policy (e.g., the National Social Protection Policy) that social workers implement in intervening in the country's psychosocial and economic challenges. Furthermore, the Ethiopian Civil Society Organisation Agency administers Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that are the main stakeholders of social work. Thus, the government is the main actor in the scholarship and practice of social work in Ethiopia.

Similarly, CSOs have played an irreplaceable role in supporting social work scholarship and practices in Ethiopia. The SWEEP Project, which served as midwifery for social work re-birth in Ethiopia, was funded by the World Bank and the Department for International Development (DFID) (Kebede, 2011). In addition, CSOs have influenced and implemented various Ethiopian social policies. In support of this, Kebede and Hagos (2017) have shown the contribution of CSOs in the control and prevention of HIV and AIDS in Ethiopia. They described that both national and international CSOs like UNPFA, UNDP, UNAIDS, USAID, USCDC, and CCRDA had mobilised resources and systems to support people living with HIV and AIDS. Particularly, USAID has supported the training and deployment of Para-social workers (Daniel, 2014). Moreover, CSOs are serving as a placement setting for social work field education trainees (Jimma University, 2016; Gebru and Doja, 2021; and Amanu and Aredo, 2022)**.** As a result, the national social protection policy of Ethiopia unequivocally states the mandates given to CSOs to engage in and implement the policy in collaboration with other governmental and non-governmental constituents (FDRE, 2014).

Since the past decade and half (since 2004), Ethiopia has produced an unprecedented number of social work graduates that are serving as academicians and practitioners in various governmental and non-governmental organisations (Kebede, 2019; and Baynesagn et al., 2021). This widespread presence and their momentous demand have recently made the sound and echo of social work and social workers ubiquitous in Ethiopia. As a result, social workers have become capable of forming an association entitled 'Ethiopian Society of Sociologists Social Workers and Anthropologists (ESSSWA)', with long existing professionals (sociologists and anthropologists). In addition, the academic units of social work in Ethiopian universities and social work graduates recently initiated an independent association for social work (Gebremariam, 2021). Moreover, they have been working with the government and NGOs to achieve relevance. In summary, social workers in Ethiopia are striving to advance the profession though more is expected from them to realise the profession's mission.

2.4 Social Work Professional Status

Currently in Ethiopia, social work is striving to establish its relevance and compete with other long-established professions and disciplines. In addition, it is stretching its presence in academia and practical settings. However, the profession is still infant (Daniel, 2014; Kebede, 2019), though it has counted more than half a century since its early inception in 1959 (Sedler, 1968; Tesfaye, n.d; and UNECA, 1964). The journey to achieve and claim a prudent professional identity still lags behind as social work professionalisation is not yet put together. In academia, social work educational quality and standards are still compromised due to a shortage of social work educators (both in quality and quantity), resources (finance and logistics to support field education), poorly designed curriculum, and low attention given by the government and stakeholders (Kebede, 2019; Gebru and Doja, 2021). In the research arena, social work issues are almost untouched. In practice, the settings and posts of social work are owned and claimed by other professionals or untrained social workers (Northcut Terry B.et al., 2020; Baynesagn, 2020; and Kebede 2021). Additionally, the boundary between trained (professional) social workers and non-professional (experienced) social workers is blurred. Likewise, anyone engaged in the social service sector for the provision of social welfare services claims the title of 'social worker'. Moreover, contemporary social work in Ethiopia lacks specialisation and an independent regulatory body (social work association and educational council). To conclude, social work in Ethiopia is at its rudimentary stage and its professional status is not fully formed yet.

3. The Challenges and Prospects of Social Work in Ethiopia

Contemporary social work in Ethiopia is a 'Discorded Social Work'. The current formal social work structure in Ethiopia has been shackled with several bottlenecks from its inception (Tesfaye, n.d), which are unresolved to date (Kebede, 2019). These include lack of formal social work and ISSSs integration, professionalisation, government (ruling regime) dependency, low quality and relevance. In addition, the ISSSs have been deteriorating through time due to government influence, lack of formal patronage and proper socialisation all over generations, and absence of revitalisation. Consequently, the prospect of social work in Ethiopia, with its current status, is shaky or not far from its historical fact, in which the ruling government all of a sudden can put things upside-down. Accordingly, the main missing link of social work in Ethiopia is the lack of synergisation of the profession, which is complementarily integrating the local and global social work constituents and realities whereby both internal and external social work systems contribute to the development of a robust profession.

3.1 Synergisation of Social Work

As mentioned earlier, the main challenge of formal Social Work in Ethiopia is 'Discordance', in which the imported formal social work from the global north is not still embedded in the local social fabric (i.e. Ethiopian ISSSs). Hence, 'Synergisation of Social Work' is a remedy for the discorded social work in Ethiopia. Here, we have adopted the concept of 'synergy' from systems theory to address the problem of social work in Ethiopia by creating a complementary integration of the global and local social work constituents and realities. Thus, synergisation is a holistic approach and process of social work development whereby continual reciprocity and balance are made between the local (i.e. ISSSs) and global social work constituents and realities via complementary integration and professionalisation of social work. The process is briefly depicted by using the following diagram.

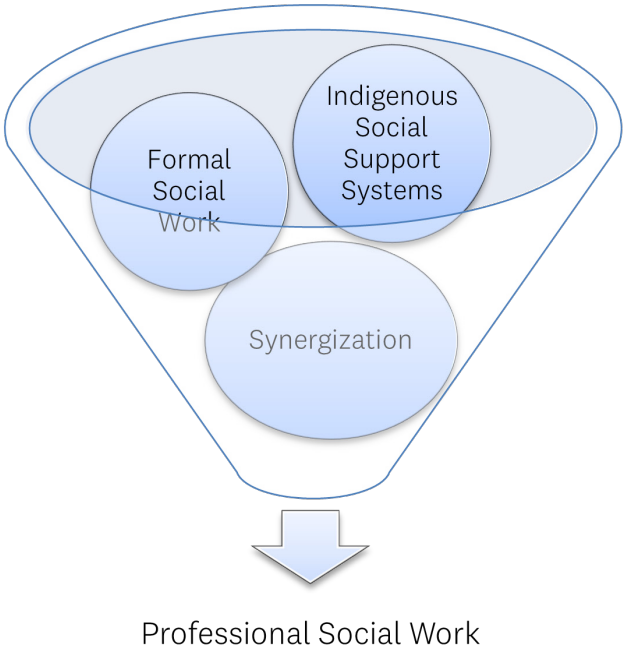

Image 1. The Synergisation of Social Work
Source: Authors

Complementary Integration of ISSSs and Formal Social Work

Historically, education and the educational system in Africa and Ethiopia in particular have been external-donor (western countries and their agencies - UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, WB....etc.) driven (UNESCO, 1962; Negash, 2006; and Molla, 2018). Similarly, formal social work in Africa (Mazibuko and Gray, n.d; and Ibrahima and Mattaini, 2017) in general and Ethiopia in particular was introduced from the Global North. The main problem with this approach has been the imperialistic and reductionist understanding of context-specific social realities and applying a top-down approach for its intervention, which is against the social work principle of 'Start Where the Client Is!' which also overlooks the existing local capacities (i.e. ISSSs). The series work of Sedler[7] (1968) entitled 'Social Welfare in a Developing Country: The Ethiopian Experience' issued in the International Social Work journal during the early phase of social work in Ethiopia reflected this reality well, in which her ethnocentric stance urged her to jump into hasty generalisation of the Ethiopian situation in her second article that read:

> *In Ethiopia there is no concept of "care" of a sick person. It is believed that all that can be done is to leave him in bed. It is expected that when the patient feels better, he will leave his sickbed and resume a normal life (P. 10).*

Also, she repeated a similar mistake in her third article that conveyed distorted information about Ethiopian society as follows.

> *We have previously pointed out why the humanitarian ideal does not represent a strong value in Ethiopian society. The social work educator must recognise this fact and must understand the multiple and complex factors which have created this situation (P. 38).*

Hence, since science making is mediated by culture, it should be cautiously adapted to other contexts. Regarding this, the recent global standards for social work education and training recognise the adverse effects of colonisation and educational imperialism on the development of social work in the Global South, stating:

> *We believe and stand firm that the theoretical perspectives and practice methods, techniques and skills developed in the Global North should not be transferred to the Global South without critical examinations of their suitability and potential effectiveness for the local contexts (IASSW-IFSW, 2020 p. 6).*

However, the reality of social work in Ethiopia deviates from this standard, as it was ill-founded and evolved poorly detaching itself from the country's local reality. Therefore, since its early stages, social work in Ethiopia has been heavily foreign-reliant (mainly the USA and the UK) in all its foundational aspects. These include curriculum (adopted), medium of instruction (English), textbooks/references (produced in Western context by Western scholars), faculties (almost foreign in the early and renaissance phase, though contemporarily shifted) and other inputs (Baynesagn et al., 2021). In addition, it is tailored to global north interest and orientation as the curriculum follows their footsteps to increase its acceptability for the graduate's further education rather than addressing local needs (Stavropoulou, Holmes, and Jones, 2016; Northcut et al., 2020). This mistake continues as social work is ill-cooked in the University (Daniel, 2014) and then supplied to the country's labour market.

Besides the external, the internal forces (conquerors and dictator regimes) have also either destroyed or weakened the Ethiopian ISSSs. Consequently, some ISSSs were lost and others are endangered as the community leaves the practice due to the impact induced by the structural-politico-legal system of the ruling regime, and influx of foreign cultural practices claiming modernisation through time. In addition, despite the current glimpse of the National Social Protection Policy of Ethiopia at the informal social saving and insurance mechanisms of 'Iddir' and 'Ekub' under the focus area of 'Promoting Social Insurance' (FDRE, 2014), the ISSSs in Ethiopia were neither included to the subject matter of social work scholarship nor rightfully recognised by formal structures and considered for social work practices. Therefore, complementarily integrating the discorded formal social work and ISSSs through revitalising ISSSs and harmonising it with formal social work is imperative.

Professionalisation of Social Work

Professionalisation of Social Work is all about standardisation - achieving quality, relevance, autonomy, and inclusive scope for integrated social work. The current Ethiopian education system, in general and higher education in particular, has been suffering

7 Mrs. Sedler was a faculty member at Haile Selassie I University, School of Social Work from 1963 until 1966 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

from the challenge of poor quality (Alemayehu, 2021), equity, access, and relevance (Tadele, 2021; Alemayehu, 2021; and Tadele, 2021). As a result, Ethiopia has developed a new education roadmap recently to rectify the challenges (Ministry of Education, 2018). Social work also shares this reality and has been influenced by the politico-legal and socio-economic forces through time. Thus, the social work constituents in Ethiopia (both ISSSs and formal social work) have been affected under various regimes by their foreign-driven ill-designed policies. For instance, Darg executed an anti-social work government policy that suppressed the only emerging social work institution in the country, while the EPRDF regime explicitly introduced quantity focused and biased educational policy - the '70/30 Education Policy' that urged public universities to enrol 70% in hard sciences and engineering disciplines and the remaining 30% into social sciences, preferring hard sciences over social sciences (Berhanu, 2014).

Besides, Ethiopia continues to produce generalist social workers since the beginning of the profession, missing social work specialisation fields. In addition, social work scholarship and practice in Ethiopia - resembling its western root, is urban biased. In this regard, an assessment of the Public Sector Social Service Workforce in Ethiopia indicated a huge gap between the professionals with necessary specialisation and the corresponding employment opportunities (UNICEF, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, USAID, and IntraHealth, n.d). Concerning the practice of social work in Ethiopia, social work positions are not exclusively left for trained social workers and agencies are not uniformly implementing it. As a result, untrained social workers (professionals from related disciplines) and Para-Social Workers (Community Service Workers) are attempting to practice social work. Northcut et al. (2020) congruently described that from 17 study participants, only six have a social work background by training while others have "... a background in Management (Business), Sociology and Psychology briefly (1–3 months) trained in social work by UNICEF, English, Accounting, Police Science, Nursing, and Social Work (P. 8)".

Moreover, the contemporary discorded social work in Ethiopia lacks the robust professional essence of Western social work like regulatory bodies (social work association and council), professionalisation, promotion, platform, communication, and collaborations amongst social workers and stakeholders (Northcut et al., 2020). As a result, social work is usually misunderstood in Ethiopia and their roles are grabbed and/or assumed by personnel from other disciplines like sociology, nursing, anthropology, or psychology (Northcut et al., 2020; Baynesagn, 2020; and Kebede, 2021). In addition, UNICEF, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, USAID, and IntraHealth (n.d) indicated that 60% of direct service providers lacked relevant educational credentials, 95.7% needed additional skills training to complete their jobs, 90% lacked resources and vertical policy - practice alignment, and majority suffered inequalities, not accessing promotion and career paths due to the absence of professionalisation in Ethiopian public sector social service workforce. Likewise, ESSSWA has no strong presence and influence on social service sectors and work forces in Ethiopia. Kebede (2019) also stressed that the education and practice of social work in Ethiopia are suffering from a lack of professionalisation and recommended an independent national association and national social work council (regulatory body).

Moreover, the analysis of Daniel (2014) revealed that Ethiopia is in its preliminary stages of putting a comprehensive system in place for the development and management of social workers lacking capacity in the training and management of social service sector workforces. He also found inconsistency in Social Work program nomenclature in Ethiopian universities.
Furthermore, the contemporary discorded Social work in Ethiopia is neither local nor global and voiceless with all its current standing and missing links. Nevertheless, the global standards for social work education and training recommend harnessing both local and global opportunities as follows:

> *Many new developments and innovations, especially those relating to sustainable development, climate change and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, are occurring in the Global South. Thus, connecting the global and the local within the curriculum would strengthen the academic preparation of social workers everywhere; it will facilitate assessments for the transferability of social work education across jurisdictions, including international borders; it will also help strengthen students' professional identities as members of a global profession (IASSW-IFSW, 2020 p. 6-7).*

Therefore, working hard for the professionalisation of social work in Ethiopia is imperative to achieve quality and relevance. Additionally, addressing missing links and working towards the 'Synergisation of Social Work' with a sense of urgency will put social work in Ethiopia on the right track.

4. Conclusion

Ethiopia has ISSSs and Formal Social Work that could complement each other via synergisation – complementary integration - to impregnate the right fit social work. Partly, since social work in Ethiopia has been bottlenecked by its seesaw existence and stunted development, both systems have not yet been integrated. On one hand, the ISSSs have been practiced informally throughout generations, lack formal patronage, recognition, and inclusion in both scholarship and practice engagements. Also, some of them were lost while others are endangered due to the pressure induced from structural-politico-legal system of the ruling regimes, and/or influx of foreign cultural practices. On the other hand, the formal social work in Ethiopia was initiated as a practice in 1955 and formal training began in 1959 with formal structures and patronage (stakeholders: government, civil society organisation, and social work alumni). Its historic evolvement went through four successive phases (Early Phase, 1959-1974; Dead Decades Phase, 1974-2004; Renaissance Phase, 2004-2007; and Contemporary Phase, 2007 – 2023) due to the influence of external and internal diversified historic, socio-economic and politico-legal forces. Accordingly, its status has been dependent on the benevolence of the ruling regime and actors. In a nutshell, contemporary Social Work in Ethiopia is a 'Discorded Social Work', bearing the missing link of synergisation (complementary integration of ISSSs and formal social work and professionalisation). Consequently, this calls for the collaboration of internal and external social work family and stakeholders to intervene for the synergisation of social work in Ethiopia.

5. Implication

This review revealed the dire condition of contemporary social work in Ethiopia - its missing links and implicated the way forward. As a result, contemporary social work in Ethiopia needs further primary research, intervention, and collaborative work between the scholars in the global north (from mature social work background) and the Global South (well-versed in the local reality) to avert the challenges. The prospective primary research should address a thorough assessment of ISSSs on one hand and formal social work appraisal on the other hand vis-à-vis synergisation of social work. Besides these, organising joint platforms to communicate the findings; conducting collaborative research on the way ISSSs and formal social work can integrate; experience sharing; and designing joint social work projects are imperative. The synergisation of social work will contribute a lot to social work professional development, as the synergy of local (indigenous) and global knowledge, skills, and values create alternatives or better knowledge, skills, and value piles for the profession.

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