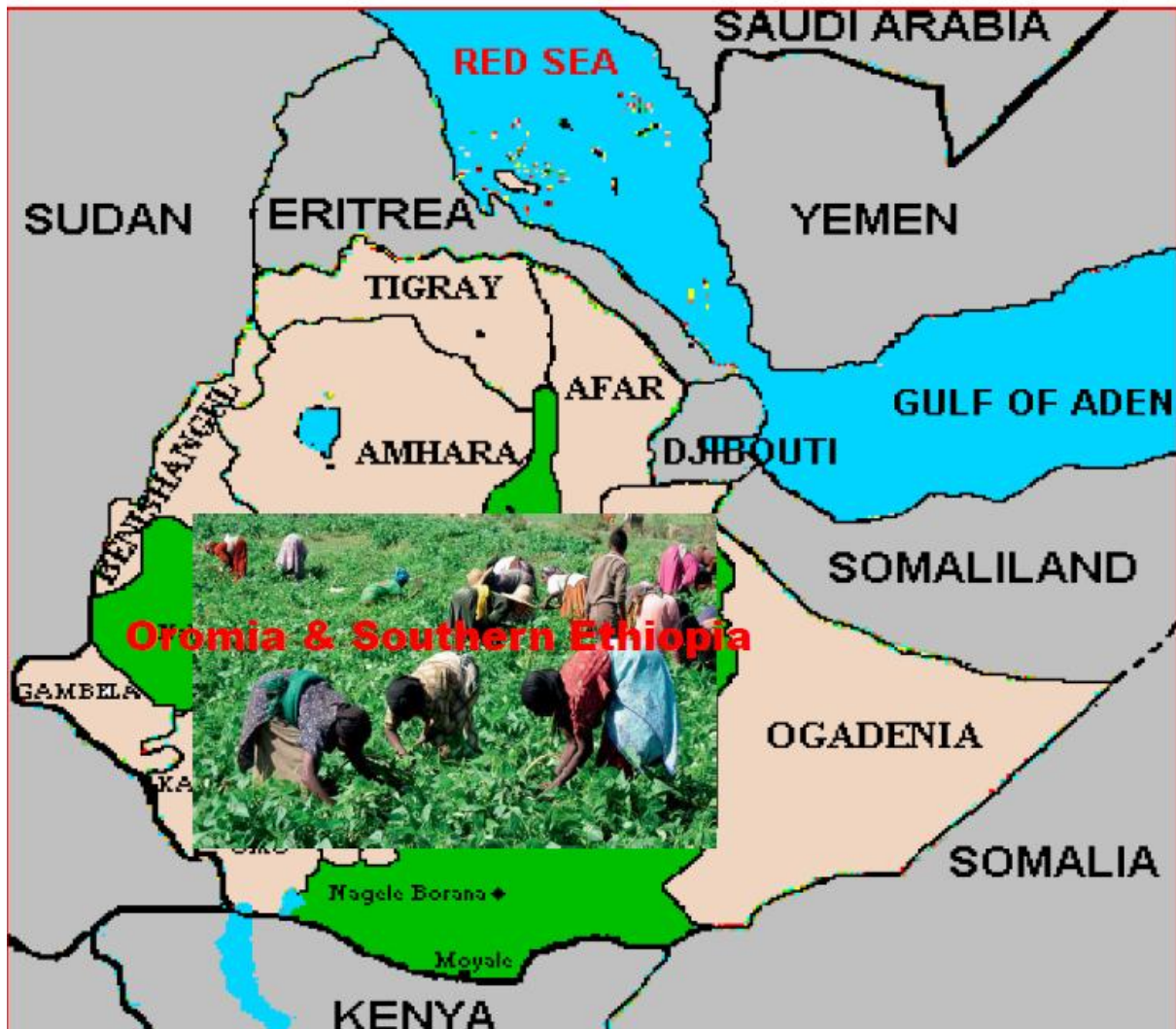


# Review of land grabbing policies of successive regimes of Ethiopia

(The major external factor challenging national liberation struggle of peoples of Oromia and southern Ethiopia)



**Malkamuu Jaatee and Zakaariyaas Mulataa**

**Oromia, Ethiopia**

**December 2012**

*Paper presented on Oromo Studies Association annual conference (July 14 – 15) 2012  
Minneapolis, USA*

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## **Abstract**

Land is a foundation of natural resource of a country. Management of land affects political stability, socioeconomic prosperity, and cultural identity of a nation. Land grabbing policies of successive regimes of Ethiopia are generally reviewed to understand their impacts on social stability, economic prosperity, cultural identity, human rights, and political power of peoples living under colonialism. The current land grabbing policy of Ethiopia is critically analyzed to understand whether it is progressively architected development plan to improve livelihood assets of all peoples of Ethiopia or it is systematically articulated political strategy of Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) regime to destabilize subsistence livelihood assets of rural communities of South Ethiopia in general and Oromia in particular to sustain 123 years old colonialism. Land ownership right is not only a customary or a legal right to access a plot of land to produce sufficient amount of crop and animal to secure supply of food for demand of a family, a community, and a nation at all time. It is directly linked to sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country and its citizens. The right to access land in Oromia and Southern Ethiopia before colonization was governed by customary law based on traditional principles. However traditional land ownership rights of indigenous peoples were dismissed by military power of successive Abyssinian regimes basically rooted in technical, material, and financial aids of foreign organizations since 1880s, the era of scramble for colonization of Africa. Land tenure policy of Ethiopia is politically grouped into two levels, customary and colonial land use policies, respectively in North and South Ethiopia. It is coded as (1) Rist and Gebar, (2) state, and (3) public & investment land tenures during imperial (1889 – 1974), military (1974 – 1991), and the TPLF (1991 – current) regimes, respectively. Very dangerous land grabbing policy is intentionally designed by the TPLF regime to destabilize livelihood assets of peoples of Oromia and southern Ethiopia through aggravation of poverty, expansion of food insecurity borders, intensification of conflict, degradation of ecosystem, and advancement of human rights violation. The regime is systematically maintained insecurity through synergistic interconnection of effects of poverty, food insecurity, conflict, human right violations, and violence in order to sustain its military, economic, and political dominances over its colonial territories. These vicious cycles of violence & insecurity negatively affect legitimate national liberation struggle of oppressed peoples of Ethiopia.

**Keywords:** *Land; colonization; and livelihood assets*

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# 1. Introduction

Land is a foundation of natural resource of a country. Management of land affects socioeconomic prosperity, cultural identity, and political stability of a nation. Land includes all physical elements in the wealth of a nation bestowed by nature such as climate, environment, fields, forests, minerals, mountains, lakes, streams, seas, and animals: and as an asset, it includes anything (1) on the ground (buildings, fences, crops, trees, and water); (2) above the ground (air and space rights); and (3) under the ground (mineral rights) down to the center of the Earth (Business dictionary, 2011). All these values of land are governed by land tenure policies of a nation or a country under normal condition to sustain positive relationship between peoples and their land. Governance of land is directly linked to political power, military capacity, socioeconomic prosperity, cultural dignity, and ecological harmony of a country.

The land is susceptible to aggressive competition of imperial politics of global order, because owners of global economic power are always planning to control everything on the land, in the land, and above the land everywhere possible to protect their imperial powers (military, economy, and politics). In general land grabbing is the seizing of land by a nation, state, or organization, especially illegally or unfairly (Dictionary.com). This definition mainly reflects land use policies of direct colonization of a nation or a country by cover of civilization; however the following definition is a reflection of indirect colonization through politics of global economy. The most common definition of global land grabbing refers to large scale land acquisition – be it purchase or lease –for agricultural production by foreign investors (Daniel and Mittal, 2009). It is a new form of agricultural neo-colonialism. Colonization of African peoples by European colonial powers and colonization of peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia by Abyssinian colonial powers resulted in establishments of land grabbing policies within colonial territories in order to sustain economic and political interests of colonial powers.

Ethiopia is politically divided into North (Abyssinia) and South (Oromia and Southern Ethiopia). Elites of North are militarily and politically colonized the peoples of South since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1889 emperor Menelik (1889 – 1913) had violently established imperial government of Abyssinia over much of present-day Ethiopia & he had gained recognition of colonial boundaries of Abyssinia from European colonial powers (Mongabay.com, 1991). Peoples of South Ethiopia are resisted domestic colonization since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. National liberation struggle of oppressed peoples of Ethiopia is not yet achieved final goal, because complex factors including land grabbing policies of successive regimes of Ethiopia are challenging effectiveness of political struggle. Only few authors cover the land tenure in South and other areas of Ethiopia before and during military campaigns of emperor Menelik (Crewett et al. 2008). However land governance policies of Ethiopia after colonization are well studied by significant number of scholars. There are 3 major types of land tenures in Ethiopia: (1) Rist & Gebar land tenures during imperial regime (1889 – 1974), (2) state land tenure during military regime (1974 – 1991), and (3) public and investment land tenures during Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) regime (1991 –...).

Land grabbing policies of successive regimes of Ethiopia are reviewed to understand their impacts on cultural identity, social stability, economic prosperity, human rights, and political power of the peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from literatures and organized to analytically answer the following five major questions in order to know effects of investment and land governance policies on livelihoods of rural communities living under colonial regimes of Ethiopia. (1) Which forms of land tenure exist in Oromia and Southern Ethiopia before colonization? (2) Which forms of land tenure exist in Oromia and Southern Ethiopia after colonization? (3) Are investment and land governance policies of current regime progressively architected development plan to improve livelihood assets of all peoples of Ethiopia or are they systematically articulated political tactics to destabilize subsistence livelihood assets of rural communities of South Ethiopia in general and Oromia in particular? (4) Do investment and land governance policies of Ethiopia suppress democratic transfer of political power? (5) What are the relations and differences between land grabbing policies of the imperial (1889 – 1974), the military (1974 – 1991), and the TPLF (1991 – current) regimes of Ethiopia?

The paper descriptively presents introductory information, data of global land-grabbing, impacts of land grabbing on livelihoods of rural community, political function of land grabbing policy of the TPLF regime, and conclusive results. The 1<sup>st</sup> part includes types of land tenure in Oromia & southern Ethiopia before and after colonization, and data of global land-grabbing. Impacts of land grabbing on livelihoods of rural community is analyzed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> part. This chapter includes general description of livelihood & poverty, general factors and impacts of land grabbing business, land governance and investment policies of the TPLF regime, short description of impact of land grabbing (1889 – 1991), and analysis of impacts of land grabbing policy during the TPLF regime, and review of case studies in Oromia & Southern Ethiopia. Presentation of the result is finalized by descriptive analysis of political function of land grabbing policy and relation between past and current land governance policies of Ethiopia. Critical analysis of land governance & investment policies in Ethiopia is required to know whether large scale rural land acquisition by foreign investors is strategically architected development plan to improve livelihood assets of all peoples of Ethiopia or it is systematically articulated political tactics of the regime to destabilize livelihood assets of peoples of South Ethiopia in general & Oromia in particular in order to sustain 123 years old domestic colonialism.

## **2. Land tenure in Oromia & Southern Ethiopia before colonization**

Land tenure is the relationship, whether legally or customarily defined, among people, as individuals or groups, with respect to land and it is an institution that the rules invented by societies are regulating behavior i.e., it regulates how property rights to land are to be allocated within societies (FAO, 2002). The right to access land has been governed by customary law before colonization of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia. It was traditionally practiced based on communal principles. Customary land rights before colonization of Africa frequently have to do with the rights of individuals to particular plots of land and with rights to land held collectively (Johan, 2011). African communities were linked to their land through their membership to groups (family, clan, or ethnic) and it was their group standing that gave them access to land. They were consequently concerned to maintain their linkage within the groups that connect them to other persons or groups in order to secure their natural rights of land ownership.

In pre-colonial Africa, land was mostly conceived of as an unbounded resource to be used; not as a commodity to be measured, plotted, subdivided, leased, pawned or sold (Bohanna et al, 2011). For example according to Congolese native law, individual land ownership does not exist; there is only collective ownership: the land belongs to the clan, a community made up of family groups consisting of all the descendants living and dead of a common ancestor and all the generations to come (Johan, 2011). African traditional concept of land tenure was also existed for centuries in Oromia and southern Ethiopia before colonization. Nigerian chief defines traditional land ownership as land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living, and countless members are still unborn' (Colson, 1971). The livelihoods of rural communities of Africa directly depend on land and all community members should have the right to access land in order to sustain subsistence agricultural production.

Most of pre-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa had a ritual relationship to land, and did not differentiate between land for agricultural and other purposes: hence the land use was the concern of the dead, the living, and the unborn generations (Johan, 2011). Natural system of collective land tenure was exercised in Oromia and southern Ethiopia in particular and in Africa in general for centuries before implementation of land grabbing policy of colonial powers. Whatever the range of regional variations on the ground, pre-colonial land use was run on two basic principles: (1<sup>st</sup>) each citizen should have the right of direct access to the resources of the territory controlled by the political unit to which he belonged and (2<sup>nd</sup>) recognizing an individual's right to anything he had created, whether this be a pot, a homestead, a plot of land, or an office, and such a right could be inherited according to the regular rules of inheritance of private property (Colson, 1971). Costmary land tenure of South Ethiopia was converted to colonial land tenure by military power of successive Abyssinian regimes basically rooted in technical, material, and financial aids of foreign states since 1880s, the era of scramble for colonization of Africa.

### 3. Land tenure in Oromia and Southern Ethiopia after colonization

Traditional land ownership rights of rural communities of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia were dismissed by successive colonial regimes. Emperor Menelik (1889 – 1913) was expanded political territory of Abyssinia to South Ethiopia by military conquest and introduced a system of land rights significantly modified from that prevailing in Abyssinia highland (Mongabay, 1991). He had established colonial land tenure policy in Ethiopia. Domestic colonial powers originated from Abyssinia since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century are classified into three regimes: (1) imperial regime (1889 – 1974), (2) military regime (1974 – 1991), and (3) Tigray people Liberation Front (TPLF) regime (1991 – current). Land governance policies of the colonial regimes are classified into three distinct institutions: (1) Rist and Gebar, (2) State, and (3) Public & Investment land tenures during imperial (1889 – 1974), military (1974 – 1991), and the TPLF (1991 – current) periods, respectively. Each of the regimes formulated and rearticulated distinctive land tenure policies as summarized on Table1.

Regimes	Imperial (1889- 1974)	Military (1974 – 1991)	TPLF (1991–...)
<b>Land tenures</b>	Communal (Rist) in North Colonial (Gebar) in South with establishment of state, private, & church tenures	State tenure regime both in North and South	Communal (Public) in North Colonial (Investment) tenure in South
<b>Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peasants of South suffered from burdensome tributes &amp; services</li> <li>Sharecropping: harsh oppressive system was implemented in South</li> <li>Tenants were forced to deliver up to 50% of the produce to landlord to maintain the right to use land for subsistence production</li> <li>The tenant was also subjected to arbitrary demands for gifts and labor services</li> <li>Landlords were tribute collectors of the emperor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agrarian reform program @ revolutionary policy</li> <li>Announcement of state ownership of rural lands (Proclamation 31/1975)</li> <li>Size of land per family was restricted to a maximum of 10 hectares (<i>Article 5</i>)</li> <li>The use of hired agricultural labor was prohibited (<i>Article 5</i>)</li> <li>Rist and Gebar systems effectively abolished</li> <li>Power of controlling land distribution &amp; access via peasant associations (PAs);</li> <li>Committee of the PAs were tribute collectors of the military regime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announcement of the continuation of the land use policy of the military regime</li> <li>Confirmation of the state ownership of land</li> <li>The 1995 constitution &amp; proclamation in 1997 provide the necessity for rural land and labor markets to emerge</li> <li>Use rights can be terminated, if peasants fail to use land (<i>Article 3.5</i>): confiscation of uncultivated rain-fed land after 3 years and irrigated land after 2 years (<i>Article 22.1</i>)</li> <li>Expropriation right to the regime if the land is required for public uses (<i>Article 6.4</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Reference</b>	<i>Donham (1986); Aberra (2000); Jemma (2004); and Crewett et al. (2008)</i>	<i>Pausewang (1983) and Crewett et al. (2008)</i>	<i>Transitional government of Ethiopia (1991) ; FDRE (1995); RGO (2002); and Tom Lavers (2011)</i>

Table 1: Land tenure in Oromia and southern Ethiopia since colonization

### 3.1. Rist and Gebar land tenures during imperial regime (1889 – 1974)

The land tenure in Ethiopia before 1974 was commonly distinguished as communal (Rist), grant land (Gult), freehold or private (Gebar), church (Samon), and state (Maderia, Mengist) tenure regimes (Crewett et al. 2008). It can be generally classified as Rist and Gebar land tenures. The Rist land tenure was traditionally practiced in North Ethiopia for centuries. In the Central and Northern highlands of Ethiopia, despite regional variations, most peasants had substantial inheritable rights of land ownership (Mongabay, 1991). However Gebar land tenure was introduced in Oromia and Southern Ethiopia after colonization. Contrary to the situation in the North where communal (Rist) system where no one was entitled to own land privately or to sell the land; in the South there emerged state, private, and church forms of tenure along confiscation and sales of land (Jemma, 2004). In the South, all the land belonged to the emperor of Abyssinia. The emperor allocated land rights to those he appointed to office and to his soldiers. The rights allocated by emperor to his agents and subjects were more extensive than the rights prevailing in the North and left most of the indigenous peoples as tenants, with far fewer rights than Abyssinian peasants in the North Ethiopia (Mongabay, 1991).

The Rist land tenure was a kind of corporate ownership system based on descent that granted the rights to appropriate the return from the land, i.e., all male and female descendants of an individual founder or occupier were entitled to a share land (Hoben, 1973). Gult and Rist Gult was the type of Rist system that those who held other types of traditional land rights were required to pay tribute and taxes in cash, kind, or labor to landlords and it is called the Gult right (Bereket Kebede, 2002). It is further defined as the rights to land and manpower of the peasants living on the land (Crewett et al. 2008). In the Abyssinian center of Ethiopia, these Rist-Gult right holders were largely an aristocratic group. The Rist Gult rights of land ownership were initially granted only to the royal family and provincial nobles of Abyssinia; however it became the rule in the regions of the newly conquered South (Pausewang, 1983). It was the main tool to sustain colonial expansion of Abyssinia in Oromia and Southern Ethiopia. Thus civil & military agents (servants) of the imperial regime in the South Ethiopia had received Rist Gult rights of land ownership as a salary or a compensation for services (Aberra Jemberre, 2000). Gult rights were also vested to the state religion, the Orthodox Church, in particular (Joireman, 2000).

The Gebbar land tenure was established in the Central Ethiopia, before it was transferred to the conquered South. It was characterized by tribute-paying peasants who were controlled by Gult lords or local elites. The rural communities of South Ethiopia suffered from burdensome tributes and services that must be delivered to the local authorities (Donham, 1986). Freehold land tenure was granted to selected individuals such as soldiers and civilian victims of the Italian occupation (Pausewang, 1983). The land for which tax had been paid to the government was defined as property of the taxpayers or the land lords after the return of Emperor Haile Selassie from exile in 1941 (Crewett et al. 2008). Many peasants had lost their land or had lived on the land of the new class of taxpaying owners of land under the tribute system imposed on them and many landlords had registered formally as taxpayers and thereby significantly limited the land accessibility rights of peasants (Pausewang, 1983). These peasants then became tenants who practiced sharecropping (Donham, 1986). Sharecropping system was a harsh oppressive system that the tenants were forced to deliver a large share of up to half of the produce to the landlords to maintain the right to use the land for subsistence production (Crewett et al. 2008). The tenants were also subjected to arbitrary demands for gifts and labor services (Aberra, 2000). However sharecropping relations differed between the North and South Ethiopia as the contracts had been highly exploitive in the South compared to the North (Joireman, 2000). Abyssinian imperial land tenure politics came to an end at the beginning of 1974 after the longest struggle of oppressed peoples of Ethiopia. Erratic political movement exercised by peoples of South Ethiopia since colonization was developed into socialist revolution in order to defeat injustice.

### 3.2. State land tenure during military regime (1974 – 1991)

The socialist revolution of Ethiopia successfully abolished land tenure gap between peoples of South and North Ethiopia. Leaders of socialist revolution successfully convinced the military administrative council to overcome historical injustice related to land tenure by eliminating exploitative character of imperial agrarian relations. The military council and leaders of socialist revolution rearticulated land tenure as egalitarianism to provide each farm family with equal access to cultivation of land according to their needs. “The land to the tiller slogan of oppressed peoples of Ethiopia”, which was popular during 1970s political movements, was effectively implemented through land tenure reform (Pausewang, 1983). In 1975 the military administrative council announced an agrarian reform program known as public (state) ownership of rural lands (proclamation 31/1975). The proclamation declared that all rural land to be property of the state without compensation to previous right holders and prohibited all tenancy relations (Article 3 & article 4.5). The plot of land per family was restricted to a maximum of 10 hectares and the use of hired agricultural labor was prohibited (*Article 5*).

The reform was introduced the first uniform land tenure system in Ethiopia as a whole and it abolished the difference in agrarian relations that had existed in the North and the South prior to the revolution. The changes were more radical for tenant cultivators in the South than for Rist right holders in the North (Crewett et al. 2008). Winners of the reform were landless, wage laborers, tenant cultivators, and poor; but the losers of the reform were the Gult, the Rist Gult, and the Gebbar holders. The military regime effectively abolished the remains of traditional institutions of Rist and Gult, and it took over the power of controlling distribution and access of land through peasant associations (PAs) (Pausewang, 1983). The regime brought major changes of organizational structures and institutions to implement agrarian socialism through collectivization of small-scale farms and the establishment of state farms. It intensified program of collectivization towards the end of 1970s with the promotion of Agricultural Producer Cooperatives (APC) and the establishment of large-scale state farms (Crewett et al. 2008). The APC were formed by members of PA by pooling their land, draught animals, and farm implements together.

The military regime successfully captured the peasantry into a system of state control through PA and APC which were typical model of communist policy of land governance. The single most important feature of socialist revolution of Ethiopia was the mass organization in the rural areas, regardless of the weak economic performance of collectivization of private properties of rural communities (Clapham, 2002). However the revolutionary policy of land tenure replaced the pre-revolutionary functions of landlords as overlords and tribute collectors by a system of state control, where PAs and APCs played the central role: so that they became effectively an instrument of the military regime to control and govern the peasantry (Crewett et al. 2008). The regime became the absolute owner of the land, even though it has successfully abolished colonial land tenures of Abyssinian monarchic regime through the socialist revolution of Ethiopia.

The regime was also not ready to respond positively to political quest of self determination rights of colonized peoples of Eritrea, Oromia, and Southern Ethiopia. The military regime was dictating the colonial empire of socialist Abyssinia for 17 years through civil wars that had been sponsored by global blocks of communist and imperialist powers of cold war politics. National liberation struggle of peoples of Eritrea, Oromia, and Southern Ethiopia to achieve the right of self determination and the competition between colonial elites of Abyssinia, mainly Amahara and Tigray, to rearticulate empire of their grand fathers (Menelik & Yohannes) is developed into ethnic revolution of Ethiopia. The political competition between ethnic elites of Abyssinia is rooted in legitimacy of the crony of emperor Menelik of Amahara. Emperor Yohannes of Tigray was killed in a war on 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1889 at the battle of Matemma and he declared his natural son, Mengesha, as successor of the imperial thorn (Wikipedia, 2012). However king Menelik marched north on 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1889 to get the submission of the Northern nobles (Tsegaye, 2011) and he became the emperor of Ethiopia. In 1898 he had successfully crushed a rebellion of prince Mengesha Yohannes who died in 1906.



### 3.3. Public and investment land tenure during TPLF regime (1991 – ... )

Tigray Abyssinian elites had never given up coordination of political struggle since March 1889 to restore imperial position of legitimate successor of emperor Yohannes. Colonial vision of emperor Yohannes is successfully established through guerilla tactics and strategies of the TPLF in May 1991 after 102 years of power struggle between political elites of Amhara and Tigray. The transitional government of Ethiopia (TGE), in its declaration on economic policy in November 1991 announced the continuation of the land policy of the Derg regime (TGE, 1991). However current colonial regime under the leadership of the TPLF regime has redesigned colonial land tenure of Abyssinia to protect colonial interest. Modern Rist and Gebar land tenure policy is successfully established as Public and Investment land tenure. The regime manipulated colonial constitutions to impose unfair land tenure policy on rural communities of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia.

The new constitution of federal democratic republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in 1995 approved and confirmed the state ownership of the land in Ethiopia (FDRE, 1995). The right to ownership of rural and urban lands and all natural resources is exclusively vested in the state and the peoples of Ethiopia (FDRE 1995, article 40). The article stipulated that the land shall not be subject to sale or other means of exchange and any transfer of land is prohibited. It further stated that the right of Ethiopian peasants to access land without payment for grazing and cultivation purposes and the right to be protected against eviction from the possessions (FDRE 1995, article 40: sections 3, 4, and 5). However the regime systematically articulated its constitution to develop fair and unfair land tenure policies in North and South Ethiopia, respectively. The 1975 proclamation prohibited the lease of land and the hiring of labor and concealed the maximum land size per individual to 10 hectares; however the 1995 constitution and the subsequent proclamation in 1997 provide some specifications that it is systematically rearticulated to establish rural land and labor markets to emerge in colonial territories. Thus, Public (Rist) land tenure is constitutionally applicable to rural communities of North Ethiopia and Investment (State or Private) land tenure is colonially imposed on rural communities of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia.

Federal rural land administration proclamation transfers the authority of land administration, including rights to distribute land, to the regional governments and vests them with the power over the assignment of holding rights and the execution of distribution of holdings (constitution of the FDRE, proclamation No. 89/1997 article 2.6). In Tigray and Amhara regions, the right to access land depends on status of the residence in the kebele (local administration), a restriction already in place during the Derg regime (Crewett et al. 2008). These regions have already formulated fair systems to introduce certificate that designed to increase tenure security and to reduce border conflicts. Inheritance rights have also been specified and in some case it has been extended beyond the core family: for example: in the Amhara region, it is allowed for land to be bequeathed to people outside of the family if those assisted the rights holders in times of need (Crewett et al. 2008). Therefore land use right of rural communities of North Ethiopia (Amhara & Tigray) is constitutionally protected by their government.

The TPLF regime has successfully formulated three restrictions at its regional government of Oromia (RGO): (1) Article 6.4 grants the expropriation right to the regime if the land is required for more important public uses; (2) if land users fail to use their land in every production season (except in the case of restoring fertility) the land use rights can be terminated (article 3.5); and (3) article 22.1 grants the regime to expropriate rain-fed land after three years and irrigated land after two years if land users fail to cultivate the land (RGO, 2002). The right to land is exclusively vested in vassal state of the TPLF regime (the RGO) that it grants holding, leasing, and inheritance rights to users; and it also opens the possibility for the government, being owner of the rural land, to change communal holdings to private holdings for private investment (the rural land administration and land use proclamation No.456/2005). Therefore land use right of rural communities of South (Oromia & Southern) Ethiopia is constitutionally violated by colonial government.



## 4. Data of global land-grabbing

Global land grabbing is significantly higher in Africa and Eastern Africa (Figures 1 & 2). International land investments in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Southeast Asia to produce food crops and bio-fuel crops is in a trend of increasing level during recent years mainly after the food price crisis of 2007-2008 (Jägerskog et al. 2012). This has led to an increased international and domestic interest in farmland, primarily in Africa and Latin America (World Bank, 2010). About 227 million ha of land (roughly the size of Western Europe) may have been sold or leased in the global South over the past decade (Oxfam, 2011). More than 56 million hectares were leased in 2009 alone, 70% of which were made in Africa (World Bank, 2011). Africa is the main target of land grabbing, because land tenure insecurity gives the investors easy and cheap access to land. Large parts of Africa are attractive for global land deals, because African countries are characterized by low cost of land lease, very cheap daily wage, weak legislation, and relative abundance of land and water (Jägerskog et al. 2012). Most of the countries affected by global land grabbing are institutionally very weak. The institutional weakness mainly includes poor regulatory frameworks, ineffective governance, corruption, absence of rule of law, and investor protection (Anseeuw et al. 2012).

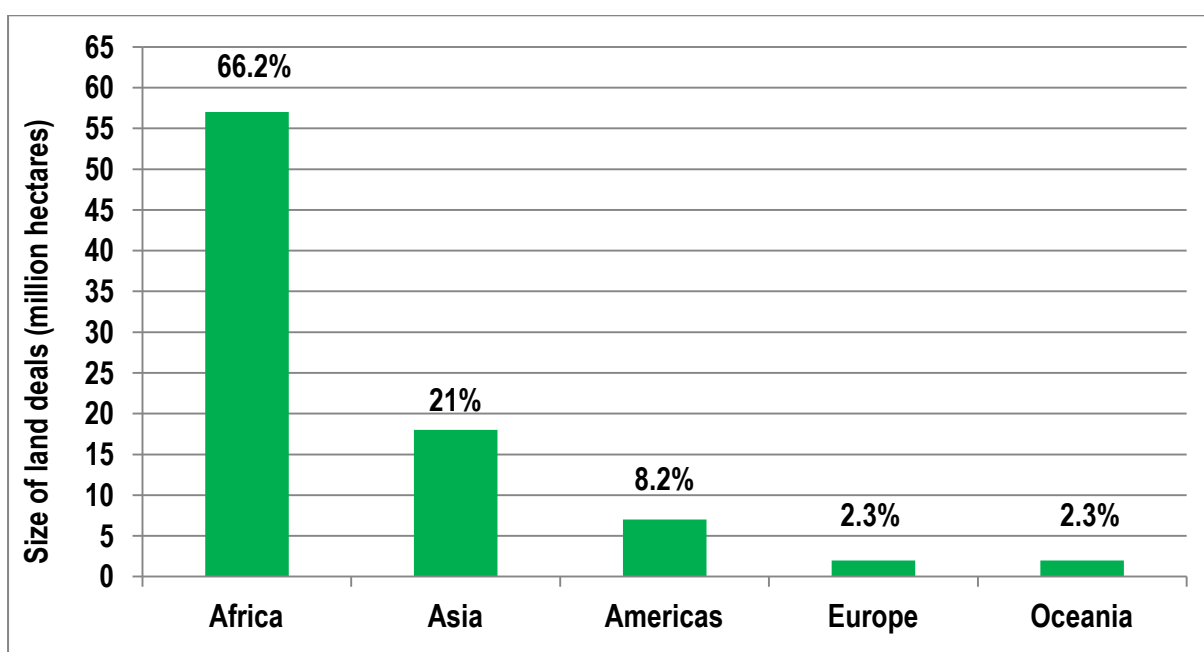


Figure 1: Regional acquisitions of land (Anseeuw et al. 2012)

Investors of global land business are targeting the poorest countries with weak land tenure security (Arezki et al., 2011). There are 1217 publicly reported deals, of which 62% projects covering a total area of 56.2 million hectares are located in Africa, while some 17.7 million hectares are reported in Asia, and 7 million hectares in Latin America. The remaining 2.2 million hectares are in other regions, particularly Eastern Europe and Oceania (Anseeuw et al. 2012). Eastern Africa is the most targeted area in the World. Majority of land deals worldwide take place in Africa, mainly in the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Much of the investment interest has been directed towards tropical areas in general and SSA in particular, because the region features a relative abundance of water and land resources, available and cheap manual power, and very low scale of land sale & leasehold prices (Jägerskog et al. 2012). For example, land prices in Brazil or Argentina is around 5000 USD per hectare per year (The Oakland Institute, 2011), but some lands have been leased for as little as 2 to 5 USD per hectare per year in Ethiopia and Liberia (Cotula, 2011).

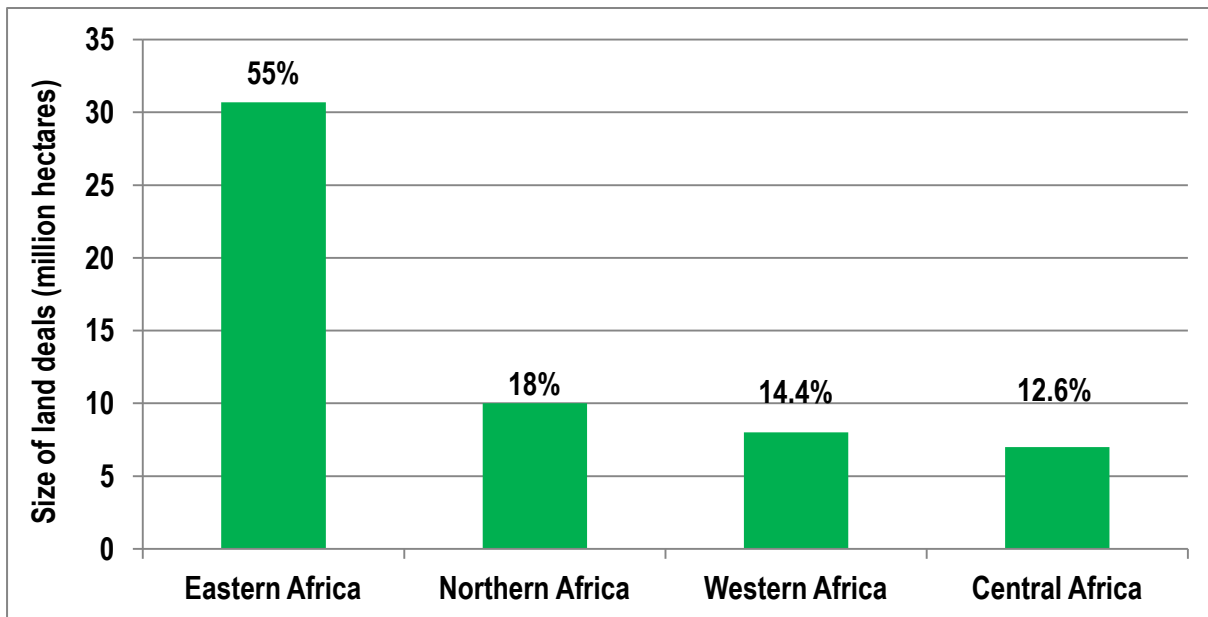


Figure 2: Sub-regional acquisitions of land in Africa (Anseeuw et al. 21012)

The demand for land by foreign investors is widespread in developing countries. 70% of the reported targeted areas are concentrated in 11 countries, although a large number of countries (84) are targeted by foreign investors. Among the top 11 countries 7 are located in Africa (Anseeuw et al. 21012). Ethiopia is one of the most targeted countries of land grabbing business (Figure 3). Global land grabbers are interested in countries with poor land governance and weak investment policy to operate their business unfairly, because African governments are easily bribed to protect business of investors by violating land use rights of rural communities. Farmlands of the most targeted countries are among the most fertile in the world and the land tenure structure is favorable for investors (Cochet and Merlet, 2011). Countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zambia, DR Congo, and Tanzania are facing a large part of the reported demand for land by foreigners.

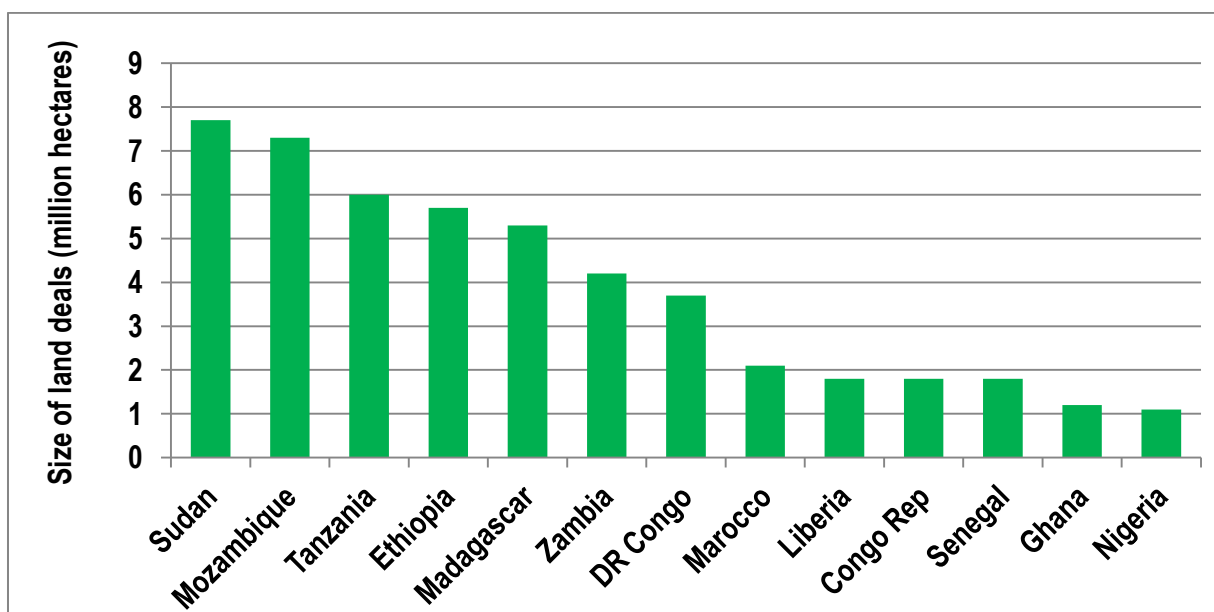


Figure 3: Acquisitions of land in African countries (Anseeuw et al. 21012)

Total area (water + land) of Ethiopia is 110.4 million hectares (FAO, 2007). Areas of land mass and agricultural land cover 90.6% and 63.5% of the total area, respectively (Figure 4). According to official document of the regime about 74.5 million hectares of agricultural land is available in Ethiopia (Esayas, 2009); however FAO data indicates 70.2 million hectares of agricultural land. The agricultural land is further subdivided into areas of annual crops (50%), permanent meadows and pastures (28.5%), and arable land and permanent crops (21.5%). However ministry of agriculture and rural development (MOARD) has issued several conflicting figures on how much land is available for investment. Only 18 million hectares of agricultural land are documented under cultivation and about 54 million hectares of land are documented as land available for investment projects (MOARD, 2008). The same document of MORAD provides significantly reduced estimate of land available for investment to about 10 million hectares. Ministry of mines and energy (MME) has estimated availability of 24 million hectares of unutilized land suitable for growing bio-ethanol and bio-diesel in its bio-fuel strategic document. Transferring this land to investors will not interfere with the production of food crops and not jeopardize the country's plans for food security (MME, 2007). The wide discrepancies of the information indicate inaccuracy of land inventory data. The authorities have not carried out credible land suitability assessment that the estimation of the size of agricultural land is done through guess and arbitration.

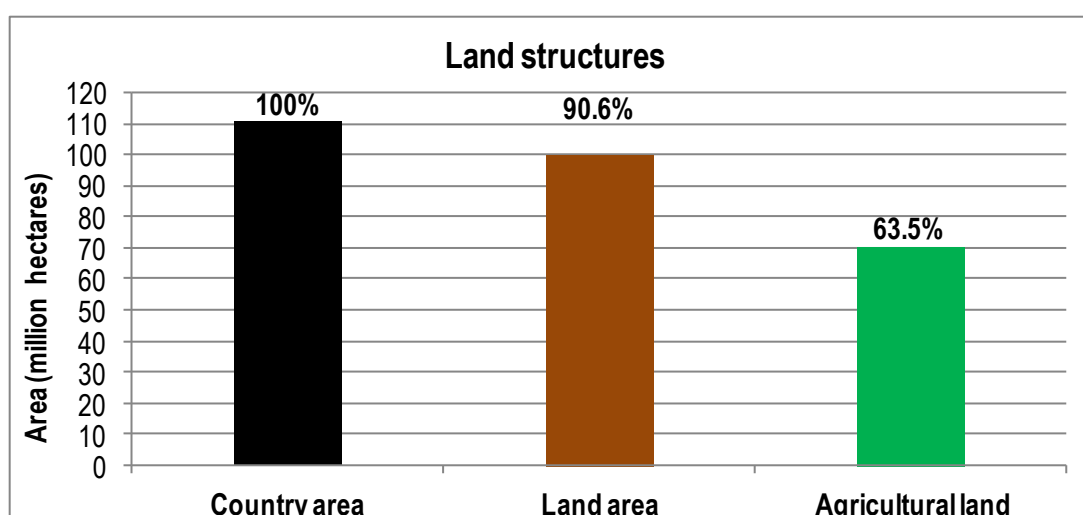


Figure 4: Land mass of Ethiopia (FAO, 2007)

In the period between 1996 and the end of 2008, some 8000 applications for land were approved by MOARD that the total land transferred to investors measuring over three million hectares (Rahmato, 2011). The total area of agricultural land leased to the investors is 3.6 million hectares (The Oakland Institute, 2011). In general 94% of the land allocated to investors is located in colonized regions of Ethiopia. The highest percentage of agricultural land transferred to the foreign investors is land of rural communities of Oromia (Figure 5). Allocation of agricultural land to global investors is insignificant in North Ethiopia (Amhara and Tigray), because the land use rights of rural communities of Abyssinia is constitutionally protected by their government. However land accessibility rights of rural communities of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia is systematically regulated by land governance and investment policies of colonial regime. Moreover condition of global land grabbing in Ethiopia is the most attractive in the word, because the regime does not take into account the land use rights of colonized peoples.

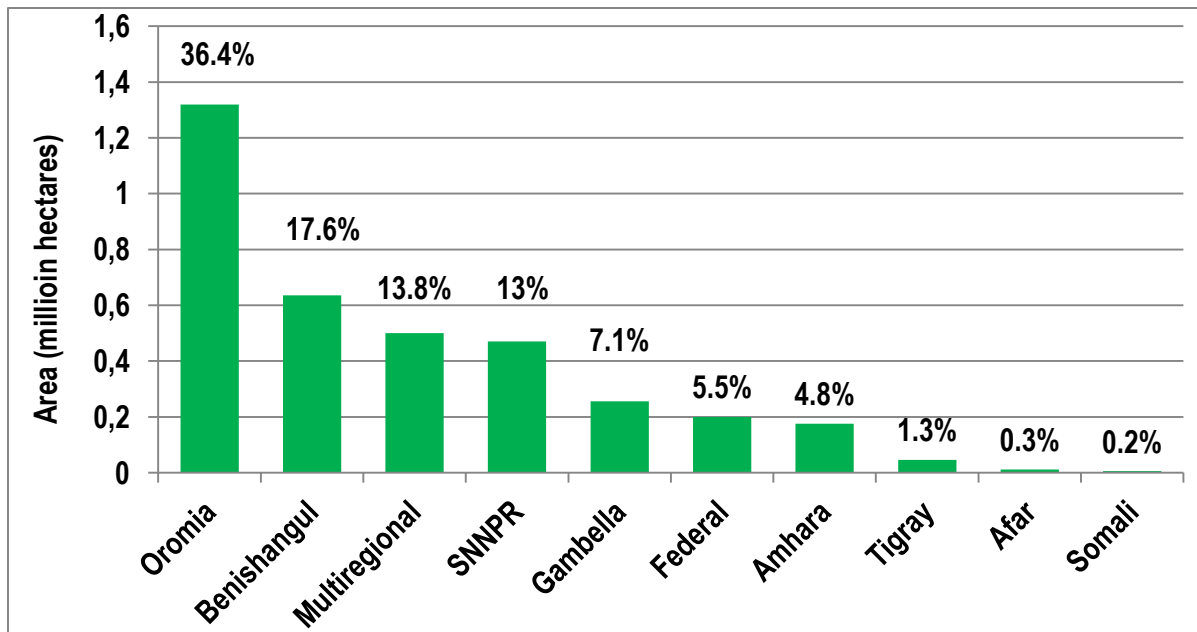


Figure 5: Land given out to investors in Ethiopia (The Oakland Institute, 2011)

The allocation of farm land to investors has been going since 1995. The years between 2003 and 2007 were the boom years for cut flower exportation to Europe. Demand for land by foreign investors began to increase sharply from 2006. More than one-third of the land allocated to investors in the ten years period was given out in 2008. Year 2008 was a mad rush of investors to get access to land with many applicants requesting large tracts measuring more than 10000 hectares (Rahmato, 2011). About one million hectares of land was transferred to 500 foreign investors in the period between 2003 and 2009. The largest foreign holding is Karuturi Company of India, which has been given 300000 hectares of land in Gambella region and 11000 in Bako woreda in Oromia (Rahmato, 2011). In 2009 and 2010 about 500000 hectares of land was allocated to investors. 1.2 million hectares of land was transferred to investors between 2004 and 2008 (World Bank, 2010). The land to be transferred to large-scale investors, without including land already allocated, is expected to increase from 0.5 million hectares in 2011 to 2.8 million in 2013 and 3.3 million hectares in 2015 (MOFED 2010a & 2010b). A total land transferred to investors will measure about 38% of land currently utilized by smallholders (Rahmato, 2011). It will be 7 million hectares of agricultural land by end of 2015 (Figure 6).

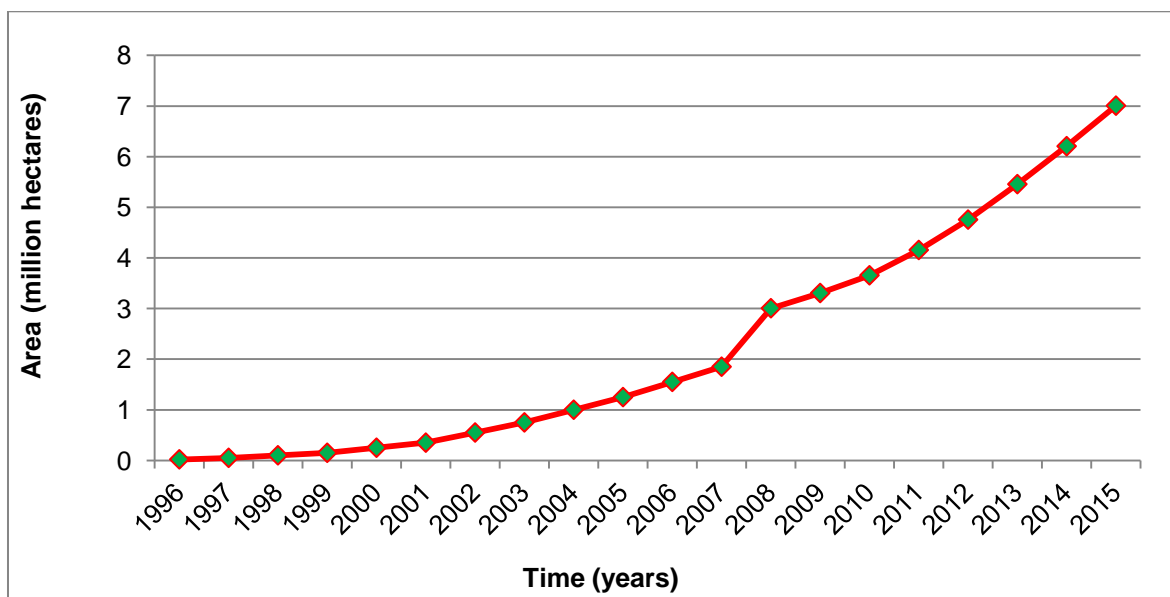


Figure6: Accumulated land transfer to investors in Ethiopia (1996 – 2015)

## **5. Impacts of land grabbing on livelihoods of rural communities**

### **5.1. Description of livelihood & poverty**

Livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living, that it is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintains or enhances its capabilities and assets both now and in the future without undermining the natural resource base (Chambers & Conway, 1991). The livelihood assets include: (1) Human capital (skills, knowledge, health, and ability to work); (2) Social capital (informal networks, membership of formalized groups, and relationships of trust that facilitate cooperation and economic opportunities); (3) Natural resource capital (land, soil, water, forests, and fisheries); (4) Physical capital or basic infrastructure (water, livestock, roads, sanitation, schools, tools, equipments, and ICT); and (5) Financial capital (savings, credit, and income from employment, trade and remittances) (Eldis, 2010). Natural resource capital is the foundation of all other assets of livelihood of rural communities of Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular. Livelihood assets of oppressed peoples of Ethiopia are negatively affected by land grabbing policies of successive regimes of Ethiopia. Historical and current impacts of land grabbing policies on livelihood of rural communities of Oromia & southern Ethiopia are shortly discussed as follows.

### **5.2. General factors and impacts of land grabbing business**

Increase of demand of land (minerals, oil, natural gas, water, & agricultural assets) is mainly driven by trend of global economic development, population growth, and climate change. The annual supply of water and land over the next 20 years would have to increase by 140% and 250%, respectively compared to the past two decades growth rate of supply (Dobbs et al. 2011). Developed countries are actively involved in business of land grabbing in order to produce bio-energy abroad and to use global agro-industrial business as insulator of global financial crisis. Corporate and government investors were driven by expectations for future food and agro-fuel demand to rise the value of agricultural products; while institutional investors, such as hedge funds, pension funds, and portfolio investors are primarily motivated by land investments as historically proven hedges against inflation (Jägerskog et al. 2012). Countries dependant on imported food are rushing to access land and water in order to achieve national food security. The rising cost of food, coupled with water scarcity in countries in the North Africa, Middle East, and parts of Asia regions motivated a number of countries dependent on imported food to lower their vulnerability to future food price hikes by investing on agricultural land in foreign nations where they could produce food and agricultural goods (IFPRI, 2009).

Impact of land grabbing business on livelihood of rural community is shortly described based on ideologies of five groups of organizations: (1) government and investors, (2) international agencies (FAO, World Bank, IFPRI, IIED, and others), (3) independent researchers, (4) activists of human rights, and (5) defenders of colonized peoples. Arguments of government, investors, and international agencies are grouped into political view of heavily opportunistic business that aggressively undermining the voices of voice-less. Analytical evaluation of land grabbing impacts by independent researchers is scientific prediction of the fate of voice-less people in the process of land grabbing. Voice of traditional owners of land is echoed through human right organizations and political fronts (parties), groups compassionately struggling to defeat justification of injustice practiced by powerful groups up on the powerless groups during land grabbing business. Various civil societies, researchers, academics and environmental and human rights activists have expressed their concerns regarding the adverse impact of large-scale farmland acquisitions by foreign investors that primarily target at security of food and energy for their domestic markets (Stebek, 2011).

Host governments and investors equally argue that global land business will result in increase of crop production and economic growth to address food security; it creates employment opportunities; it facilitates technology transfer to smallholders (peasant farmers); it improves social infrastructures, and it promotes energy security. Government of Ethiopia and the World Bank have argued that global land business is an essential factor to modernize agricultural land to improve productive efficiency in order to increase food production and economic growth (MOARD 2008, 2010; & World Bank 2010). The following benefits are frequently cited in MOARD documents. Large-scale foreign investment: a) produces export crops and hence increases the country's foreign earnings; it is expected to expand production of crops needed for agro-industry; b) it creates employment opportunities; c) it benefits local communities through construction of social infrastructures such as health posts, schools, access to clean water; d) it provides opportunity of technology transfer; and e) it promotes energy security. Benefits of land transfer to investors include "new social and physical infrastructure", the sale of "some of their production in Ethiopia, helping to close the food shortage gap, and exporting the rest", creation of job opportunities, knowledge transfer, tax revenue, market access and other benefits (Kebede, Ethiopia's Ambassador to the UK, 2010). Land deal provides new seeds and new techniques and it also allows major investment, including improved marketing as well as better jobs, and related infrastructural developments, including schools, clinics and roads (FDRE Ministry of foreign affairs, 2010). Investment is expected to play a number of positive roles: earn foreign exchange, create employment opportunities, facilitate technology transfer to smallholders, and address national food security (Lavers, 2011).

International agencies (FAO, World Bank, IFPRI, IIED, and others) believe that the costs and damages assumed to be inherent in land grabbing could be minimized by responsible decision-making and equally responsible investment (Rahmato, 2011). They focus on the need for better land administration, improved quality and transparency of land transactions and greater institutional capacity of host countries for sound contracts, oversight, and follow-up. Emphasis is placed on the importance of establishing guidelines and standards for land allocations and land use, and an effective code of conduct to govern relations between investors on the one hand, and communities and host governments on the other (FAO 2010a, World Bank 2009, Cotula et al. 2009; and IFPRI, 2009). These principles could lead to a situation where both host countries and investors could benefit in equal measure. The World Bank argues that increased demand for food production in the developing world will be driven by population growth, expanding urbanization, and rising incomes and this will have to be met by bringing more land into cultivation and by improving productivity. The Bank expects Africa to benefit immensely, because potential farmland is most plentiful here and at the same time productivity on land currently under cultivation is very low compared to what could be achieved.

Independent researchers argue that the global land grab will have the effect of enhancing the dominance of the state at the expense of citizens and grassroots communities. Global land grab brings about changes in land property relations favoring the (re)concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the dominant classes: capitalists, corporate entities, state bureaucrats, and village chiefs (Borras and Franco, 2010). It displaces smallholders, indigenous peoples, and the poor in general. It establishes structures dominated by settler-type of large estates existing side by side with a host of impoverished small farms struggling to survive in the shadow of large scale commercial agriculture (Hall, 2010). Producing crops where there are resources available and exporting for other regions where food demands are increasing rapidly (e.g. emerging economies) could in theory contribute for global food security; but it could lead to food insecurity at national and local levels in the hosting countries (Jägerskog et al. 2012).

Human rights organization argued that land grabbing by foreign investors in poor countries poses a threat to livelihoods of rural community and endangers chances of achieving food security. Global land grabbing is defined as a new form of agricultural neo-colonialism. The international financial institutions are accused of promoting aggressive land grabs in poor countries through support to investors and host governments (Rahmato, 2011). Lower Omo residents are being told that a key component of the

resettlement plans are required a drastic reduction of livestock numbers which would dramatically harm livelihood asset and cultural values with potential consequences of food insecurity and malnutrition (HRW, 2012b). The government of Ethiopia through its constitution and international agreements has already accepted validity of customary land use right and the need to protect indigenous people from involuntary displacement. The traditional owners of land have the right to use land based on international law. Changes to land use or seizure are illegal without the consultation of traditional owners of the land, who must give their free, prior, & informed consent before any development activities or displacement occurs and they should also receive clear choices about alternative land and survival strategies (HRW, 2012b).

Colonized peoples of Africa defined the recent policy of global land grabbing as the second scramble for Africa. Eyes of the modern scramblers are on Africa, the continent with great reserves of natural resources. South Ethiopia is one of the most targeted countries in Africa (Figure 5). For example Metho (2012) is stated the impact of land grabbing in Gambela region as follows: *“Some of those who have been displaced are people I personally know, so when I am talking about the impact, I know many of their stories. I know that those forced off their land are now struggling to eat. I know about the huge areas of virgin forests that have been cut down to clear vast fields for planting. I know how vulnerable the rivers are to pollution from chemicals and fertilizers. These are rivers from which I used to drink or fish. I know how the wildlife will be jeopardized. I know how those who resist are beaten, killed, disappeared or arrested. This is not only happening in Gambella and in Ethiopia but wherever people have no rights and where others covet their resources or land.”* Transfer of fertile lands to investors will result in loss of trees, topsoil, natural habitats, and rivers, to be rendered barren as a consequence of vulnerability to chemicals latent in the fertilizers, insecticides, and pesticides and that the rivers and lakes that survive “are likely to be poisoned by toxic materials and become undrinkable and negatively affect health of rural communities of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia (Tolossa, 2011).

### 5.3. Land governance policy of the TPLF regime

The regime is juridical owner of the land, but peasant farmers and pastoralists have the right to use only. The use right of land holders is dependent on residence in a kabele or locality or district, personal engagement in agriculture, “proper” management of the land, and other restrictive conditions. Holders (users) who are found to have violated any of the conditions are subjected to penalties including the loss of their right to use the land. Holders may also lose the land if they are absent from their farms and the land is uncultivated for two or three consecutive years. The regime has constitutionally established right of removing holders from the land if it decides that the land is needed for “public purposes” or if it considers that the land will be more valuable if it is utilized by investors, cooperative societies, and other public entities (Rahmato, 2011). A local land administrator has constitutional right to expropriate land used by smallholders, where it believes that it should be used for a better development project. However it is unfair to expect independent smallholders to invest on the same agricultural technology as large-scale investors in order to improve production potential of agricultural land. Agents of the regime have an enormous power of land administration; but smallholders have a little possibility of appeal (FDRE, 2005: article 3(1)). One of the main examples of smallholder displacement is the expansion of flower industry, in particular in central Oromia, where the regime has tried to limit migration of displaced peasants to Addis Ababa by requiring investors to employ them as daily (casual) workers. Since the state has juridical ownership of the land by law, it has used its statutory right of ownership to alienate land from those who have customary rights and rights of longstanding usage, and transferring it to investors without consultation or consent (Rahmato, 2011).

The regime is defined land use from perspective of settled agriculture. Agricultural land is narrowly defined as cultivated area that includes only land used for crop production. The terms ‘unused’, ‘empty’ and ‘uncultivated’ are often used interchangeably from perspective of settled agriculture, which views pastoralist agriculture as unsustainable (MOFED 2003). Agricultural land use classification disregards



pastoralist as communities passing through the land, rather than 'using' it and the regime considers nomadic land as 'unused' areas. Equating 'cultivation' with 'use' dismisses the importance of other land uses. Therefore it is impossible to tell whether the land is unused or just unregistered. Land inventory report estimated cultivated land area at less than 20% of the total land mass of Ethiopia. The regime is tactically limited information of land use in remote areas where the land is targeted for investment projects. It argued the availability of plenty of unutilized land based on misleading data of agricultural land. However agricultural land includes nomadic land for livestock production, agro-pastoralist for mixed farming (crop & livestock productions), communal grazing land, agro forestry land, shifting cultivation, and land though which water, energy, and other vital natural resources are accessible to rural communities. There are three very important types of land in populated areas: communal grazing land, individual holdings, and state farms. Like land in pastoralist areas, most communal land is unregistered and government officials consider such land to be a government land, not a community resource, ignoring the valuable role of communal land in local livelihoods (Lavers, 2011).

The regime is centrally controlling local resources and livelihoods by maintaining land dependency of rural communities through its hegemonic authorities of land ownership and management to increase insecurity of rural people. The central government still makes key decisions about the livelihoods and land of these historically marginalized groups without consulting them, despite the ethnic federal system (Lavers, 2011). Federal regions are constitutionally responsible for land management (FDRE 1994: article 12), but the growing importance of global land grabbing business enhanced the central control of land management by organizing Agricultural Investment Support Directorate (AISD) to allocate very large areas of land to foreign and domestic investors. The AISD can transfer land to investors without consulting land holders or communities, and irrespective of negative effects on livelihoods. The regime is claiming the lands transferred to investors are unused land and it will not harm the livelihood, agro-ecosystem, and natural environment. However land transferred to investors are arable land, cultivated land, communal land, state farms, land inside national parks, protected areas, wildlife sanctuary, land used for grazing, wood & forest lands, and savanna grassland. The regime should protect national reserve bearing in mind future generations and land not utilized at present will inevitably be used in future due to population increase (Tolossa, 2011). Vegetation clearing & farm operation will soon have a damaging impact on water sources, soil quality, wildlife, and biodiversity. The damage to people's livelihood is beginning to be evident in many ways: it has led to loss of farm land, loss of pasture land, loss of communal land, inaccessibility to sources of water, and the loss of right to firewood and useful wild plants (Rahmato, 2011). Case studies from Gambela, Omo valley, and Oromia regions of South Ethiopia are clearly indicating negative effects of land grabbing on livelihoods of rural communities. Therefore land governance policy of the TPLF regime does not support theoretical positive impacts of land grabbing business stated by the regime, investors, and international aid or development agencies.

## 5.4. Investment policy of the TPLF regime

The regime has formulated financial incentives to attract investors. The investors comprise of international corporations, sovereign wealth funds, foreign governments, private equity firms, and domestic actors (Jägerskog et al. 2012). The regime has exempted foreign agricultural investors from paying custom duties and taxes on imports of capital goods and there are no employment limits on foreign staff (Weissleder 2009). Investors are allowed to import free of custom duty capital goods, construction materials and spare parts for establishment or upgrading of their enterprises. Investors in remote areas like Gambella, Benishangul, and Omo valley are eligible for tax-free years (FDRE 2003a: article 4). In addition, areas not previously under cultivation are prioritized by exempting investors from land use fees for up to five years if they use improved seeds and irrigation (ONRG 2001:article 2). Investors are eligible for 5-year income tax holidays if they export more than 50% of their production; but investors exporting less than 50% of agricultural production are entitled to only two years of tax holidays (FDRE 2003b & 2008). The Land rent is very cheap ranging between 14 to 135 Birr/ha per year for a period of 25 to 50 years. It is a fixed rate of rent despite growing financial depreciation and inflation.

The regime established attractive investment policy in expense of livelihoods of rural communities. It offers protection of investors by being a member of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agencies that the agreements guarantee investors' right without providing opportunities for those affected by activities of investment projects to challenge the agreements and to call for adequate compensation (Alison et al. 2011). For example the agreement signed with the Netherlands on the encouragement and reciprocal protection of investment offers considerable incentives to the private corporations wishing to invest in Ethiopia: i.e., it guarantees transfers of profits, interest, or dividends in freely convertible currency of payments related to investments, that a Dutch company investing in Ethiopia would not have to pay tax and that profits can flow back to the Netherlands without any restrictions (Alison et al. 2011). Foreign investors have the right to fully repatriate, in convertible currency, profits and dividends, principal and interest payments on external loans, proceeds from technology transfers, and from asset sales in the event of liquidation of the investment (FDRE 2008). Investors are guaranteed against expropriation. Full compensation is paid at the prevailing market value and foreign investors can repatriate compensation paid in foreign currency, if expropriation is necessary based on public interest (FDRE, 2002 and 2003a).

The foreign direct investments (FDI) in the agricultural sector have increased from USD (\$) 135 million in 2000 to \$3500 million in 2008 because regulations have been significantly reduced (Alison et al. 2011). Development of foreign direct investments in Ethiopia during the first decade of the third millennium and the share of different countries are shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8, respectively. The Indian group of companies shares the highest investment level. This group has already invested nearly \$ 4 billion in agriculture, flower growing, and sugar estates (Alison et al. 2011). More than 9200 investors have received licenses for commercial farms since 1996, of which about 1300 are foreigners. The largest investors in Ethiopia are companies from Asia, European Union, Middle Eastern, USA, and others; but secrecy surrounding investment policy of the TPLF regime makes it difficult to determine the extent of their influence on development of political economy of Ethiopia. For example MIDROC business empire of Sheik Mohammed Al-Amoudi (a joint Ethiopian and Saudi citizen) who owns many agricultural investments in Ethiopia and who established a close linkage with the TPLF regime and Saudi royal family clearly played a role in the changes and he has also been key in fostering trade relations between Saudi business and Ethiopia (Wudineh, 2009).

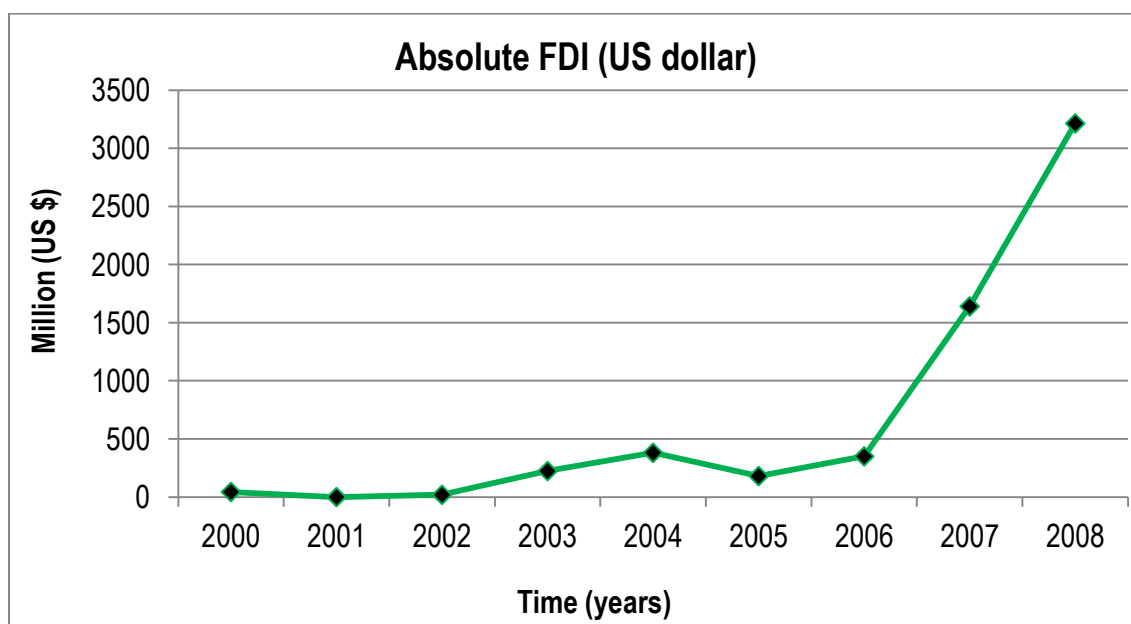


Figure7: Development of FDI in Ethiopia since 2000 (Investment Bureau. 2009)

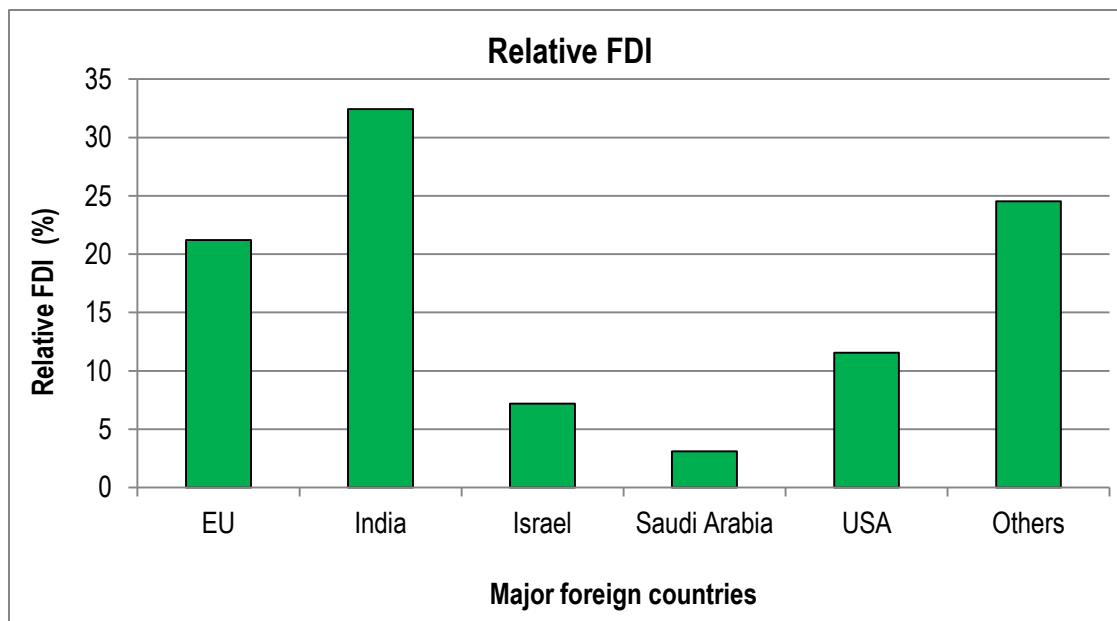


Figure8: Share of FDI of different countries in Ethiopia (Investment Bureau. 2009)

The regime has adopted the most favorable conditions for investors in Oromia and Southern Ethiopia. Procedure of application to acquire investment land is very simple. Investors fill out a standard application form and present a business plan with written request of land; but neither the application form nor the business plan requires strong obligations and no mechanisms for checking the accuracy of the information provided by investors. Furthermore there are no contractual obligations of investors to provide social services. Investors pay no compensation for land, but make informal promises that they will contribute to community development by building schools or clinics, and providing employment (Lavers, 2011). The investors did not sign contractual obligations to provide social services to the communities concerned or invest in basic infrastructure; on the contrary, in number of cases it is the government that constructs some of the infrastructure such as roads and irrigation schemes used by the projects (Rahmato, 2011). Therefore the provisions in the contracts are neither aimed to achieve food security nor to contribute in development of social infrastructures important to minimize level of poverty.

The regime has redefined the agrarian structure of the country as shifting towards large-scale agriculture with priority for exports. Those investors producing for the domestic market are given lower priority. The regime is strongly encouraged export of most or all of agricultural products. It ignores the need for domestic food security and it is increasingly marginalized rural population. For example Saudi Star, a company with a strong Saudi interest, and which acquired 10000 hectares of land in Gambella in 2008, was recently given permission by MOARD to add another 129000 hectares to its project in the same region to grow rice for export to Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Gulf (Rahmato, 2011). The aim of the company is to get sufficient land to produce one million tons of rice annually for export in order to earn one billion dollars in exports yearly. The company is seeking a total of 500000 hectares with 300000 ha in Gambella and the rest in Benishangul and Oromia regions (Rahmato, 2011). This example clearly indicates that investors freely choose which crops to grow and there are no obligations to supply food crop for local or national market. Therefore investment policy of the TPLF does not support theoretical positive impacts of land grabbing business stated in argumentative statements of the regime, the investors, and the international aid or development agencies.

## 5.5. Description of historical impacts of land grabbing (1870 – 1991)

Historical impact of land grabbing is characterized by genocide, cultural extinction, and eradication of identities of colonized peoples through mass killing (1870 – 1900) and political attempt to destroy identities (1900 - 1974). Emperor Menilik extended territory of Abyssinia from North Ethiopia to Oromia and southern Ethiopia through war of aggression with cooperation of a few war lords of Oromo like general Gobena and material & technical assistances of foreigners. The war of aggression was concluded in about three decades with murdering of millions of innocent lives to establish domestic land grabbing policy of Abyssinia. War of aggression combined with famine and epidemic diseases resulted in death of about five million peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia during the period between 1870 & 1900 (Gadaa-Malba, 1988 and De Salviac, 2005). About five million of ten millions peoples were survived from physical extinction. The conquered peoples were reduced to slavery status under the ownership of military settlers and aristocratic elites of Abyssinia. The war of aggression was the first direct genocide attempted to wipeout peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia from global map in order to achieve political goal of complete ownership of the land through eradication of the indigenous communities. The war was not successfully achieved its political goal of total elimination of indigenous peoples through direct genocide, because natural law has limited the power of aggressor. However strategies of destroying identities (language, culture, and history) of the oppressed peoples were articulated by successive colonial regimes to maintain land grabbing policies for ever.

The oppressed peoples never lost their potential to resist land grabbing policies imposed on them by barbaric colonial regimes. For example resistance of peasants of Wello, Hararge, and Bale provinces in 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s were known as Raya-Azebo, Carcar, and Bale peasant uprisings (movements), respectively. The uprisings were erratically organized against land grabbing, because their organizational ability was limited by poverty and illiteracy. The regime was responded by bombardment of villages of Oromo peasants and manipulation of famines (food shortage resulted by erratic rainfall) as revenges against peasant uprisings. Recurrent failure of crop has been frequently resulted in low to high level of catastrophic famine in Wello province. Since 1940s in a total of at least million peoples were died of starvation, because the regime was slowly reacting. For example famine in Wello and in some parts of Tigray is estimated to have killed 40000 to 80000 peoples between 1972 and 1974; but a BBC News report has cited a 1973 estimate of 200000 deaths based on official document of Ethiopian Nutrition Institute (Wikipedia, 2012). Moreover, the colonial politics of Abyssinia has resulted in unnatural death of millions of human beings. Violence and insecurity resulted in internal displacement of hundreds of thousands or it resulted in displacement of tens of thousands of rural communities annually from ancestral land and it forced them to seek refuge in neighboring countries.

Land grabbing was and is still the major source of political conflict in Ethiopia. Erratic peasant uprisings were developed into Ethiopian socialist revolution. Even though the revolution brought the land grabbing policies of imperial regime to an end it continued to use land as the source of power. It was evident that the quest for state control over the rural land exhibits a long continuity in history of Ethiopia (Crummey, 2000). Ethiopian ruling regimes are reluctant to hand over the power of land allocation and distribution to the indigenous communities. They have legitimized this with the historical legacy of the imperial oppression of the rural communities, although it has been seen that the degree and scale of oppression differed significantly between the North and the South Ethiopia (Crewett et al. 2008). The state control was legitimized as historical and social justice by the military regime, but it was politically resembled the Gebar system of imperial regime. The Gebar system was replaced by peasant association. Communal Rist system was replaced by the state's organ, peasant associations (Crewett et al. 2008).

## **5.6. Analysis of impacts of land grabbing policy of the TPLF regime**

The regime established agricultural investment policy with the cover of development politics of global economy. Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries of Africa. It is well known to the world for its poverty, food insecurity, conflicts, human rights violation, and ecological degradation: because governance institutes are very poor. Livelihood assets of small farmers (peasants) and pastoralist community are negatively affected by establishment of large commercial private farms in rural areas. Impacts of land grabbing on livelihoods of rural communities of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia is critically analysed based on the following parameters: poverty, food insecurity, conflicts, ecosystem, and human right.

### **5.6.1. Aggravating poverty**

Poverty is “a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, shelter, sanitation facilities, health, education, and information (library.thinkquest.org).” Land grabbing aggravates poverty through destruction of livelihood assets of rural communities mainly natural, financial, and social capitals. Social and economic powers of rural communities of Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular directly depend on rights to access land in order to access primary human needs (food, safe water, house, cloth, and medical services). Global land grabbing will aggravate poverty of Ethiopia by demolishing foundation of livelihoods of rural communities, i.e. dismantling rights of people to access land is equivalent to destroying livelihood assets and thereby increasing poverty. Ethiopia is ranked among the top 20 poorest countries, i.e. 174<sup>th</sup> out of 187 countries with human Development Index (HDI) of 0.363. The HDI represents a broader definition of well-being and provides a composite measure of three basic dimensions of human development: health, education, and income (UNDP, 2011). The right to access land is directly linked with the rights of rural communities to access food, water, health, housing, finance, and education to sustain subsistence livelihoods.

Majority of peoples in Sub-Saharan Africa are peasants and they rely heavily on rights to access natural resources (particularly land and water) in order to feed themselves and their families both through directly consuming the food produced and/or through income generating activities that allow them to purchase food from local markets (Alison et al., 2011). The right to access land is the foundation of the livelihoods of rural communities, because subsistence agriculture is directly linked to land in order to maintain means of survival. Hence losing the right of access to land and related resources in the course of land grabbing amounts for the great majority of Sub-Saharan Africa peasant farmers to a reduced access to the resources and means to feed themselves and severely affects their right to an adequate standard of living including food and housing, even if some compensation and rehabilitation is provided (Borras & Franco, 2009). Smallholder production accounts for 95% of agricultural output, because 85% of the population of Ethiopia earns a living from agriculture (CSA, 2009). Agricultural development policy and strategy of the TPLF regime did not consider protection of smallholder farmers in South Ethiopia.

Stage one countries, struggling with chronic under nutrition linked to poverty, must give first priority to public investment needs: and in these countries, especially in rural areas, critical public goods are frequently undersupplied, making it impossible for households, local communities, and private firms to play an effective role either within or across the three sectors of concern, i.e. Agriculture, Nutrition, and Health (Shenggen & Rajul, 2010). These sectors are directly interlinked to each other. Poor agricultural development is resulted in poor supply of food for human nutrition: and insufficient or imbalance intake of food is resulted in poor health conditions of communities. Land is the foundation of agricultural development. Production of sufficient food and improvement of public health mainly depend on rights to access land in rural areas of poor countries, because land is a major asset of rural livelihood. Therefore the damage to livelihoods of people is beginning to be evident in many ways: loss of farm & grazing lands, loss of accessibility rights to water, shortage of firewood, and extinction of useful plant species.

## 5.6.2. Expanding boundary of food insecurity

Food self-sufficiency of a nation should integrate five dimensions of food security: (1) universality, (2) stability, (3) dignity, (4) quantity, and (5) quality of food supply for citizens. Meaning of food insecurity is derived from definition of food security in form of questions and answers (Table 2). 43 of the 53 African countries do not produce enough food for their own population (FAO, 2009). Successive governments of Ethiopia including the TPLF regime are one of the African governments without effective plan to produce at least average quantity of food for citizens they are claiming to govern. States dependant on food aids are surrendering more and more land to foreign investors while failing to ensure conditions to improve income and food security for their own population (Welt Hunger Hilfe, 2009). Natural assets of African rural communities must be protected to achieve security of food supply through advancement of food production sovereignty of the nations. However global land grabbing is mainly targeted African nations, the world's hungriest region. Shifting from domestic to foreign control over food resources and food production means that large corporate deals will result in reduction of poor nations' likelihood of reaching food self sufficiency (Daniel et al, 2009). Implementation of land grabbing policy aggravates food insecurity via demolishing of livelihood assets of rural communities. It results in increase of food aid dependant peoples. Moreover it causes loss of human dignity and it aggravates nation's insecurity.

#	Dimensions	List of questions	Food security (David, 2006)	Food insecurity
1	<b>Universality</b>	Who should get food?	<b>Every one (all people)</b>	<b>Someone (a few people)</b>
2	<b>Stability</b>	When?	<b>At all time</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>
3	<b>Dignity</b>	How?	<b>Via normal food channels</b>	<b>Via emergency channel</b>
4	<b>Quantity</b>	How much food?	<b>Enough for a healthy active life</b>	<b>Only for survival</b>
5	<b>Quality</b>	What kind of food?	<b>Safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable, sustainable system of production, and promote strength of communities</b>	<b>Unsafe, poor, culturally not acceptable, unsustainable system of production, and promote weakness of communities</b>
❖ <b>Food security is governed by six principles of food sovereignty: (1) Focusing on food for people, (2) Valuing food producers, (3) Localizing food production systems, (4) Putting control over resources locally, (5) Building knowledge and skills of producers, and (6) contributing for sustainability of ecosystems (Nyéléni – Declaration, 2007)</b>				

Table 2: Broad definitions of food security and food insecurity

Millions of peoples in Ethiopia are constantly subjected to food aids, because agricultural development policy of the TPLF regime is not strategically designed to minimize food shortage like its predecessors. Starvation rate of Ethiopia is 20% and malnourished children are 60% with high under age mortality rate (WCM, 2007 and CSA, 2011). Massive transfer of physical wealth to foreign corporations is overseen by the regime, while 13 million (15.3%) peoples receive international food aid and 41% peoples are undernourished (Terry, 2011). Food aid (usually wheat) has been in range of 11% to 50% of domestic supply since 2000 (FAO 2010b). In 2008 at least 4.6 million peoples were depending on emergency food assistance and 5.3 million were subjected to chronic food insecurity or dependency on productive safety net program (PSNP) (WFP and USAID, 2008). In 2009 more than 7 million peoples were affected by chronic food insecurity and they received regular support from the cash or food-for-work activities of PSNP, while several million others affected by shocks requiring emergency food aid in any given year (MOARD, 2009). In April 2011 MOARD reported some 4.5 million peoples in need of emergency food aid (Tesfa-Alem, 2011). 50% of 85 million peoples of Ethiopia are living below the poverty line and at least 10 to 20% depend on food aid every year (HRW, 2010). 75% of 85 million peoples of Ethiopia are deprived of the rights to access sufficient amount of food per day (Figure 9). The regime has already



transferred 4 million hectares of agricultural land to foreign investors, despite most of 85 million peoples of Ethiopia are constantly affected by shortage of food. The regime has already signed away about 10% of agricultural area to foreign investors to produce agricultural commodities for international markets, but Ethiopia is in the midst of a severe food crisis and it is heavily dependent on food aid to feed its people (Hobbelink, 2011). Agricultural investment does not address national food insecurity, because 95% of crop production is export oriented (Figure10). Therefore food insecurity will be increased, because land accessibility rights and food production ability of rural communities is limited by land grabbing.

Productivity of subsistence agriculture depends mainly on size of agricultural land. Total yield of cereal production of Ethiopia increased from 5.3 million to 15.6 million metric tons by extensively increasing cereal cultivation area from 4 million hectares to 9.3 million hectares during 1993 – 2010 (Figure11). Cereal yield per area was almost stagnant during these periods, because investing public fund on agricultural research and development was neither effectively planned nor independently implemented. Agricultural extension program has already established in Ethiopia, but political cadres of the regime command peasants to follow strict development politics of the regime. Peasants are denied credit of agricultural input (mineral fertilizer, improved seeds, and pesticides) or even lose the right to access land, if they openly disagree to agricultural plan of the regime (Helen, 2010). The capacity of peasant farmers to increase agricultural production per area is limited by politically oriented agricultural policy. Moreover 85 million peoples of Ethiopia will double by year 2050. Therefore additional areas of agricultural land and effective agricultural research and development policies are essential factors to increase food production in order to support food demand of the present generation without jeopardizing ability of the future generations of all peoples of Ethiopia to achieve food security & sovereignty.

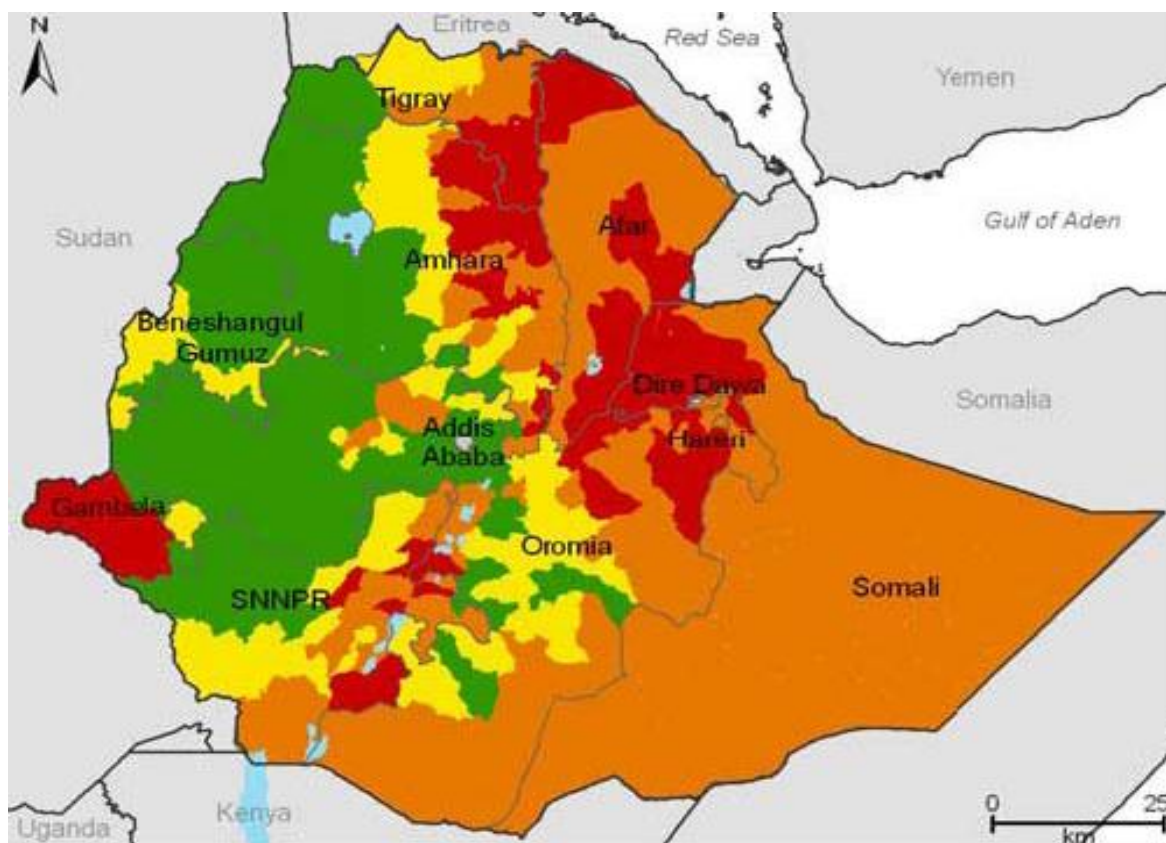


Figure 9: Projected food security conditions of Ethiopia from April – June 2010: **Green (Generally food secure)**; **yellow (Moderately food insecure)**; **Orange (Highly food insecure)**; **Red (Extremely food insecure)**, and **Black (Famine)** (IFRCRCS, 2010)



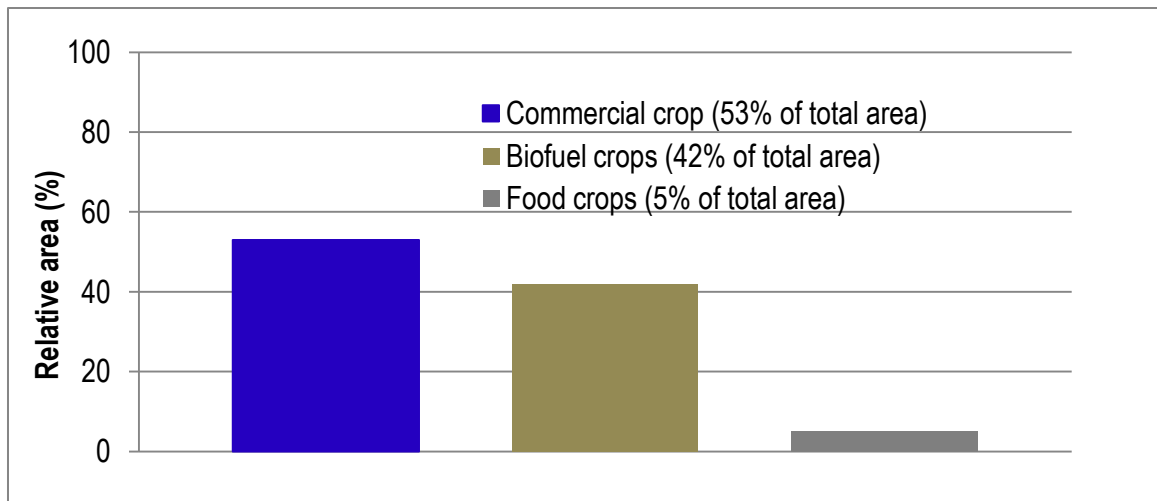


Figure 10: Summary of relative crop production on lands transferred to investors (Rahmato, 2011)

Communal land used for dry-season grazing and shifting cultivation is classified as wasteland with no pre-existing users by national investment promotion agency of the TPLF regime (IIED, 2009). Waste or surplus agricultural land should not be transferred to investors to produce agricultural commodities for export markets. Either waste or productive land should be developed to increase production of food in order to overcome regular dependency on food aid. Productive farmland is being stolen from rural communities and it is leased to foreign companies to grow and export food, while millions are starving. For example, large areas of fertile land surrounding Omo, Baro, and Akobo rivers in southern Ethiopia are being leased to Asian and European companies. Forest and grass lands are cleared by the companies to establish vast commercial plantations in order to produce export crops, even though 773000 populations in the area depend on the land to survive. Waste land or surplus agricultural land is essential resource of the people to increase agricultural production for domestic consumptions. Peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia are wished to properly manage natural resources located within their territory in order to minimize conflicts originate from shortage of land and water that will increase in next few decades due to population pressure. However the struggle of rural communities to maintain subsistence food production at minimum risk for present & future generations is jeopardized by triple stresses, poverty plus insecurity and competition of land grabbers for agricultural land.

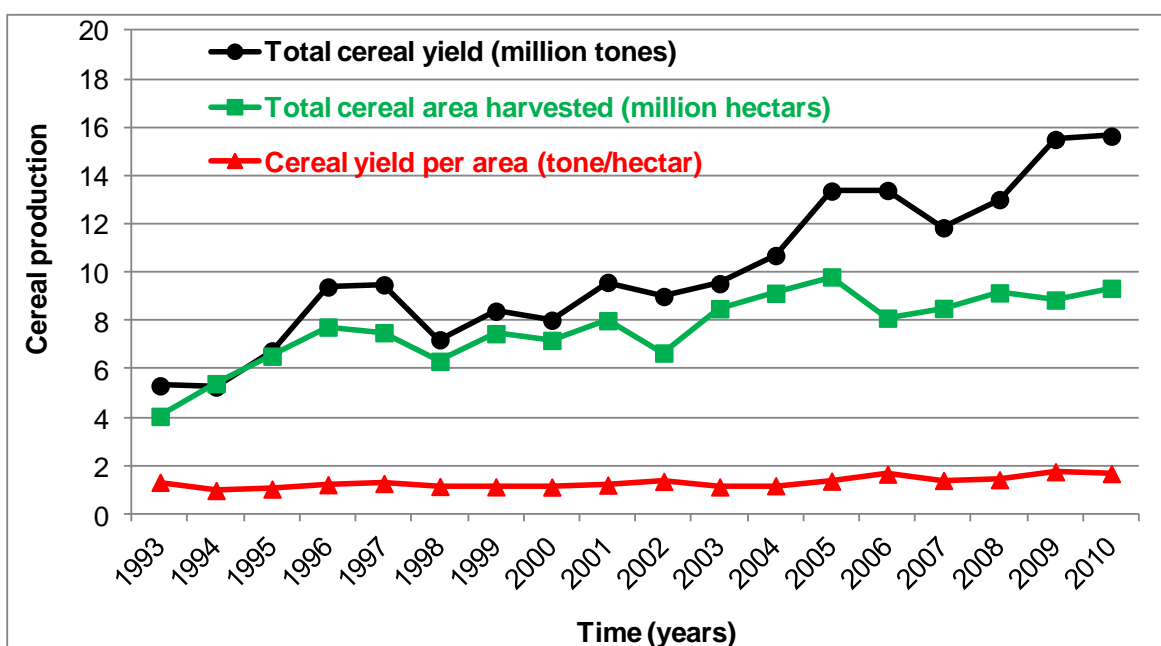


Figure11: Trend of cereal production of Ethiopia from 1993 to 2010 (FAO, 2012)

### 5.6.3. Intensification of conflicts

Land use conflict is more likely occurred under conditions of rapid population growth, mobility, ethnic heterogeneity, resource encroachment, increased vulnerability to poverty, institutional deficiency to manage dispute of scarce resources, weak legal system, poor governance, political instability, and insecurity (Tesfaye, 2005). These factors are fundamental components of political, economic, and social conflicts in Ethiopia. Conflict is seasonally emerged from shortage of water and land in rural Oromia and Southern Ethiopia; however it has been traditionally resolved for centuries. Both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts over the use of natural resources are common in Borana region of Oromia and they are usually settled by the local elders using the principles of gadaa system (Edossa et al, 2007). However the TPLF regime is either manipulated or orchestrated seasonal conflicts on natural resource to implement anti peace strategy in Oromia through maintenance of insecurity. The government of Ethiopia fails to appreciate, collaborate, and complement the traditional mechanism of resource allocation and resolution of conflicts: thus its ignorance or poor understanding of the role played by the gadaa system has diminished the efficacy and relevance of this customary institution in conflict management in Oromia in general and in Borana in particular (Edossa et al, 2007). The regime 's unwillingness to promote traditional mechanism of conflict resolution is intentional and it is strategically required to incite ethnic conflicts between Oromo & Somali, Sidama & Oromo, Oromo & Afar, Gumuz & Oromo, and others in order to destabilize peaceful relations between different ethnic groups of South Ethiopia (Table3).

Climate change and ecological deterioration alone do not lead to conflict, because local populations have learned to adapt their environments. The scarcity of natural resources exacerbates conflicts when it is coupled with other social, political, and economic factors (Temesgen, 2010). Violent conflict over water and pasture land reportedly affected rural communities in pastoralist-inhabited areas of South Ethiopia near the border of Kenya. Conflict on land and water resource internally displaced 300000 to 350000 peoples in late 2010 (iDMC & NRC, 2011). Level of the conflict is complicated by population growth in combination with poverty and food insecurity. Shortage of agricultural land and water is resulted in increase of degree of conflict. Incidence of conflict over use of natural resources is intensified in Oromia since 2003. It resulted in death of at least 1094 innocent civilians and it displaced internally half a million peoples between year 2005 and 2009 (Table3).

Peoples (victims)	Internally displaced	Killed	Location	Time
Gabra & Guji	70000	68	Southern Oromia	April 2005
Borana & Gabra	55000	43	Southern Oromia	July 2005
Oromo & Somali	30000	33	Southern Oromia	December 2005
Oromo & Somali	100000	135	Southern Oromia	August, 2005
Oromo & Somali	85000	73	Eastern Oromia	August, 2005
Borana & Gabra	75000	100	Southern Oromia	October 2006
Burji & Guji	35000	37	Southern Oromia	June 2006
Borana & Konso	25000	30	Southern Oromia	October 2007
Oromo & Gumuz	24000	400	Western Oromia	May 17 to 19 / 2008
Oromo & Sidama	30000	140	Southern Ethiopia	April 2-7/2008 & May 31/2009
Oromo & Afar	25000	35	Eastern Oromia	May 20 – 29, /2009
<b>Sum</b>	<b>554000</b>	<b>1094</b>		
<b>References</b>	IDMC, 2005; <i>Sudan tribune</i> , 2008; OLF, 2009a – 2009e ; <i>Megalommatis</i> , 2009 and <i>Temesgen</i> , 2010			

Table 3: Number of peoples displaced and killed in Ethiopia by conflict on land and water

Global land grabbing by investors is aggressively competing with rights of rural communities to access water and land for livestock and crop production. New tensions are emerging from land grabbing by putting unprecedented pressures on rights to access land and potential for conflict. The conflict is further exacerbated by the ambiguity surrounding land rights and a company's legal rights over land may not be perceived as legitimate by the local populations and vice versa (Alison et al, 2011). Therefore increasing shortage of natural resources will aggravate the ongoing conflicts in Oromia & Southern Ethiopia. Lack of clear demarcation of land rights of communities, inadequate data, & failure to consult effectively with the affected communities and a lack of transparency will potentially cause conflict (World Bank, 2009).

#### 5.6.4. Accelerating degradation of ecosystem

Ecosystem is interaction and interdependence relationships of organisms (plant, animal, and human being) with their environment (air, water, and land) through chains of energy flow and nutrient cycling. Living in harmony with ecosystem is an essential component of sustainable development. Natural-ecosystem and agro-ecosystem of Ethiopia have already degraded, because development policies of Abyssinian regimes are against protection & conservation of ecosystem. 35% of land area of Ethiopia was covered by natural forests at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century (EFAP, 1994). Deforestation activities were intensified by human impact since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ethiopia was covered by 4.8% natural forest in 1970s and only 0.2% of the land was covered by undisturbed natural forests as of 1999 (Matthias, 2000). Introducing agro industries in fragile African ecosystems could destroy the habitat of millions of human-beings who are already suffering deteriorating conditions due to climate change (Alison et al, 2011). Land grabbers are started accelerating degradation of already fragile ecosystems of Southern Ethiopia and Oromia through deforestation, contamination of water, and deterioration of soil quality. Clearing of woody and herbaceous vegetation by investment projects is exposing lands in several regions to serious erosion and land degradation, and depriving rural communities of valuable natural resources (Rahmato, 2011). Deforestation is resulted in degradation of quality of ecosystem. Areas of natural and plantation forests are reduced to 4% at the beginning of 2000 (Table 4).

	Percent of natural and plantation forest area relative to total land area					
	Original	Early 1950	1960 - 1970	1970 - 1990	2000	1990 - 2000
<b>Ethiopia</b>	35%	16%	14%	12%	4%	- 8%
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	-	-	-	29%	20%	- 9%
<b>World</b>	48%	40%	35%	31%	29%	- 2%

Table 4: Percentage change in Forest area (EarthTrends, 2003 and WCM, 2007)

Since 1990 ecosystems degradation is intensified in Ethiopia, because natural resource development and environment protection policies are deficient and ineffective. Over the last four decades, agricultural land increased about 10%, which was achieved at the expense of forest land and other land mainly in the developing world (Alison et al, 2011). Deforestation is mainly driven by poverty through scramble for agricultural land and fuel wood. Since 1990 the rate of deterioration of agro ecosystem and natural ecosystem of Ethiopia is significantly aggravated: because (1) speed of soil loss through erosion is intensified; (2) level of transformation of productivity of agricultural land from fertile to unfertile status is increased, and (3) rate of degradation of bio-diversity is increased. Global land grabbing is resulted in increase of rate of soil loss through deforestation of the remaining natural forests of Oromia and Sothorn Ethiopia (Figure12). Large scale commercial agriculture is characterized by single-crop farming and it could replace wide areas of peasant farming characterized by high biodiversity: and it could be resulted in reduction of biodiversity of some areas (UNEP, 2007). Foreign investors are doubly participated in destruction of natural environment and jeopardize future generations' enjoyment of human rights by replacing traditional small-scale farms and wild areas with large intensive agriculture (Alison et al, 2011). The enclosure of land, vegetation clearing, and farm operation by investors have a damaging impact on land & water resources, wildlife, biodiversity, and natural environment of Oromia and Sothorn Ethiopia.

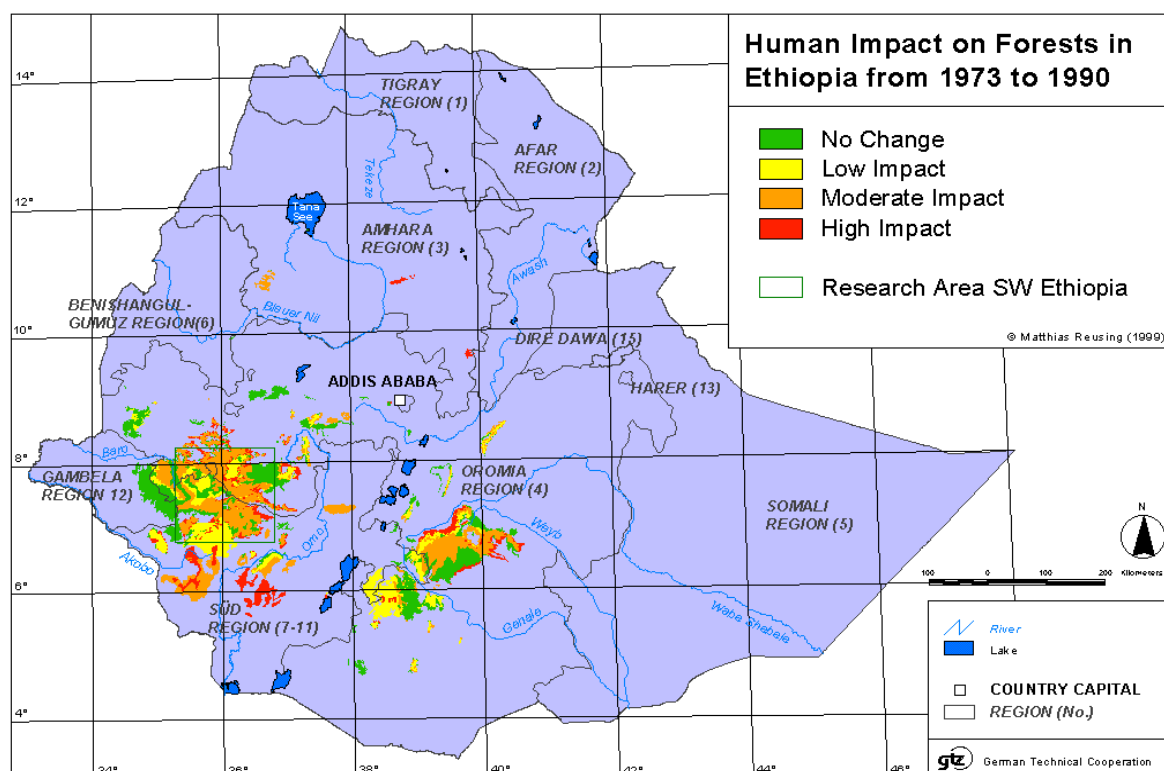


Figure 12. Forest degradation in Ethiopia between 1973 and 1990 (Matthias, 2000)

Global land grab is both water and land grabs due to the fact that agricultural investment is pointless without water and therefore only lands with abundant water supply have been targeted by investors (Smaller and Mann, 2009). Selling or leasing rural land in poor countries to agro-industries is resulted in overconsumption of water from the rivers and streams. Large-scale plantations for agro-fuel production are associated with increased soil and water pollution by pesticides, soil erosion, and surface run-off (UNEP 2007). Commercial agriculture demands intensive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Shortage of water and poisoning of drinking water through discharge of dangerous chemicals are threatened livelihoods of rural community. It is resulted in pollution of soil and water through degradation of ecosystem quality by accumulation of residues of agro-chemicals like insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers, and growth regulators. The residues of agrochemicals can cause significant damage to biodiversity and pollution of soils, rivers, subterranean water sources & springs, and gravely affect the health of plantation workers and rural communities (Alison et al, 2011). Only 11% of rural populations are accessing safe water, only 11% lives within one mile of an all-season road, and only 2% are accessing electricity in Ethiopia (World Bank, 2008). Major sources of water for drinking and domestic consumption in rural areas of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia are unprotected spring, river, ground water, and pond. Therefore residues of agro-chemicals endanger health of rural communities.

### 5.6.5. Advancing violation of basic human rights

The TPLF regime is advanced its practices of human rights violation through implementation of very dangerous policy of land grabbing in Oromia and Southern Ethiopia. The violations of civil rights during process of land grabbing include both direct and systematic crimes against humanity. Human rights violation directly exercised by the regime includes physical mistreatments like beating, raping, detaining, torturing, and killing during forced eviction of rural communities from their ancestral land. Survival's director, Stephen Corry, said that, *"The Ethiopian government and its foreign backers are bent on stealing tribal land and destroying livelihoods: they want to reduce self sufficient rural communities to a state of dependency, throw all who disagree into prison, and pretend this is something to do with progress and development"* (Survival, 2011c). The systematic violations of human rights mainly involve

limitation of accessibility to basic human needs through destruction of livelihood assets of the people. Violation of the legitimate right of indigenous people to access ancestral land is systematically resulted in (1) increase of population living in extreme poverty; (2) reduction of subsistence crop and animal production, (3) unsafe drinking water and shortage of food, (4) poor health conditions, (5) increase of internal displacements and refugee, (6) financial disability to access basic needs, and (7) reduction to the status of forced manual laborer.

Direct human rights violation practices of the regime in Omo and Gambela regions of South Ethiopia demonstrate atrocities of the land grabbers. Human rights violations in the lower Omo valley is characterized by arbitrary arrests and detentions, beatings and mistreatment, governing through fear and intimidation, and violations of economic, social, and cultural rights (HRW, 2012b). The government and its police are cracking down, jailing and torturing indigenous people and raping women in the Omo region that the people do not oppose the land grabs and an interviewee said, *"Now the people live in fear – they are afraid of the government"* (Survival, 2011b). In a report based on more than 100 interviewees in May and June 2011, a victim from Gambella said, *"My father was beaten for refusing to go along [to the new village] with some other elders, he said, 'I was born here – my children were born here – I am too old to move so I will stay', but he was beaten by the army with sticks and the butt of a gun, he had to be taken to hospital, and he died because of the beating"* (HRW, 2012a). About 200 Bodi, 28 Mursi, and 20 Suri tribes of Omo region are in jail and the indigenous people now fear that the security forces may start killing people and they said, *"The arrests are a show of force, to intimidate us not to oppose the land grabbing policy: 'we lived here in peace, in the heart of our land, the place where all of our cattle were grazing during both the rainy and dry seasons; but now, in this place there is a plantation owned by a rich Malaysian company who trained 130 soldiers and armed them with 130 machine guns by the government: if our people oppose the land grabbers, the soldiers are ready to kill us'"* (Survival, 2011a). Like the present government, past regimes sought to settle pastoralists, changing their 'backward' practices to more 'civilized' sedentary farming (Amdissa 2006 and Donham 2002).

The then prime minister Meles Zenawi rejected the critics of land grabbing as ill-informed and he said, *"We want to develop our land to feed ourselves rather than admire the beauty of fallow fields while we starve"*. Also head of the state agency responsible for land leasing (Essayas Kebede) said, *"Ethiopia benefits in many ways from land deals that we will receive dollars by exporting food; the farms provide jobs; they import know how; they will help us to boost productivity; and therefore we will improve food security"* (Philipp, 2011). However centuries old governance corruptions will effectively limits distribution of investment benefit to the poor people of Ethiopia. For example between 2000 and 2009 Ethiopia lost US\$11.7 billion to illicit financial outflows and the illicit money leaving the economy in 2009 was US\$3.26 billion, double of the amount in 2007 and 2008, and greatly exceeds the US\$ 2 billion value of total exports of Ethiopia in 2009 (GFI, 2011). Even though the peoples of Ethiopia are trying very hard to fight poverty the possibility to defeat evil system is full of challenges. The global shadow financial system happily absorbs money that corrupt public officials, tax evaders, and abusive multi-national corporations siphon away from the peoples of Ethiopia (GFI, 2011). Therefore implementation of global land grabbing policies directly limits socio-economic power of the rural communities to access primary human needs (water, food, house, cloth, and medical services).

The right to feed households and family is realized in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa with the right to access agricultural land to produce sufficient food through crop and animal production. Failure of African governments to protect & guarantee sustainable use of land & water for food production of subsistence peasants constitutes a violation of the right to food, because assuring long-term supply of food is part of their obligations in relation to the right to food. The right to adequate food exists when every individual, house-hold or family has achieved physical & economic access to adequate food at all times or means for its procurement (CESCR 1999). Agricultural investment policy of the TPLF regime encourages export oriented crop production. The Saudi Star produces rice in Ethiopia for export (Oakland Institute, 2011). Karuturi marketing & logistics makes no secret of the fact that the investment is commercial that



the company will sell its agricultural products to those who pay most (Philipp, 2011). But at least 80% peoples of Ethiopia are very poor to economically access food if food is available to buy. Agricultural companies are mainly focusing on production of commercial crops; because investment on agriculture in remote areas should be profit oriented. Therefore investment on production of stable food crop is very marginal. For example investment of Indian agro-companies on food crop is less than 10% (Table 5). Violation of land accessibility rights of rural communities is resulted in increase of starvation rate through dramatic reduction of subsistence crop or/and animal production. Therefore land grabbing policy of the TPLF regime has nothing to do with improvement of food security.

Company	Size in ha	Crop production	Region
Karuturi	100000	Rice, palm oil, maize, sugarcane	Gambella
Karuturi	11100	Floriculture	Oromia
Ruchi Soya	25000	Soybeans	Gambella
BHO Agro	25000	Agro fuel seed	Gambella
Shapoorji Pallonji & Co. Ltd	50000	<i>Pongamis pinnata</i>	-
Emami Biotech	100000	Jatropha and edible oil seeds	Oromia
Sonnati Agro Farm Enterprise	10000	Rice, pulses, and cereals	Gambella
Romton Agri plc	10000	Tomatoes	Oromia
Almidha	28000	Sugar	Oromia

Table 5. Agricultural investment of Indian companies in Gambela & Oromia (Oakland Institute, 2011)

The right of rural communities to access agricultural land is the most important factor to achieve primary standard of living, because agriculture is the foundation of the livelihood assets of rural communities. Access to land is an essential element of the right to an adequate standard of living and the realization of the right to work (art. 11 and art. 6 ICESCR). Land grabbing resulted in forced displacements and refugee. The right to adequate housing is the right to live somewhere in security, peace, and dignity (CESCR 1991). The right to housing is directly linked to the right to be protected from forced evictions. For example forced displacement of 270000 indigenous peoples from the western Gambella and Omo regions to new villages by government of Ethiopia details the involuntary nature of the transfers, loss of livelihoods, deteriorating food situation, and ongoing abuses by the armed forces against the affected people: and that many of the areas from which people are being moved are leased by the government for commercial agricultural development (HRW, 2012a & b). Violation of the rights to live somewhere in peace is defined as the permanent removals of individuals, families, and/or communities from their homes and/or lands that they occupy, on either a permanent or temporary basis, without offering them appropriate measures of protection (CESCR, 1997). Rural communities of Omo valley of South Ethiopia are neither 'backward' nor need 'modernization', they are as much a part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century civilization as the multinationals that seek to appropriate their land; but forcing them to become manual laborers will certainly lead to a drastic reduction in quality of their life and condemn them to starvation and destitution like many of their fellow countrymen' (Survival b, 2011). Despite some instances of income improvement by export opportunities, the expansion of world agricultural trade has failed to translate into better living conditions for most of those working in farm in the developing world (ILO, 2004).

Governments and private investors believe rural community accessibility to the job market compensates for the loss of land and livelihoods. However income derived from daily wages never replaces livelihood assets of rural community, which are constantly and directly derived from land use. Some peasants were employed as casual laborers (day laborers) by the coffee plantation following eviction from their land and they receive about 1\$ per day for a fixed amount of work that they have often completed in two days work (Alison et al. 2011). Large shares of commercial agriculture jobs are characterized with very poor working conditions mainly very low payment, low-skilled daily work, seasonal fluctuation, without

health insurance, very high risk of accidental death without insurance, violence, harassment, and employment of underage children. A young boy is digging up weeds kneeling in the middle of a sugar cane field in blistering temperature of 40 C °, while an Indian worker stands over him to make sure he does not miss any and Red is eight years old and earns 73 pence for one day work, i.e. less than the cost of using pesticides (Philipp, 2011). Children attending primary school are significantly decreased in areas of land grabbing. Deputy Head of a school (Tigaba Tekle), near the Karuturi farm said that only 5 out of 60 students are sometimes attending a class, because most of them are working at agricultural fields of Karuturi (Philipp, 2011). Land commercialization will never establish sustainable and safe employment opportunities for peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia, because colonial governance system is never defended security and dignity of oppressed peoples. Therefore unsustainable and unsafe employment conditions have nothing to do with compensation of loss of livelihoods of rural communities of South Ethiopia.

## 5.7. Review of case studies in Oromia and Southern Ethiopia

Review of case studies in Oromia & Southern Ethiopia is summarized based on data of field research conducted in Eastern Oromia by Lovers (2011) and in Western Oromia & Gambela by Rahmato (2011). The results are summarized on Table6.

	Eastern Oromia (Lavers 2011)	Western Oromia (Rahmato 2011)	Southern Ethiopia (Rahmato, 2011)
<b>Location</b>	East & West Hararghe, Arusi, Bale (200000 ha)	Bako woreda in West Oromia (11000 ha)	Most of Gambela region (250000 - 500000ha)
<b>Investors</b>	Foreign investor of bio-fuel crop	Foreign investor of rice, palm trees, and maize production for export	Foreign investors of large-scale commercial and bio-fuel crop production
<b>Land deal</b>	Investors paid incentives to kebele and traditional leaders in order to convince people to join the out grower project	Rural community and local officials were not consulted in the decision to transfer the land to investors	Authoritarian land transfer to investors , i.e., without knowledge of community, without consultation of local leaders, and without compensation
<b>Land use</b>	Most areas were cultivated by smallholders and the remaining land used by pastoralists	<i>The koticha</i> land (black soil) is used for communal grazing and to grow a variety of food crops	Ecosystem & surrounding natural resources are very important for livestock survival and source of food, medicinal, & other useful plants
<b>Population affected</b>	124000 smallholder and 50 000 pastoralist peasants	125000 smallholder peasants	273000 small holder and pastoralist peasants

Table 6.Summary of review of case studies of land grabbing in South Ethiopia

### 5.7.1. Eastern Oromia

72000ha farm land is grabbed by foreign investor of bio-fuel crop in 2008 to establish castor crop as out grower schemes on land used by 84000 to 124000 smallholders in 240 peasant associations (PAs) in East and West Hararghe provinces. Community meetings were held in each peasant associations to establish the project. Investors paid incentives to members of committees of PAs and traditional leaders to convince the people to join the project. Committees and investors signed contracts on behalf of the small holder farmers. The company leased another 60000ha of land classified as 'unused' in West Hararghe to establish plantation. The company received 30 million birr loan from Ethiopian bank to establish a biodiesel processing factory. It hired agronomists, accountants, and supervisors. Large sums of money were spent on pesticide sprayers, peeling machines, motorbikes, and cars.



The project was failed, because castor yield was massively over-estimated at 70 quintals/ha. Instead of expected yield (i.e. 70 quintals/ha) the average seed yield was only 3 to 4 quintals/ha. It took only three days to process all the seeds bought. The managers fled the region in April 2009 facing failure of the project. The investor left massive debts and no money to pay wages or buy the remaining seeds from the out-growers. Most of the PAs are chronically food insecure, because average landholding is less than 0.5ha per family and annual rain fall is erratically distributed.

The major impacts of bio-fuel project on livelihoods of peasant farmers include loss of up to 50% of annual crop production by switching from food crops to castor cultivation, the pesticides killed bees & resulted in loss of extra income of beekeeping, some had to sell cattle to buy food, increased peoples depending on food aids, and the company has abandoned out-grower schemes without compensation. The project is shifted to large scale farming on 60000ha in West Hararghe and 100000ha in Arusi & Bale provinces. Even though the land is classified as 'unused' it is grazing land for livestock production activity of pastoralist communities. It is resulted in loss of communal grazing land.

### 5.7.2. Western Oromia

11000 ha land in Bako district is grabbed by investors in 2009. The land is classified as arable land, grazing land, open wood land, and forest or shrub land. Farming system is mainly mixed farming activities under management of small holder farmers. The most important crop production activities are maize, sorghum, wheat, teff, oil seeds, and spices cultivation. Livestock production is an important source of income. The peasant farmers were denied certification of plots of land that they have been using since generations in order to refuse them eligibility for compensation, when the land is transferred to investors. Local officials and rural communities were not consulted in the decision to transfer the land to Karuturi, Indian agricultural investor. Karuturi has established rice and maize farms and plantation of palm tree to export grain and oil. Local farmers depend on the Abuko river (tributary of Gibe) to grow sugar cane and vegetables along its banks but the river and other streams have now become insufficient, because the Karuturi project is competing for water & land uses.

The land transferred to the investor is called *koticha* land. *Koticha soil is a black soil with high water holding capacity and high fertility level but with difficult workability, because of water logging and hardness when dry (Taye and Yifru, 2010).* However the *koticha* land was used for grazing by the community and it had been used by peasants to grow a variety of food crops. Peasants interviewed stressed that the *koticha* land was also used for other important purposes by the community: it provided access to firewood, to useful plants and water sources both for humans and livestock, and served as a setting for holding community and cultural events. The black soil was covered with open woodland and some of the trees, especially *ficus sur* and *ficus vasta* (*sholaa* or *arbuu*) were valued by the community for religion or cultural reasons. These trees have symbolic meaning in Oromo culture and are revered by rural Oromo communities. They provide shade for humans and livestock, are used as venues for community gatherings and peace-making, and have religious significance. A lot of people, including local employees, were thus very upset when the company uprooted a large *ficus sur* located on a religiously symbolic site which was frequently used for a variety of significant cultural events. When employees brought the matter up with the company manager, he is reported to have told them: **"don't worry, we will buy you umbrellas"**.

Peasants complained that the loss of their common and individual property has brought hardship and reduced their income. Fruit trees and crop land were lost in the process, but the compensations for lost properties were denied. 500 peasants lost crop land, when the land was transferred to the investor: and 150 peasants lost property during the extension of road to the project site. When some concerned peasants protested to the district authority they were put in detention for some days. The detainees were released after being given severe warnings not to "cause trouble". The project has provided some employment to people; however the majority of employees are casual laborers without employment

security and without benefits other than the daily wage they receive. Wage laborers and others interviewed were not particularly well disposed to the project, some were even hostile because they felt they were unfairly treated, had no job security, and frequently abused. Two women laborers told the interviewers that they had suffer physical abuse and sexual harassment at work. The project pays a daily wage of less than 0.5\$ per day, which is 50% less than the daily wage scale for wage laborers in productive safety net (PSN) program.

### **5.7.3. Gambela**

Gambella is one of the regions of Southern Ethiopia with unique natural ecosystem. The ecology and biodiversity of Gambella include several varieties of woodland, high forest, shrub-land, savanna grassland, permanent and seasonal wetlands, diverse wildlife, and twenty most important wild animal species of international significance (TFCI 2010a & TFCI 2010b). It is the second largest wildlife migration area in the world, after that of the Serengeti in East Africa. Neither registration nor certification of land was conducted in the region. The land tenure is mainly characterized by communal system of land use based on customary property relation among different ethnic groups. Gambella is traditional home of three ethnic minority groups: Annuak (100000), Nuer (113000), and Majangir (60000) population. All the peoples are directly affected by investment projects.

The livelihood of Annuak people depends on crop production, fishing, hunting, honey production, woodlands, forests, and grasslands. The Nuer people are pastoralists and transhumance cultivators. They live at the river banks with their livestock and cultivate crops on land enriched by the floods during the end of the flood period (October to May). They live in the upper woodland areas with their livestock and cultivate crops during rainy season (May to October). The rivers are vital to sustain sustenance agricultural production and survival of the Nuer people. The Majangir people live in densely forested areas. They are honey producers and the forest ecosystem is critical for their livelihood. The ecosystem provides a variety of other essential resources, including wood for tools, grass for homesteads, wild food, medicinal and other useful plants, and access to water resources for 273000 peoples. The land given to the investment project belongs to the peoples of Gambela. It was transferred to investors without knowledge or consent of rural communities and without any compensation paid to them.

A full-scale resettlement program was planned in the region. The populations in all parts of the territory were moving to settlement sites. The program was a complete surprise to the peoples. The local officials were not consulted and they were only instructed by high level authorities to implement the decision. Everyone was convinced that it is a land clearing program for the investment projects. An eviction in the form of mass resettlement negatively affects rural communities, because investment projects are depriving the rural peoples of vital livelihood assets, because the settlement sites are unsuitable for habitation and cultivation. The rural communities will be affected by shortage of water and they will be denied access to fishing rights, because a dam built over river Alwero using public fund provides irrigation water to projects of Saudi Star (the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest investor in the region). The investment projects are implemented inside national park and protected areas, or inside the established habitats of wildlife. They are implemented in areas effectively block or interfere with transit corridors and migration routes of animals. Others are located in areas that will deprive livestock accessibility to seasonal pastures and water points. The clearing of the land by investment projects and the loss of the woods, grass, and other vegetation negatively affect the local communities. The clearing of the land and the large-scale deforestation by investors will bring social and economic hardship to rural communities; because valuable wild animal & plant used to be plentiful in the area have now disappeared.

## 6. Political function of land grabbing policy of the TPLF regime

Land grabbing is the major source of military, political, and economic powers of successive regimes of Ethiopia. Each regime distinctively designed land governance system to maintain colonial ownership of land of peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia. After incorporation of South Ethiopia into the Abyssinian (North Ethiopia) empire at end of 19<sup>th</sup> century the relationship between the Southern and Northern is characterized by inequality, exploitation, and resource extraction by collection of tributes and taxes, and slave and ivory trades (Dereje, 2006 and Donham, 2002). Gebar land tenure system in the South Ethiopia as well as the Rist tenure system of North show some resemblance to the current land tenure system and with some reservations also resemble that of the military regime, with the exceptions that the communal Rist system is replaced by the organs of state, i.e. the peasant associations (Crewett et al. 2008). Power of domestic colonial politics is highly centralized with absolute land ownership right of governance core of Abyssinia to sustain rule of dictatorship through chains of colonial agents at regional, provincial, and local levels. Government of Ethiopia (the TPLF regime) is the owner of land, but the rights of individuals and communities are '*holding (use) rights*' (Proclamation No. 456/200550).

Though ethnic equality is now legally recognized, in practice, emergent regions are still politically marginalized and permitted less autonomy, partly due to the federal development strategy, which requires central control of local land resources and changes in livelihoods (Lavers, 2011). Centralization of Abyssinian land governance politics is manifested by five levels of land use rights: (1) owner-ship, (2) management, (3) sanction, (4) full accessibility right, & (4) limited accessibility right (Table7). Land tenure politics of both imperial and military or TPLF regimes are generally sharing similar political goal, i.e. manipulation of land use rights to maintain monopoly of governance powers. The commercialization of land has served as a political advantage for the state, because it enhances greater concentration of authority in the hands of the governors. A woreda (district) or an urban administration shall have the power to expropriate rural or urban landholdings for public purpose where it believes that it should be used for a better development project to be carried out by public entities, private investors, cooperative societies or other organs, or where such expropriation is decided by the appropriate higher regional or federal government organ for the same purpose (Proclamation No. 455/200558).

Land use rights	Imperial regime 1889 – 1974	Military regime 1974 – 1991	TPLF regime 1991 – current
Owner-ship	Emperor	Military committee (Derg)	TPLF
Management	Kings and aristocrats	Provincial & local committees of peasant associations	Regional and local agents of TPLF
Sanction	Kings and aristocrats	Provincial & local committees of peasant associations	Regional and local agents of TPLF
Full accessibility	Peasants of Northern Ethiopia	Members of peasant associations	Peasants of Tigray and Amhara regions
Limited accessibility	Tenants of Oromia & Southern Ethiopia	-	Peasants of Oromia & Southern Ethiopia

Table 7. Land use rights in Ethiopia after colonization of peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia

The TPLF regime is intentionally violating the land accessibility right of rural communities of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia to achieve political goals of suppressing national struggle of colonized peoples. The regime has already institutionalized practices of human right violations through manipulation of constitution. It formulated politically motivated proclamations (1) to limit humanitarian activities of NGOs using charities proclamation and (2) to crash political opponents through manipulation of anti-terrorism

law in order to protect its monopolistic ownership of military, political, and economic powers (Mulataa, 2010b). The regime is not hesitated to practice arbitrary arrest, long detention, or extrajudicial killings of tens of thousands, and torturing peoples suspected to be supporters of opposition political organizations to sustain fears in civil societies. As society becomes more fearful, many individuals yearn for the safety and order promised by strong, controlling regime: and that the fears create conditions under which such regime gains control (Alan Hall, 2010). The regime is systematically advancing level of insecurity by aggravating poverty, expanding borders of food insecurity, manipulating conflicts, degrading safety of ecosystem, and advancing violation of human rights in order to produce the poorest of poor peoples. Thus it can easily use victims of poverty as political animal through manipulation of land use right. The regime easily regulates rural communities' support of opposition political parties by threatening subsistence livelihoods of about 75% of 85 million populations. Therefore the rural communities are directly controlled by the regime and they cannot be free in any means to vote opposition political parties during election. They will loss land use right, if they vote for opposition.

Power of the regime is frequently dependant of external aids. During 1974 – 1991 financial, material, & technical supports of the international donor communities were channeled through political NGOs of the TPLF to areas under its control to support both military and emergency programs (Mulataa, 2010a). The aids were resulted in increase of peasant-based supports, legitimacy expansion among the civilian population, use of aid resources to support organizational structures, and quantitative capability in feeding the armies (URD, 2002). The regime received very huge sum of financial aids since 1991. It has received a sum of US \$ 26 billion in development aid as of 2009 (Helen, 2010). Ethiopians remained in the most wretched poverty, despite decades of development policies (The Economist, 2007). The regime is manipulating foreign military and development aids as instrument to suppress peaceful transfer of political power since 1991 through marginalization of opposition political parties. The government of Ethiopia used donor-supported programs, salaries, and training opportunities as political weapons to control the population, punish dissent, and undermine political opponents—both real and perceived, that the local officials deny these people (i.e. supporters of opposition parties) to access seeds and fertilizer, agricultural land, credit, food aid, and other resources for development (HRW, 2010). Policies of aggravating poverty through destruction of livelihood of rural communities are systematically implemented by the TPLF regime to sustain political manipulation of aids, because either emergency or development aids are political instrument of the regime to enforce political support. Increasing level of poverty is tactically increasing enforcement of peoples electing the regime.

The regime is frequently manipulating food aid distribution to crash supporters of political opponents. It uses food aids as an instrument to achieve political objectives and to protect its governance powers. Land grabbing policy of the regime is systematically intended to increase size of people dependant on food aids in order to secure political support. For example: *“Despite being surrounded by other communities which are well fed, a village with a population of about 1700 adults is starving. We were told that in the two weeks prior to our team's arrival 5 adults and 10 children had died. Lying on the floor, too exhausted to stand, and flanked by her three-year-old son whose stomach is bloated by malnutrition, one woman described how her family had not eaten for four days. Another three-year-old boy lay in his grandmother's lap, listless and barely moving as he stared into space. The grandmother said, we are just waiting on the crop, if we have one meal a day we will survive until the harvest, beyond that there is no hope for us (BBC, 2011).”* The message is clear and simple. It increases climate of insecurity and fear in society that for who depend on food aids they must support the ruling party in order to survive from a threat of systematic assassination. Therefore political loyalty to the state and the ruling party (the TPLF regime) governs the very existence of rural communities of Ethiopia.

## 7. Conclusion

Land ownership right is not only a customary or a legal right to access a plot of land to produce sufficient amount of crop and animal in order to secure supply of sufficient food for demand of all members of a family, a community, and a nation at all time. It is directly linked to sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country and its nation or communities. A nation and its communities possess a legitimate right to properly manage and to fairly use natural resources integrated within their geopolitical territory without illegal interference of aggressors. A people will loss natural rights of protecting their resources, when they are incapable of defending their sovereignty. Therefore loss of territorial integrity and governance rights of a country or a nation through military (direct) or political (indirect) conquest leads to the aggressive damage of land ownership and land use rights of indigenous peoples.

Colonization of Africa in general and Oromia plus Southern Ethiopia in particular by colonial powers resulted in development of unfair land use policies in order to maintain exploitation of the natural resources of colonized communities, nations, or countries. Current land grabbing policies imposed on rural communities of Africa in general and peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia in particular are extension of direct colonization. Successive regimes of Ethiopia have been articulating oppressive types of land use policies within the country they are claiming territorially integrated country.

Land use policy of Ethiopia is politically grouped into two levels: customary land use policy in North Ethiopia and colonial land use policy in the South since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Land use right of rural communities of Amhara and Tigray (North Ethiopia) has been protected by Rist system during imperial regime and it is maintained by public land use policy during military and TPLF regimes, because the core leaderships of the colonial governance have been derived from political ideology of Abyssinia (North Ethiopia). However land use right of rural communities of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia is limited by Gebar system and agricultural investment policy of colonialist regimes.

Successive colonialist regimes are cruelly controlled socioeconomic and political powers of peoples living under injustice through implementation of aggressive land grabbing policies. Peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia are not allowed to practice customary owner ship of their land, because they are reduced to status of the second class citizens of Ethiopia. They are victims of vicious cycles of poverty and their livelihood assets are threatened for total destruction by violence and insecurity directly linked to land governance and investment policies of the TPLF regime. These stresses affect a legitimate national libration struggle of peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia, political movement to emancipate from injustice through self determination.

The TPLF regime is intentionally designed dangerous land grabbing policies to destabilize livelihood assets of peoples of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia in order (1) to aggravate poverty, (2) to expand food insecurity, (3) to intensify conflict, (4) to degrade ecosystem, and (5) to advance violation of human rights. The regime is systematically maintained insecurity though synergistically interconnecting poverty, food insecurity, conflict, human right violations, and violence in order to sustain its military, economic, and political dominance particularly in Ethiopia and generally in horn of Africa. The regime strategically manipulates insecurity and instability to achieve the hidden objective of damaging the livelihood assets of colonized peoples. Therefore land grabbing by TPLF regime for global investors is nothing to do with improvement of subsistence livelihoods of rural communities of Oromia and Southern Ethiopia. It plays significant role to sustain 123 years old domestic colonialism through aggressively suppressing national liberation struggle of Oromo people in particular and peoples of South Ethiopia in general.

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