

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION,
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE : -
THE CASES OF *IDDIRS* IN *AKAKI, NAZRETH* AND
ADDIS ABABA.**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University in
partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of the Masters in Social
Anthropology.**

By
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother W/o Tirunesh Deshu Dires
for her self-less love and relentless support throughout my life.

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Abbreviations

ACORD	:	Agency for Cooperation in Research and Development
CBOs	:	Community Based Organizations
CRDA	:	Christian Relief and Development Association
CSOs	:	Civil Society Organizations
E.E.A	:	Ethiopian Economic Associations
ESSWA	:	Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers and Anthropologists
MNCD	:	Ministry of National Community Development
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental organization
WPE	:	Workers Party of Ethiopia
EPRDF	:	Ethiopian people's Revolutionary Democratic Front

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the role of civil society organizations in poverty alleviation, change and development with emphasis on Iddirs on their own and in collaboration with Governmental and Non-Governmental organizations. In this thesis Iddir as civil association is considered as one of indigenous civil society organizations in Ethiopia. To meet its purpose the research has employed methods such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, group discussions, archival and document review and analysis of available relevant materials.

The thesis has emphasized the additional roles and functions of Iddirs as incipient labour unions, political platforms, non-profit making insurance organizations, change and development agents for socio-politico-cultural and economic life of the people, Iddir as entry points to undertake poverty alleviation and business activities, and recently as an instrument to fight hazards of HIV/AIDS and to support orphans of deceased members.

Regarding the internal dynamisms and features of Iddirs, members contributions become permanent and increased rapidly. Leadership and bylaws have been diversified. All in all Iddirs acquired features of modern associations. Hitherto ten types of Iddirs were identified and findings of this thesis indicated seven more specialized and diversified functions and types of newly emerging minor Iddirs. Also types of Iddirs that were forced to disappear during Imperial and Derg regimes, namely, region, ethnic and religion based Iddirs were found to have re-emerged. Besides, variables for classification of the earlier identified Iddirs have been developed by adding three equally important defining variables in one Iddir. Furthermore in cases of Akaki and Nazreth two types of Iddirs, namely, Hawilt Iddirs and Aslekash Iddir died out. As far as Iddir-state relations in the three consecutive regimes, is concerned evidences indicated that there were both common and distinct features among the three regimes.

Regarding poverty alleviation and development efforts, Iddirs participated in building schools, clinics, water pipelines, internal road construction and provision of other social facilities and services and the like. Both joint efforts of Iddir-state, and Iddir-NGOs have serious limitations. Generally the so called co-operations or collaborations seems to be co-optations. Also, Iddirs own efforts were severely hampered due to their limited capacity and inherent limitations.

In the face of the limited capacity of Iddirs, their umbrella organizations can be a viable coping mechanism to undertake competitive business to benefit Iddirs and their members, provided favourable policy is formulated by the government and if other stakeholders contribute their share. Also there are non-profit oriented efforts such as Limat Akef Mahiber of Kolfe Iddirs. To achieve better results at the levels of individual Iddirs and umbrella organizations their independence, and capacity building and empowerment measures are highly essential.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In this preliminary chapter issues such as the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, study areas (sites), methods of data collection, methods of analysis, significance of the study, and organization of the paper are discussed briefly.

1.1 Background To The Study

In Ethiopia, since the imperial regime, despite efforts of governments and the market sector, poverty has been increasing to an alarming and unbearable state. In this respect, the World Bank (1992:1) has estimated that about half of the population lives in poverty. The chronically poor make up about 60 percent of the total poor in the country. Seven years after this report, the official Ethiopian Government report indicated that, "In Ethiopia, 45.5% of the population was living in absolute poverty" (MEDAC, 1999). In the face of this increasing state of poverty Ethiopian Governments in power have been reporting the growth or development of the economy. But researchers recently warned that, if the trend of poverty in the country continues unabated, it may eventually threaten the very survival of the country itself. In this respect, Aklilu and Dessalegn (2000:8) have stated that,

We believe that poverty, with all its attendant ills, is the most pressing problem facing this country, and what is therefore urgently required is a sound and integrated poverty reduction strategy with a firm and abiding commitment by the government to ensure its successful implementation. If we fail to address this deep rooted problem, and poverty continue to grow through society, as we believe it is doing at present, it may lead to profound social dislocation and unrest, and may eventually threaten the survival of the country itself.

During of the current government, though significant progress has been reported due to reforms made, the most important goal of sustainable growth and of reducing poverty has not been achieved (Abrar and Samira, 1999:24). In this connection, *Ato Mekonen Manyazewal*, former Vice Minister of MEDaC, and *Ato Abebe Shimelis* have concluded that economic growth

does not necessarily lead to poverty reduction as the Ethiopian data might show (Ethiopia Economic Association, 1999). In a similar vein, Seitz (1995:9-21) has demonstrated that neither the government nor the market alone can be relied on to help citizens to alleviate their poverty and to achieve development. Also, in the case of Africa Joycox (in Serageldin et al. 1994:4) has noted that though economic growth is necessary it is not sufficient to bring about improvements in human well-being.

As the result, the emerging alternative is a civil society approach, according to this approach civil society organizations such as *Iddir*, NGOs, etc. can mobilize local initiatives and resources in order to obtain reliable, fair, balanced and sustainable poverty alleviation, change and development. In line with this framework, the purpose of this research is to explore and examine isolated and joint efforts of *Iddirs* in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations in *Akaki*, *Kolfe* and *Nazreth*. In this respect, since the starting point should be understanding the *Iddirs* themselves, an attempt has been made to study their historical development, experience and current status in the overall context, and eventually their contributions and problems in poverty alleviation, change and development.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The role and importance of local community based voluntary associations such as *Iddirs* and their studies in development have been underlined by different authors. In this regard, Fowler (1992:39-40) have asserted that, "community based voluntary organizations (CBOs) with traditional roots are more effective in realizing sustainable development." And ". . . to work with traditional CBOs would be worth a detailed study of its own". Similarly, Gardner and Lewis (1996:94) have argued that "Projects are often most successful when they work through pre-existing social structures and institutions." In the case of Ethiopia, Tegegn (2000:50) has underlined the total absence of research in the area in the following manner.

Although these local NGOs (i.e. Iddirs) could serve as important intermediaries in development, almost no effort has been made both by the Ethiopian government, national and international NGOs on how to tap their grassroots, voluntary and participatory potentials for development at the local level. Their potential roles in the overall political and economic decision making process and in creating partnership with national and international NGOs have not been recognized with sufficient consciousness and seriousness.

The purpose of this research is to contribute towards this gap. Though *Iddirs* have been engaged in poverty alleviation, change and development activities since the imperial regime, studies are lacking on their role prior, during and after their engagement. Particularly in my research sites, namely, *Akaki, Kolfe* and *Nazreth*, research has not been conducted. To fill this gap, my research project has attempt to inquire, document and analyse the whole process, its impacts and implications.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of this study is to explore, document and analyse *Iddirs* and their umbrella organizations in relation to their background and origin, dynamisms and features, functions and roles, their contributions to poverty alleviation, change and development projects in isolation and jointly, and their relations with political regimes since the imperial regime in *Akaki, Kolfe* and *Nazreth*.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

1. To investigate internal dynamisms and features of *Iddirs*
2. To examine functions and roles of *Iddirs*
3. To inquire into *Iddir*-state relations since the imperial regime
4. To explore and anaylse *Iddirs'* umbrella organizations and their efforts
5. To examine the role of *Iddirs* individually and together in poverty alleviation, change and development in collaboration with political regimes and NGOs

6. To analyse earlier definitions, arguments, assumptions, conclusions and recommendations
7. To analyse the research findings of the study in the overall setting

1.4 Research areas (Sites)

This research was conducted in three urban sites (areas), namely, *Akaki* and *Kolfe* of Addis Ababa, and *Nazreth* town.

1.4.1 *Akaki Beseke* : - *Akaki* or *Akaki Beseke* was an independent town up to early 1980s E.C..

Since then it was integrated with Addis Ababa and considered as the Sixth Zonal Administration of Addis Ababa City Administration. *Akaki* comprises two *Woredas*, namely, *Woreda 26* and *27*. *Akaki* is known as an industrial center or *Zone*. It was formed on the railway on the road between Addis Ababa and *Dire Dewa*. *Akaki Beseke*, according to my informants, obtained its name from a river around the town which is known as *Akaki*, and *Beseke* is the name of the hill in the vicinity of the town. Its location is between the river, *Akaki*, and the hill, *Beseke*. *Akaki* is about 25 kilometers from the center of Addis Ababa. A large proportion of *Akaki* residents are migrant workers. *Akaki* was selected as my research site due to the total absence of study on *Akaki Iddirs*.

1.4.2 *Nazreth* : - *Nazreth* is about 100 kilometers from Addis Ababa. *Nazreth* was also formed on the railroad between Addis Ababa and *Dire Dewa*. It is a trade center of *Yerer* and *Kereyu* in the Eastern *Shewa Zone*. This research site was included in my study later due to its *Iddirs'* umbrella organization formation prior to *Akaki* and Addis Ababa.

1.4.3 *Kolfe* : - *Kolfe* is located at the western part of Addis Ababa. Its location is in *Woreda 25* of *Zone 5* administration. I decided to include *Kolfe Iddirs* for various reasons. To begin with, I learned that some *Kolfe Iddirs* formed a self-initiated independent umbrella organization which aims at undertaking development venture. This umbrella organization consists of 20 *Iddirs* around *Kebele 07* of *Woreda 25*. Also I was informed that a local

NGO known as Mary Joy has organized about 41 *Iddirs* around its project activity. These are *Iddirs* in and around *Kebele 16* of *Woreda 25* (around *Asko Shoe Factory*). Besides, I had the opportunity to attend a workshop in which an umbrella organization of *Kebele 16 Iddirs* was formed. This was part of the effort of *Zone 5* administration in forming umbrella organization of *Iddirs* in the *Zone*. Furthermore, I got the information which indicates that *Nebar Kolfe*, and *Yeagerew Iddirs* were among the oldest *Iddirs* in Addis Ababa. As a result, *Kolfe* was included as the site of my research.

While *Akaki* is my major research site and case study, *Nazreth* and *Kolfe Iddirs* are my supplementary case studies in order to enrich my research and comparative analysis in the overall context.

As far as my field experience is concerned, I went to *Akaki* at the end of July 2001 with ACORD staff and participated in a workshop organized by them for *Akaki Iddirs* leaders and members as a participant observer. I took the opportunity to introduce myself and about my research work on *Akaki Iddirs*. I gave them my letter of introduction from my department (SOSA). I had preliminary discussions with participants started to identify *Akaki Iddirs* and key informants. I distributed my letter of introduction through them and as a result my contact was facilitated. This process took about two months. I started my field work at the beginning of October 2001. Since university students are considered as credible citizens for their struggle for the interest of Ethiopia people, I had no problem. While I was working in *Akaki* I made contact with *Nazreth* and *Kolfe Iddirs*. Before I went to *Nazreth* and *Kolfe* I sent my letter of introduction to them and as a result my later contact was facilitated. I had enjoyed my fieldwork and I had no problem at all.

1.5 Methods of Data collection and sources of Data

As methods and sources of data, I have included,

1. In-depth interviews : - Through the method I made intensive and extensive contacts with my informants, who had close access to the information required.
2. Participant observation : - Through participant observation method, I have participated in relevant workshops, meetings, discussion forums and training courses of ACORD for *Akaki* programme beneficiaries.
3. Focus Group discussions : - I managed to organize and conduct four group discussions in *Akaki*, *Nazreth* and *Kolfe* each. Also leaders of *Abo Tsebel Sefere Selam Meredaja* Ina *Limat Iddir* were included as one of focus groups.
4. Archival Documents : - I had the access to collect data from archives of relevant offices in *Akaki* such as the Zonal administration and dead files of former branch office of the Ministry of National Community Development.
5. Document Review and analysis : - I have attempted to review and analyse documents that were available to me on related issues.

1.6 Methods of Analysis and Theories Employed

Situational analysis in comparative and holistic contexts has been employed. Since the research is qualitative research, qualitative data analysis method has been employed. All relevant conceptual and theoretical definitions, frameworks, and perspectives were employed to analyse the collected data and issues under discussion.

1.7 Significance of The Study

This study will be significant in providing new findings for practical and academic purposes, in helping to reconsider earlier assumptions and arguments, and in giving insights into problems and limitation of *Iddirs* in poverty alleviation, change and development, and in indicating remedial measures to be taken by all concerned stakeholders.

1.8 Organization of the thesis

The next chapter deals with conceptual and theoretical definitions, frameworks and perspectives while the third chapter deals with a brief literature review. The fourth chapter presents internal dynamisms, features, functions and roles, and their relations with the three consecutive regimes. The fifth chapter discusses the role, contribution, and problems of *Iddirs* in poverty alleviation and development in collaboration with the consecutive governments, NGOs and on their own. The sixth chapter deals with umbrella organizations of *Akaki*, *Kolfe* and *Nazreth Iddirs* during the three consecutive regimes. Their history, performance, problems and relations with the regimes have been examined. The seventh chapter deals with the analysis of the research findings on its own and in relation to the earlier definitions, arguments, assumptions, conclusions and recommendation. The final chapter presents a brief discussion on the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Definitions, Frameworks and Perspectives

2.0 Introduction : - This chapter begins with definitions and features of civil society organizations, and the use of a civil society approach as a recent paradigm in development. The chapter considers why *Iddirs'* involvement in development is required. Issues such as joint partnership in development, community empowerment and participation, social capital have been discussed as theoretical perspectives and frameworks for the analysis of issues in the thesis.

2.1 Civil Society Organizations : - definitions and features

Rooy (1998:1) has stated that,

Various definitions describe civil society as the whole of humanity left over once government and profit firms are excised, covering all those organizations that fill in the space between the family and the state and the market.

Major categories of civil society organizations comprise NGOs at international, national and local levels; church organizations, grassroots or people's organizations. This latter category consists of residential area-based associations, professional associations, professional associations, burial associations, producers and consumers associations, credit associations, trade unions, gender and age based organizations and various interest groups.

Most recently a new sub-field in anthropology which studies of civil societies cross-culturally has emerged. This sub-field is known as civil anthropology. Though westerners conceived civil society as formal, legally registered, modern and strongly structured organizations as a universal feature of civil society organizations, civil anthropologists on the basis of their ethnographic studies argue that western universalist definition is ethnocentric. Proponents of civil anthropology argue that civil society is multi-cultural, historical and culture specific (Hann and Dunn, 1996: 14-15). Indeed they recognize the existence of common features. Anyhow recently, both formal and informal organizations such as *Iddirs* are defined as

a civil society organizations of developing countries such as Ethiopia(Pankhurst, 2001; Getinet, 1999; Teketel, 2000).

2.2 The Civil Society approach as a recent paradigm in development

Since the 1980s a recognition of the essential role of civil society has emerged as a change in the development paradigm. This has been the result of the failure of the state and market in bringing about improvement in the lives of citizens of poor countries such as Ethiopia. In reaction to failures of state and market approaches, citizens were forced to undertake self-help activities. Despite its inherent limitations and problems, a civil society approach enables citizens to take charge of their own destinies and realize their full potential through organizations that either represent them, or can reach them more reliably than can government and market approaches. Through this approach, it is believed that the poorest can be reached more effectively, at less cost, and more innovatively to effect equitable, fair and sustainable development. A civil society approach enables tactful mobilization of internal and external resources to alleviate poverty, and to promote change and development (Seitz, 1995 and Rooy 1998).

Regarding the role of the state or government in power, the emphasis has been changing at the global level. Earlier as it had been the case in Ethiopia, governments in power were assumed to have a dominant development role. Then state controlled development has been envisaged to be replaced by market controlled development. Recently, as stated earlier the emerging development paradigm is one which envisions a greater role for civil society organizations in development. In this respect, one of the problems observed in Ethiopia is that there is no favourable policy which encourage autonomous community based organizations such as *Iddirs* in the development process (Zerihun, 2001). Through their own organizations and efforts citizens should be enabled to be objects and subjects of their development. If policy and

legal environment is facilitated and necessary support are provided by all concerned, people have the capacity to help themselves. Cases presented in this paper shows the scale of self-initiated efforts. As Curtis (1991) has asserted beyond government there exists a large area of human organization and activity through which people collectively advance their well-being and prosperity.

2.3 Rationale for involving *Iddir* and *Iddir*-like indigenous voluntary associations in poverty alleviation, change and Development Promotion

Generally human life and progress have been, among other things, functions of human organizations. Voluntary association is one of human organizations, which has been used as a coping mechanism. The importance and role of organizations in human life has been stated by Freeman (1989:5) as follows,

Creating and operating organizations has always been central concern of human beings who have recognized, for thousands of years, that they must make permanent arrangements to secure and collectively manage what they could not obtain individually . . . The progress of people in diverse arrays of cultures has always depend on how they have organized their collective lives.

Furthermore, for modern development, it has been well-recognized that "organizational resources are at least as scarce and valuable as capital, land and technical knowledge" (Freeman, 1989:229). At this juncture, the challenging problem is how we can obtain organizational resource required. There are two alternatives. These are either to organize new organizations or to use the already existing old organizations for the new purpose. Both alternatives could be viable solutions depending on the objective conditions of the society. But in societies such as Ethiopia, it has been observed that alien and modern organizations were not accepted by the society for they are artificial to their culture and imposed on them from outside. This kind of organizations invade the culture of society. As a result, they are resisted by the society and hence, could not penetrate into the society and bring about fundamental change.

Therefore the more viable approach is to use pre-existing organizations, which are already part and parcel of the culture. The advantage of using already existing organizations is that, they are valued, respected and internalized by the community. In economic terms, they are cost-effective. But they have their own limitations. They lack modern elements and capacity. To fill this gap, one needs to integrate them with modern and improved expertise. This makes indigenous associations more appropriate and sustainable.

Many authors argue that "projects are often most successful when they work through pre-existing social structures and institutions" (Gardner and Lewis, 1996:94). But in Ethiopia, since 1975 *Iddirs* were undermined due to the socialist ideology of the Derg regime. Earlier in the 1950s and up to the mid-1960s due to dominant modernization theory, these organizations were considered to be backward and ineffective in the development effort. Hence, in both regimes traditional people's organization were undermined. In this line, Freeman (1989:240) commented on similar measures by saying that: "In the name of progress and development, precious local organizational resources have been neglected, circumvented, weakened, and destroyed. They have been in the shadows of planners' consciousness". As the result, the then Ethiopian Socialist oriented military regime was criticized for its failure to consider the people's history and cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge and experience as practiced by traditional institutions which might have been useful for the fundamental transformation of society (Tirfe, 1995).

Indeed, traditional and indigenous local organizations are part and parcel of the coping mechanisms and survival strategies of people. Since these organizations are embedded into the way of life and culture of the local people, as stated earlier they are respected, valued and internalized by the people. Hence, these organizations can serve as tools to ensure more participation of people and to come up with more effective outcomes compared to modern

organizations, which are artificial and imposed on the people and their culture from alien sources.

Members are strategizing to make the best use of their *Iddirs* organizational facility, resource and power to solve their problems. Tirfe (1995) has indicated many case studies that show the expansion of *Iddir* and the tendency to engage in business activities since different formal organizational systems so far tried by central governments have failed to provide poor people with any security of life. In this connection, it has to be noted that traditional and indigenous local organizations cannot be considered as a panacea for all problems of society. But, they could be essential and beneficial to integrate traditional and modern methods of work and organizational structures. In other words, traditional and modern organizational structures and methods of work may complement and supplement each other to create sustainable social organizations and institutions for sustainable development of the community.

In this respect, Hailu (1987:89-107) has argued that indigenous local organizations can be viable vehicle for community involvement and participation in the project design and implementation, when appropriate and timely guidance and encouragement are provided. In this regard, it goes without saying that joint *Iddirs* and NGOs projects could serve as an exemplary experiment in the collaboration with development actors and partners in breaking the poverty cycle and in promoting the take-off into sustainable development.

In this regard, Fowler (1992:39) has argued that "CBOs such as *Iddirs* with traditional roots are more effective in realizing sustainable development". Hailu also has strongly emphasized the need to mobilize the available community and organizational resources, which has a great potential to be exploited for further development purpose. Similarly, Tegegn (2000:50) has indicated the need to make use of *Iddirs* in creating partnerships with national and international NGOs.

2.4 Joint Partnership

In the context of developing countries such as Ethiopia due to inefficient structures meaningful poverty alleviation and development cannot be expected from government efforts. On the other hand, a market approach has shown the negative impact of impoverishing the already marginalized masses of the people. The remaining and strongly emerging approach is the civil society approach. In this approach, despite serious and inherent problems and limitations, efforts of the concerned actors are seen as viable and promising alternative compared to the ineffective and failed efforts of the state and market approaches. The efforts of some *Iddirs* individually are seen to be promising and exemplary. If *Iddirs* become organized under umbrella organizations and start to operate properly commendable outcomes can be registered. Joint partnership of *Iddirs* in the form of independent umbrella organization is one of coping mechanisms in tackling problems of poverty and development. Once citizens start to help themselves and solve their problem, the momentum and impacts may expand.

One of the problems of civil society organizations is lack of resources and power. To overcome this problem, the remedy is to come together and become organized at various levels. In this respect, like some *Iddirs* are doing at the present, one strategy is to join minds, hands and resources among similar organizations. The next step is to join with other different organizations for common purpose and form joint partnership. In this line, an enlightening experience was reported from Brazil where churches, trade unions, NGOs, the private sector and local government came together involving millions of people in practical local level action to raise awareness of causes of poverty (Oxfam, 1995:2). In fact, in the context of Ethiopia, at least in the present conditions, one may comment that this kind of joint partnership may be easier said than done. But the rapidly growing poverty and its devastating consequence may even force opposing actors join hands and form partnership.

2.5 Community Empowerment and Participation for Sustainable Development

The concept of empowerment emerged during the 1980s as the result of a change from a top-down approach towards a bottom-up alternative development model. Many authors have defined the concept of community empowerment. Gardner and Lewis (1996:116) adopted a definition which described empowerment as being nurturing, liberating, even energizing to the unaffluent and the unpowerful. The concept of empowerment, among other things, emerged from a theory of poverty which views it not simply as the absence of material or other resources, but as a form of social, political and psychological disempowerment. As noted by Singh and Titi (1995:14)

Empowerments as a strategy for poverty alleviation and sustainable development has to be multifaceted, multidimensional process involving the mobilization of resources and people's capacities to enter the transition towards sustainable development. In this sense, empowerment then becomes a tool for reversal of impoverishment processes rather than a theoretical construct.

Empowerment eventually entails the taking of power at the individual and social levels. Besides, the concept of empowerment comprises political power, legal power, social influence and personal control. Indeed, economic power is also equally important. Empowerment of the community implies disempowerment of the government structure (Graig and Mayo, 1995:5)

The concept of participation as a key prerequisite for sustainability of development strikes at the heart of previous developmental paradigms by suggesting that development should come from the bottom-up instead of through top-down policies and the agency of the state (Gardner and Lewis, 1996:112). The real process of participation entails empowerment of the participants. The people's own initiatives are the only true forms participation for they are not imposed from outside (Gardner and Lewis, 1996:11)

In this connection, there is a challenging question regarding the role of the government in power in realizing genuine popular participation. Midgley et al. (1986) have asserted that, while

some believe that the state should encourage and sponsor community participation, others reject state involvement on the ground that it dilute a participatory ideals. Many critics argued that the idea of participation is drawn from radical roots and served only to “soften” top-downism.

2.6 Social capital: - its definitions and assumptions

Social capital refers to features of social organization such as trust, norms, and networks. These stocks of social capital tend to be self - reinforcing and cumulative voluntary cooperation is easier in a community that has inherited a substantial stock of social capital in the form of norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement (Putnam, 1993:167-177)

Regarding the importance of social capital compared to other capitals, putnam (1992:69) has stated that,

Social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence . . . for example, a group whose members manifest trust worthiness and place extensive trust in one another will be able to accomplish much more than a comparable group lacking that trustworthiness and trust.

On the other hand, for political stability, for government effectiveness, and even for economic progress social capital may even be more important than physical and human capital (Putnam, 1992:73).

Dejene (2001:A6-9) presented different definitions of social capital. The defining variables for all definitions include trust, reciprocity, common rules, norms and sanctions, networks, connectedness in institution, shared knowledge, understandings and so on. Finally, Dejene has concluded that *Iddir* is a form of social capital because it satisfied most definitions of social capital.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Literature Review on Issues Related to Civil Society Organizations and *Iddirs*

3.0 Introduction :- This chapter comprises two sections. The first section deals with brief literature review on the role of civil society organizations in poverty alleviation, change and development. The second section deals with experiences of *Iddirs* in poverty alleviation, change and development.

3.1 Literature Review on Civil Society Organizations

3.1.1 The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Democratization, Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development

Civil society organizations are considered as a precondition to promote and facilitate democratization process in political sphere, and poverty alleviation and sustainable development in the economic sphere. Both sides of development are considered as inseparable and mutually reinforcing. Civil society organizations create a favorable environment in which democracy flourishes. Indeed, democracy should not be narrowly defined as a way of government only. It should be seen as a way of life and as a means to learn civility, i.e., the way citizens treat each other with respect and tolerance.

Furthermore, civil society organizations may perform particularly important roles such as articulating a broad range of interests, meeting local needs, making demands on government, developing political skills of their members and the community at large, stimulating political participation, and in their watchdog roles they serve as checks on the relentless tendency of the state to centralize its power and to evade civil accountability and control (Korten, 1990: 99). Civil society organizations have the potential capacity to work for realization of government, which emanates from popular choice, consultation, negotiation and consensus politics. It is believed by donors that in order to deepen democratic process and to consolidate effective and democratic institutions of governments, civil society organizations need to be strengthened. The

existence of a broad civil society is what is needed for long-term and sustainable democratic change (Rooy, 1998:49).

As far as the role of civil society organizations in poverty alleviation and take-off into sustainable development is concerned, since the 1980s, they have been considered as viable and promising alternative in comparison to the failed efforts of the state and market approach, particularly in developing countries such as Ethiopia. As a result, people have been forced to alleviate their problem on their own initiatives. In this respect, Seitz (1995:17) has noted that, "People have responded to the failures of the market and the state by undertaking self-help activities".

A civil society approach enables citizens to take charge of their own destinies and realize their full potential by utilizing their social capital, which includes people's mutual trust, the skill, cultural norms and rules, social networks, organizational facilities and the like. In other words, a civil society approach avails the people with the opportunity for self-improvement and sustainable development. Besides, it enables to assist the poorest through organizations that either represent them, or can reach them more reliably than can government and market approach. In addition, the poorest can be reached more effectively, at less cost, and more innovatively than official donors or even home governments. Also, it can bring about equitable, fair, effective and sustainable social, political and economic development policies and their implementation (Rooy, 1998: 33-39).

In this respect, Dejene and Getinet (1998) argued that a civil society approach can be used to mobilize the community more effectively in its bottom-up development to address mass poverty. Also, Seitz (1995:19) has argued that, "the civil society approach presents a new participant in development and new motivations. By focusing on the benefits that occur when people exercise local initiative and function as a community". Similarly, an Oxfam poverty

report (1995:11) has concluded that, "ultimately, real progress towards poverty reduction will depend upon local communities coming together to act as catalyst for change".

Furthermore, advocates of a civil society approach (Seitz, 1995: 16-18) argue that both market and government development approaches in many developing countries have failed to make people's lives better and to help citizens obtain their basic needs. It is even easy to show example where they have made the peoples' lives worse. In reaction to this desperate situation, voluntary efforts are flourishing to raise the low level of living standards in many developing countries. Besides, the spread of democracy around the world is a favorable ground for civil society and its approach to flourish. In this connection, Van Rooy (1998:38) has concluded that "the creation, strengthening, and further development of such institutions of the so called civil society is an essential pre-requisite for an efficient and socially sustainable functioning of a market economy".

3.1.2 Problems and Limitations of Civil Society Organization and its Approach

Critics of the civil society approach (Seitz, 1995:18) point out that while it may be promising, it can be insignificant compared to the resources of the state and the market. For instance, even the admirable Grameen Bank of Bangladesh provides only about 0.1 percent of the credit in the country. On the other hand, while the lives of millions of the people throughout the world have been "transformed" by successful projects of NGOs, it was observed that beneficiaries still remain poor. Also, efforts at the grassroots level, which was directed toward community managed economic development, often fail due to various internal and external problems. Besides, hostile and oppressive political and economic powers can block the efforts of civil society organizations. As far as the status of civil society in the African context is concerned, Teketel (1999:4) has noted that,

it was often argued that civil society in Africa is a weak and highly fragile construct, partly due to co-optation and repression by authoritarian regimes and partly because of the general socio-economic underdevelopment of the continent.

Obviously, not only CSOs but also government of developing countries are heavily dependent on external funding for their development or other programs and activities. This context of serious external dependence on donor funding affects not only the sustainability of CSOs, but also their very existence, autonomy and self-definition is under-question. As a result, through capacity-building and various supports and inputs, donors reproduce and create their own images, priorities, structures and shapes (Howell, 2000:17).

A very high level of aid dependency makes CSOs of poor developing countries seriously vulnerable. Alan Fowler has indicated that, according to the insiders' estimates 95% of NGOs will collapse if aid is stopped. This fact clearly indicates the gravity of the problem. The problem is not limited to financial and material dependency, but also there is perhaps a serious problem of intellectual dependency. The direct impact of lack of resources of NGOs and CSOs, and their dependency on foreign aid has been among very debilitating factors. Particularly poverty alleviation and sustainable development efforts have been seriously hampered. Regarding the limitations of NGOs in poverty alleviation efforts, Riddell and Robinson (1995:4) have asserted that,

In general while NGO projects reach poor people, they tend not to reach down to the very poorest. Furthermore, as NGO projects tend to be small scale, the total number assisted are also small. It is also rare for NGO projects to be financially sufficient. At times too, the NGO's concern to keep costs down to the minimum has meant that the level and quality of the benefits have been adversely affected.

3.2. Literature Review on *Iddirs* and Related Issues

3.2.1 Functions and roles of Iddir

Regarding the function, role and contributions of urban *Iddir*, the *Iddir* funds were not only employed to meet the cost of funeral but also to assist families who have lost the breadwinner, and to a lesser extent the funds also serve in cases of severe illness and unemployment. Besides such monetary assistance members of the *Iddir* were expected to bring food to the family of the deceased (Pankhurst and Endreas, 1958:358-359). In addition to the above functions, Levine (1965:277) has indicated the assistance given by the *Iddir* to families in the event of imprisonment of their breadwinners. Also help in the case of loss due to fire was included. Alemayehu (1968:12-14) has further enriched what have been stated earlier, by including additional functions such as, provision of loans without interest when a member is in serious financial problem or is out of job, and other newly emerged functions were community security, sanitation and development.

For both urban and rural *Iddirs*, members attendance of funerals, consoling and giving company to the bereaved member is common. Also members are encouraged to pay visits to each other at times of happiness and when a member is sick. Moral and psychological support is considered as important function as financial support.

Fecadu (in Ottaway, 1976:376-379) has argued that by transforming itself from a monoethnic to polyethnic association, *Iddir* has played a social integration function. As a major urban social structure, it integrates not only the urban masses horizontally but also links them vertically to the bureaucratic structure. In the absence of public social welfare and a social security system in Ethiopia, *Iddirs* have been playing a crucial role to fill that usually felt gap. Obviously, this is a commendable function and role.

Also *Iddirs* served as a pressure group on behalf of the community. In this regard, the officials of several *Iddirs* within the same vicinity co-operate in making demands upon the town administration and the government for the provision of facilities. Hence, there was a tendency

for *Iddirs* in the larger towns, such as Addis Ababa in particular, to become civic oriented organizations. Indeed, due to lack of response in the provision of facilities, *Iddirs* were forced to help themselves and be converted into local self-improvement development organizations (Markakis, 1974:172)

Iddir organizations used to play the role of political parties. In this respect, at least in the case of Addis Ababa and *Akaki*, *Iddir* leaders were competing to have a seat as municipality councilors in the Municipalities of Addis Ababa and *Akaki*. By holding this position, the elected municipality councilors were in a position to influence some administrative decisions and policies.

3.2.2 *The Role of Iddir in Socio-Politico-cultural change, poverty alleviation and Development*

In Ethiopia like all other countries, people have been helping themselves through their own self-help organizations. In urban contexts like the case of Addis Ababa, providing for the demands of the people had become greater than the capacity of the government to meet those requested demands. As a result of the failure of government structures to provide social services and facilities, people were forced to resort to their own efforts through their organizational facilities and resources (Alemayehu, 1968:14; Koehn and Koehn, 1975:400). Due to the unsatisfied demand of the people and the pressure posed on the imperial government in 1963 G.C the Emperor made a speech about self help efforts required from the people, and he said that,

Although great effort is being exerted by our government by way of planning and formulating ways and means of eradicating community problems, it is not sufficient for the people to rely on government support alone... the people themselves must ... try to solve them by collective participation (Alemayehu, 1968:14).

As Alemayehu has asserted, *Iddir* being the only body organized on community level, its level of participation increased. Hence, *Iddirs* took the responsibility for organizing and carrying out development projects. Self-help programs were more and more popular in Ethiopia. Many

communities were partially shouldering the responsibility of carrying out development projects. In the final analysis community participation became the imperial government policy (Alemayehu, 1998).

In conclusion, in November 1973 G.C the Imperial Ethiopian Government had stated its measures towards community development by employing *Iddir* Structure,

Of all traditional forms the Iddir would have been the most viable self-help association, had it not been for its limited scope ... Measures are being undertaken to restructure the organization and purpose of Iddir, especially through urban community development centers. A number of Iddirs are assisted in forming a Federation of Iddirs. The federation then collects extra funds and materials and organizes communal labour to work on selected development projects (Imperial Ethiopian Government, 1973:6).

In this line, in 1964 E.C there were 13 community development centers in major urban areas of the country including Addis Ababa. But the role of these centers and contribution of *Iddirs* in promoting social, cultural, political, and economic development of the community has been questioned and challenged by some researchers.

Koehn (1976:383-384) has noted that Addis Ababa *Iddirs* and their coordinating committees were engaged in non-developmental activities such as discouraging girls living in their districts from wearing miniskirts , ensuring sufficient citizens turn out on ceremonial occasions (the parade marking the Emperor's 80th birthday), and organizing security patrols. Besides, in the late 1960's *Iddir* leaders were mobilized by the government to march on the Emperor's palace and express indignation over the "deplorable" and "untraditional" behavior of students. On the other hand, municipality officials denied *Iddirs* the favorable conditions for their effective participation in community development. All these facts led Koehn to conclude that *Iddirs* were utilized as institutional means for perpetuating the social and political status quo of the capital city rather than as potential vehicle of urban change and development (Kohen in Ottaway, 1976:384). Koehn's conclusion was further strengthened by other evidences. *Iddirs*

leaders tended to be the better off members and were co-opted by the government into the system, and hence, were people with more vested interests in the status quo. As a result, role of *Iddir* was limited to work in a basically conservative situation, in which each community was supposed to improve its own conditions without tackling any of the basic structural problems which created the conditions. In the final analysis, *Iddir* did more to perpetuate the status quo rather than to bring about change (Ottaway, 1976:382).

The Derg regime had totally undermined the role of *Iddirs* in development. It used *Iddirs* for its non-development purpose. As a result, it has been criticized for its failure to consider traditional institutions, among other things, which might have been useful for the fundamental transformation of the society (Tirfe, 1995).

3.2.3 Problems Of Iddir in Poverty Alleviation And Sustainable Development

Since the 1960s the involvement of *Iddirs* in poverty alleviation or social welfare activities and sustainable community development efforts have exhibited complex and perplexing problems. In this regard Kebebew (1978:23-24) has noted that,

Iddirs have administrative problems which can be complex at times. Embezzlement, non-execution of official decisions, power struggle among the leadership, mishandling of Iddir property, etc, could be identified as some of the problems. There are also some members who make attempts to utilize the benefits of Iddirs when they are not eligible for such services.

Furthermore, Kebebew has added that numerous institutional and structural limitations have hampered positive contributions of *Iddirs* in development programs. In this regard Ottaway (1976:38) has commented on the problems of *Iddir* in their urban development endeavors in the 1970s as follows,

In the first place, in the early 1970s Eddirs were only beginning the transition from funeral societies to agencies of development. They lacked experience in carrying out development projects, and they were short of funds. The idea of mobilizing the resources of the community to solve its own problems was accepted in theory, but the resource to do it in practice were scant. In the second place, the effectiveness of Eddirs, was severely limited by the vested interests of both within and outside organizations.

3.2.4 State - *Iddir* Relations during the Three regimes of Ethiopia

3.2.4.1 State-*Iddir* Relation during the Imperial Regime

Before 1955, there seems to be no formal and legal grounds for state-*Iddir* association interaction, and recorded history therefrom. But the constitution of 1955 declared citizens' right to form association, and this has created favorable legal ground. Besides, the provisions of civil code of 1960 provided practical legal provisions on issues related to association formation, legal personality, legal procedures, rights, and duties of the association and its members, legal role of the concerned government department and the like. In line with the legal requirements of the civil code, associations such as *Iddirs* have been required to be register with the office of associations established with in the Ministry of Interior. Due to various reasons, in 1966 the association registration regulation legal notice 321/66, was promulgated.

Though the imperial government had facilitated the legal ground for civil association, it was not comfortable with them. As noted by Markakis (1974:174) the regime had "profound hostility to voluntary associations stemming from its political considerations". As a result, the regime had relegated to itself the dominant legal power and, strictly control and limit activities of civil associations. In the case of *Iddir* associations, they were required to include the following phrase in their statute, which reads as, " this *Iddir* will not pursue any political activity or interfere in administrative matters of the government". The additional phrase says, "membership is open to anybody regardless of his tribe, religion, age and sex". (Alemayehu, 1968:9; Mekuria, 1973:10). Besides, sometimes security agents were attending *Iddir* meetings (Alemayehu, 1968:14). As a result, *Iddir* forums were not free. As Markakis (1974:172) has noted , " To a limited extent they were serving as channels of communication between the state authorities and the urban population." Regarding the capacity of *Iddirs* for political activity, Markakis (1974:172) has described it as very limited. This is due to very small membership size,

members' conception of their *Iddir* merely as a burial association, older traditional type leaders with government connection, absence of educated leadership and uneducated dominated membership (Markakis, 1974).

In the imperial regime since the late 50s, both the political elites and the government used and abused the *Iddir* and its leadership. With the emergence of a popularly elected parliament, (Chamber of Deputies) and Municipal council *Iddir* and its leadership, due to the absence of political parties and political platforms *Iddirs* came to be used as platforms by candidates running for parliament and municipal councils. For political purposes, i.e., to obtain popular support and votes, some popular elites joined *Iddirs* (Fecadu, 1976:370-371). On the other hand, the government itself was interested in linking *Iddirs* to some of its departments for security and development activities as well as using it for mobilizing support among the masses. Towards this end, as a pretext, the government has promulgated legal rules requiring registration of associations with the government for their legal existence. In Addis Ababa, those registered *Iddirs* were reorganized under ten confederations and linked to central government structure (Fecadu, 1976: 371-372). As Fecadu has vividly demonstrated to realize its goal the imperial government had co-opted *Iddir* leaders and infiltrated its officials into the structure of *Iddirs*. On the other side, in 1957 the imperial government established the MNCD, which aimed at transforming "traditional" mutual aid institutions into modern organizations so as to carry out development projects through their instrumentality. In this regard, the strategy adopted was to infuse concept of development, to modify and broaden the function of *Iddir* (Kebebew, 1978:24).

The MNCD in collaboration with the Municipality of Addis Ababa had attempted to redefine *Iddir* as a voluntary association established for the development of the community. Besides, these government bodies drafted new law, policies, directives and constitutions, and proposals for the coordination of *Iddirs* at *Woreda*, *Awaraja* and Municipal levels (Mulunesh,

1973:2; Kebebew 1978: 15- 29; Fecadu, 1976:373). Indeed, this government effort was challenged by a few *Iddir* representatives on the grounds that all efforts were only to benefit the government at the expense of the people (Mekuria, 1973:11).

The imperial government had prohibited *Iddirs* from engaging in any political activity and required them to be apolitical. On the contrary, it required them to mobilize public support for its administration. For instance, as Koehn (1976:384) noted, " *Iddir* leaders were mobilized by the government during the student crises in the late 1960s to march on the Emperor palace and express indignation over the deplorable and untraditional behavior of students".

On the one hand, the government and Addis Ababa Municipality called upon *Iddirs* and their leader to participate and undertake development projects. On the other hand, high -level officials of Addis Ababa Municipality were not willing to provide effective mechanisms and incentives such as the provision of matching funds, technical assistance and delegation of greater responsibility for *Iddir* leaders in the planning and executing phases of the community development process (Koehn, 1976:383).

3.2.4.2 State - *Iddir* Relation during the Derg Regime

With the fall of the Imperial regime and the emergence of socialist oriented military (Derg) regime, the development role of *Iddir* was overtaken by *Kebele* Administrations. As a result, *Iddirs* were forced to resort to their traditional burial and related services. Particularly evidence from Harar (Koehn and Waldron, 1976: 412-421) and Addis Ababa (Ottaway, 1976,:409-411, 424-426) have shown negative relationship between *Iddirs* and the Derg regime. According to these observations, *Iddirs* and their leadership were considered as traditional, backward and remnants of the feudal system, which were not reliable to undertake modern socialist development. As a result, rather than strengthening *Iddirs*, the regime decided to establish its own "progressive and development oriented organizations" known as *Kebeles*.

Eventually this had created potential conflict between *Iddirs* and *Kebele* Administration. In effect the role of *Iddirs* was marginalized. Hence, for instance, in Addis Ababa in November 1975 numerous *Iddirs* had returned to their members the funds previously raised for development projects (Ottaway, 1976:424).

Unfortunately, *Iddir*- Derg relation did not end there. During the Somali invasion, *Iddirs* were forced to donate their properties such as tents, and other materials. Besides, on the basis of various studies, Pankhurst (2001:14) has identified that, halls that belonged to *Iddirs* were used by *Kebeles*, *Iddirs* were, at times, requested to call meetings for *Kebeles*, *Iddirs* recruited militia, and *Kebeles* ordered *Iddirs* to change times of their meetings. In addition, there were efforts to pressurize *Iddir* leaders to make them members of the ruling party. Also *Kebeles* attempted to establish new *Iddirs* under *Kebele* administrations. Obviously, all these efforts were directed towards linking *Iddirs* to the government administrative structure and the manipulate them in line with government political interest.

3.2.4.3 *Iddir* - State Relations during the EPRDF regime

Like the last two regimes, EPRDF has not declared a policy which is favorable to indigenous voluntary associations such as *Iddirs*. But there are attempts in Urban areas to utilize *Iddir's* structure in the Campaign against AIDS. Also invitations were forwarded to *Iddirs* to include their participation in some workshops (Pankhurst, :2001:15).

In the case of Gojam, Yigremew (2000:56) has reported that government officials considered traditional rural organizations as forums of anti-government elements labeled as "feudal remnants" and "birokrats" and hence their activities were under constant surveillance.

CHAPTER FOUR

Urban *Iddirs* Dynamisms, Roles and Functions, Features and Relations with the Regimes

4.0 Introduction : - This chapter consists of four sections. The first one deals with internal dynamisms of *Iddirs* and treats issues such as members' contributions, its gradual increment, how it was expended, recording systems and related problems. Consecutive sub-sections deals with penalties, membership fees, leadership problems and bylaws of *Iddirs*. The second section,

deals with the roles and functions *Iddirs* in relation to formal insurance sector, socio-cultural and political changes, and *Iddir* as an incipient labour unions in *Akaki* Textile Factory. The third section deals with diverse features of *Iddirs*, including gender composition and features of women *Iddirs*, already identified types of *Iddirs*, and newly emerging ones, re-emerging *Iddirs* and their features, multi-*Iddirs* membership status of some informants, multi-purpose *Iddirs* and, death and dynamism of *Iddirs*. The final section of the chapter deals with the issue of *Iddir* - state relations with conflict over the naming systems and the names of *Iddirs*, and *Akaki* and *Kolfe Iddirs'* relations with state structure under the three regimes.

4.1 Internal Dynamisms of *Iddirs*

4.1.1 Amount of contributions, gradual increment, expenditure, and related problems

Case 1

According to my elderly informants from *Akaki*, *Nazreth* and *Kolfe*, at the earlier times, members contributions to their *Iddir* were 0.10 cents. In my informants' *Iddirs*, 0.10 cents were collected just when the incident of death took place among members. All collected contributions were expended on the spot. There was no left over money. Later on, after early 1950s E.C. this system was found to be inconvenient, and as a result one time contribution ahead of the incident of death was proposed and practiced. Contribution of money at the incident of death took time and deemed inconvenient. Hence, every member was required to contribute 0.10 cents before the incident of death and waited until the contributed money was expended for funeral expenses, i.e., just as incident of death took place and collected money expended, next round of contribution eventually follows. As this stage of evolutionary process of hoarding of *Iddir* money was not in practice. This system was in operation even with gradual increment of contributions in most cases until contributions reached one *birr* towards the late 1950s E.C. in some *Iddirs*.

Regarding growth or increment of contribution, despite some variations the trend seems to be similar. The starting point for all early *Iddirs* seems to be 0.10 cents. This was increased to 0.15 cents. Then in the early 1950s E.C. it increased to 0.25 cents. In late 1950s E.C. and early 1960s E.C. in some *Iddirs* this was increased to 0.50 cents and then to 0.75 cents. After 1960 E.C. in some *Iddirs* monthly contribution reached ETB 1.00 and changes were observed in the structure of *Iddirs*. In this connection, it should be noted that the rate of increment and duration did vary. For instance, in *Babur Tabia Iddir* monthly contribution was raised to 0.25 cents in 1950 E.C.. In *Gishen Mariam Iddir* monthly contribution was 0.25 cents in 1955 E.C. In *Legehar Iddir* monthly contribution was 0.50 cents in 1961 E.C. Before 1950 E.C. contributions were 0.10 cents; and after 1960 E.C. drastic increment was observed, according to my informants. Consecutive increments were ETB 2.00, 3.00, 5.00 and recently most *Iddirs'* monthly contribution is ETB 10.00. In fact, in a few extreme cases it is ETB 12.00

and lesser contributions are ETB 7.00, 8.00, and so on. In larger *Iddirs* monthly contribution of ETB 5, 6 and 7 are considered relatively small. But in *Iddirs* where members income is very low, hence *Iddirs'* contribution and payment is relatively small, monthly contribution could even be ETB 3, 4 or 5 in some cases.

In this connection, it has to be obvious that payments to the deceased family has increased significantly in proportion to members monthly contribution. At the initial stage *Iddirs* were simply covering funeral expenses. Later on, additional payments were made to the deceased family. Recently up to ETB 1000.00 to 1500.00 is being paid in some *Iddirs*. Indeed, poorer or smaller *Iddirs'* payment is in hundreds.

When the collected contribution of *Iddirs* was expended on the spot only position of one leader (*dagna*) was required. When one turn payment ahead of the incident was required one leader and a secretary post was necessary. After monthly contributions reached ETB 1.00 and were made permanent, a modern financial recording system was introduced. Eventually, this has entailed treasurer, chief accountant and internal auditor positions in the *Iddirs'* leadership. Furthermore, due to purchase of required *Iddir* materials a storekeeper was required. As a result, meeting halls, stores and offices were required either by rent or by building their own ones. Between the end of 1950s and mid of 1960s E.C. most older *Iddirs* built their halls, stores and offices in major towns such as Addis Ababa and *Akaki*.

Due to lack of access to bank services in the name of *Iddirs*, collected money of *Iddirs* were accumulated in the hands of *Iddirs'* leaders. As a result, *Iddirs* money were exposed to embezzlement by leaders. Some *Iddirs'* leaders deposited their *Iddir's* money in their own names. Though this kind of saved money may not be embezzled, it had its own problems. Because the money deposited in the name of a leader is considered as private money of the depositor at his death, there is no way for the *Iddir* to claim its ownership. Many *Iddirs* including ACORD's employees *Iddir* faced similar problem.

Perhaps, opening a bank account under the name of an *Iddir* was possible after the *Iddirs* were registered and certified. This was after registration regulation of 321/1966 G.C. (1959 E.C.) was promulgated or even before or after this regulation, *Iddirs'* money were embezzled and as a result people felt shock. Hence, trusted and genuine leaders were elected time and again as much as for fifty years like the case of *Ato Nigussie Desta* of *Kebena Kifle Iddir*, who has been in the leadership position since 1944 E.C. by consecutive election every two years. Similarly *Ato Wolde* of *Fanta Medhane-Alem*, *Ato Taddesse Tenna* of *Talaku Iddir* of *Kaliti* had served as leaders for 32 and 21 years respectively. Some, also, have led their *Iddirs* throughout their life such as *Haile-Mariam Wolde Mariam* of *Babur Tabia Iddir* of *Akaki*. Many other similar cases might exist everywhere.

4.1.2 Penalties for non-compliant Members and Membership fees

My informants claim that, particularly before 1950s E.C., people were more concerned about each other, and helped each other. Non-participation at neighbours sorrow and happiness events was very exceptional. It was considered as taboo. In case if a negligent member of the

community is observed, he was advised by elders. If he failed to comply with the norms of the community, he was not fined, but sanctioned and ostracised, which means that the community denied him the services he required and isolate in social relations. Informants claim that but people were considerate to each other. On the other hand, at earlier times there was no membership fee to become a member of an *Iddir*. Elderly informants assert that membership fees was initiated after permanent contribution was started after the 1950s E.C. in some *Iddirs*. Nowadays, according to some of my informants, penalties for the slightest non-compliance, and required membership fee for new applicants has become a heavy burden. As a result, some informants argued that *Iddirs* have lost their humane flavour and changed into aggressive inhuman organizations. In this connection, the problem of *Iddirs* include lack of considerateness, concern, love and respect for each other. Recently, from the responses of my informants and personal experience, I appreciate that both fines and sanctions employed in both urban and rural *Iddirs*. Indeed, sanctions and fines seems to be more observable in rural and urban areas respectively. But both systems are employed sometimes simultaneously in both rural and urban *Iddirs*.

4.1.3 Leadership problems of Iddirs

Some *Akaki*, *Nazreth* and *Kolfe*, *Iddirs* leaders claim that in comparison to Government and NGOs they are more democratic in their manner, transparent and accountable to their members. leaders of *Iddirs* confirmed that bi-annually and annually they conduct general meeting of members. To the general assembly, activity and audited financial reports are submitted. In some *Iddirs* members are invited to inquire into financial records. Every two or three years free and

fair elections are conducted. Hence, *Iddir* leaders claim that they are living up to the standard of democratic, transparent and accountable leadership.

In the case of *Akaki*, administrative officials assert that *Akaki Iddirs'* leadership is dominated by former regime's ruling party members, who systematically impose themselves on the members and are undemocratic in their manner.

Generally speaking, (ACORD, 1998:9) asserted that *Iddir* leadership is not accountable and transparent. On the other side, *Dejene* (2001A:3) has argued that, "of all organizations in Ethiopia, *Iddirs* can be said to be the most egalitarian, broad-based, transparent, and accountable one, though it is far from being ideal".

4.1.4 Bylaws of Iddirs

Before the promulgation of the civil code, proclamation no. 165 of 1960, there was no legal ground for *Iddirs* on which they could base their statutes or bylaws. Even then, *Iddirs* such as *Nebar Kolfe* had designed and consecutively updated and adapted their bylaws to satisfy the requirements of their members. In this line, *Nebar Kolfe Iddir* has drafted its rudimentary bylaw in the year 1925 E.C.. In 1933 E.C. it had designed a better bylaw. This was revised and improved in the year 1939 E.C.. Then again in the year 1950 E.C., the bylaw was further enriched by specifying detail articles. After two years, in the year 1952 E.C. or 1960 G.C. the civil code come up with its provisions on the legal content of the bylaws, i.e. modern principles of associations' management and leadership were laid down. Since then, particularly *Iddirs* led by elites were in a better position to define rights, duties and responsibilities of *Iddir* members and their leaders, methods of handling administrative and financial affairs, nature and purpose of the *Iddir* association (non-profit sharing) and the like. Those civil code provisions were not revised for the last 42 years. As a result, some conflicts or contradictions were observed between the law, the bylaw and the practice. For example, though the law states that membership is not

inherited, some *Iddirs* used to accept the right of the deceased family to be substituted, i.e., the right to inherit membership which is against the law.

Also, the law does not provide the right to form umbrella organization for associations such as *Iddirs*. But, government structures and *Iddirs* have been establishing umbrella organizations. Besides, bylaws of *Iddirs* and members of *Iddirs* were not consulted to form umbrella organization. Recently *Iddirs* tend to include in their bylaws their intention to participate in profitable activities. But this is not in line with legal provisions. Finally some *Iddirs* sold and shared their resources when they could not function anymore. But the law does not allow this kind of practice.

Organizational Structure of *Iddirs* :- In their bylaws and practices, *Akaki Iddirs* have introduced a new kind of organizational arrangement. In that they incorporated a council of decision making body, which is known as *ye-Iddir Mikir Bet*. The status of this body is equal to the executive body and it is directly accountable to the General Assembly of the *Iddir* members. When the executive body faced issues that require interpretation and decision on behalf of general members, the council would be called upon to decide on it. Also when exotic problems which require interpretation arises it is submitted to the council for its interpretation. Since the general meetings of *Iddirs* in *Akaki* are conducted twice a year issues that require its decision would be presented by the council. The council meets as it deemed necessary.

Due to administrative convenience some *Iddirs* with large numbers of members have created special arrangement by dividing residential areas of members into *ketenas* or *Zones*. Members of a *ketena* or a *Zone* elect their leaders. These leaders represent a *ketena* or a *Zone* members and bridge relations with the main *Iddir*. A *ketena* or a *Zone* leaders inform the main *Iddir* on the incident of death, coordinate and organize services to be provided to the deceased family and facilitate mourning ceremony. Non-*ketena/Zone* members are not obliged to

participate in mourning activities of other *ketenas/Zones*. But all *Iddir* members are obliged to be present at the burial ceremony, and failure to be present entails penalty. *Abo Tsebel* and *Yerer Iddirs* are cases in point.

Regarding the bylaws of *Iddirs* it goes without saying that it has been in the process of change and development since its emergence. I have reviewed about Thirty bylaws of *Iddirs* and out of this four older *Iddirs'* bylaws have stated “the non-interference of the *Iddir* in politics and administrative affairs of the government.” Others never mentioned this matter. Older *Iddirs'* bylaws consists very detailed provisions. The influence of the civil code and associations registration regulation can be easily observable. Some relatively recent *Iddirs* include their intention to undertake business and development activities. But details are not stated. Older *Iddirs'* bylaws merely state provisions on issues related to death.

4.2 Roles and Functions of *Iddirs*

4.2.1 Miscellaneous roles and functions

In addition to burial services, *Iddirs* in *Akaki*, *Nazreth* and *Kolfe* perform diverse functions and play multi-purpose roles in all walks of life. *Iddir* leaders are credible members of the society who aggressively work to resolve conflicts that arise in the family and the community as a whole.

Iddirs serve as social security. Some *Iddirs* help their members at times of crisis. Not only during death and sickness, but also when their members lost their employment. Indeed, due to limited capacity and high magnitude of problems, *Iddirs* contributions in this respect seems to be marginal. Besides, recently there are efforts among some *Iddirs'* members in supporting children of their deceased members. In this respect members of *Ketena 3 Kebele 01 Iddir* of *Akaki* have been contributing extra 0.50 cents for children of deceased members for years. Many

others are performing similar practices in some urban areas such a *Jimma* for HIV/AIDS affected orphans.

Iddirs are playing roles in provision of social services and facilities, in development and poverty alleviation as discussed in chapter five and consecutive chapters.

4.2.2 *Iddir* and Formal Insurance sector

Unfortunately, introduction of insurance in Ethiopia was not based on and linked to the already existed rudimentary mechanisms and self-help organizations. Hence, as an alien entity it could not penetrate deep in to the life of Ethiopians and incorporate masses of the people in the modern insurance system.

In 1980s G.C. Ethiopian insurance corporation has attempted to use *Iddirs* as a channel for extending its services and coverage. As Dejene (2001B:8) has noted that it succeed to attract only about 70 *Iddirs* out of many that were operational in Addis Ababa. The other project sites were Dire Dawa and Bahir Dar. According to my latest information, December 2001, the Ethiopian Insurance Corporation has cancelled its contract with *Iddirs* except two or three elite *Iddirs*. According to Ato Tilahun Moges, the reasons were many-fold. To being with, obviously, Ethiopian Insurance Corporation is profit oriented company. It works in the principle of “law of large numbers”. It assumes to collect money from large number of clients and pay to smaller number, i.e., the difference is net profit for the company. But in the practice of *Iddirs*, all collected money is to be paid back to members. On the one hand, the insurance needs concrete evidence for all its payments. But organizing concrete evidences and meeting the requirement of the insurance company was one of the problems of *Iddirs*. Besides, the insurance found out that some *Iddirs* requested the insurance to pay life insurance for the member who has left the *Iddir*. In such incidents the corporation has cancelled the contract. On the other hand, one of the alternatives mechanisms employed by the Ethiopian Insurance Corporation was increment of

payment by *Iddirs*. But *Iddirs* could not afford to pay the required increment by the insurance corporation. In such cases *Iddirs* were forced to cancel their contract on their own.

Some simplistic assumptions and studies might have misguided the insurance corporation. In this line, Dejene (2001B:8) has quoted some studies which suggest the willingness of some *Iddirs* to join in health insurance schemes. This kind of studies do not consider the inherent conflict of interest, related problems and limitations of the interaction between *Iddirs* and formal insurance sector. In some respects, *Iddirs'* activities resemble insurance services which are lacking among the poor, these include insurance services such as property, fire, life, and health. In this respect, in both urban and rural areas citizens are supported by *Iddirs*. In the 1960s, *Akaki, Nazreth* and *Kolfe Iddirs* were serving their members in covering medical services, and damages and loss of property emanating from fire and theft. But due to misbehaviour of members and lack of resource and proper management, these efforts were frustrated. In this connection many complicated problems were reported by my informants. Anyhow, again recently these noble efforts are reviving in some rural and urban areas. The case of *Menbere Hiwot Medhane-Alem Meredaja Iddir* of *Akaki* and *Goma* District of *Jimma* (*Tadele*, 2000) are live efforts to be mentioned. In relation to linking *Iddirs* to modern insurance services my informants were divided between two stands. On the one hand, some argue that *Iddirs* service need to be linked to the modern insurance sector, because they believe that it is a necessity to transform existing traditional way of service into modern system. On the other hand, others argue that insurance is not favourable agency to work like *Iddirs*. Involvement with insurance entails risk. Insurance procedures are tiresome and payments are not easily accessible. Similarly, *Feleke* (1998:28) has asserted that, "Modern insurance companies were not quick to respond to the immediate needs of communities. Their financial procedures were also found to take a long process".

From an insurance company perspective, *Ato Tilahun Moges* mentioned that in 1980s G.C. his company was engaged in a venture in Addis Ababa, *Dire Dawa*, and *Bahir Dar* to incorporate or cover *Iddirs* and their members in insurance policy. After some years of practical experience, the venture was found to be unprofitable and unacceptable to the company. As a result, contracts made with *Iddirs* were cancelled.

4.2.3 *The roles of Iddirs in socio-cultural and political change*

Iddirs are also acting as change agents. In the cases of *Akaki* and *Nazreth Iddirs* efforts to change harmful traditional practices such as building of costly tombs or monuments, unnecessary and costly burial expenses, etc, have tended to impinge on behavioural and attitudinal change among some community members.

When *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee improved its bylaws in 1967 E.C., one of the incorporated changes were related to what they call *Goji Bahilawi Tegbaroch* (harmful traditional practices). In that the bylaws have prohibited practices such as *Selist* (third day mourning) in the church, *Hawilt* (tomb or monument), *Yehazen Tikur Cherk* (mourning black cloth), *Yehazen Mels Digis* (feast after burial), gambling in the bereaved home, *Tezkar* (feasts on 7th, 12th, 40th, 80th days, 6th month and every year up to the seventh year of the deceased). After the fall of the Derg regime two *Akaki Iddirs*, namely, *Mekashine Kidus Mikael* and *Melkashine Kidus Gebriel* won the ACORD's Prize award of 1999 G.C. for relentless struggle to stop the afore - mentioned harmful traditional practices.

Similarly *Nazreth Iddirs* had attempt to avoid the afore-said, harmful traditions among their members in the last one decade. This has been regulated in their common bylaws. In this connection one interesting incident took place in *Nazreth*. In that priests were against this measure, because they have vested interest in the feasts and important portion of the food prepared for feasts was the share of priests. As a result, *Nazreth Iddirs* modified their regulation

and considered the part prepared for the priests as an exception to the rule. Then the priests endorsed the decision of *Nazreth Iddirs* and started to agitate their followers to accept decisions of the *Iddirs*. Nevertheless, in all attempts there have been challenges from members of *Iddirs* and the community at large. Those promoters of change of the so called “traditional harmful practices” were ridiculed and named as *Metie Ferenjoch* (the new comer white people). This name tend to imply that those who promote the change of those practices are not the product of their culture but that of foreign culture.

In this relation, among others, NGOs such as Facilitator for the change of Ethiopia, and another one which deals with harmful traditional practices employ *Iddir* as their instrument for change. Also *Iddirs* are considered as one of the instruments to stop the hazards of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. In *Akaki* ACORD is One of the NGOs that works on awareness creation regarding the hazard’s of HIV-AIDS. But the target groups are merely beneficiaries of its programmes among *Iddir* members. As a result, leaders of *Legehar*, and *Ketena 03 Kebele 01* saving and credit P.L.C., who are also leaders of their *Iddirs*, reported that they had requested ACORD to provide similar lessons on HIV/AIDS for their non-beneficiary *Iddirs’* members in addition to the beneficiaries. But they did get favourable response from ACORD.

Awareness creation activities among other *Iddirs* seems to be very limited. Only Ato Yeshewa-Liul Bekele, a leader of *Kidus Bale-World* and *Fanta Teklehaymanot*, has reported that half a day awareness creation effort was made by gathering members of three surrounding *Iddirs*. He confessed that sufficient effort is not being underway in *Akaki* in general and in his *Iddirs* in particular

4.2.4 *Iddirs, politics and political change*

In his article Alemayehu (1968:32) has concluded that in other parts of Africa political organizations have sprung from *Iddir*-like associations. For instance, the National Congress of

Zambia developed out of the African Welfare Society. Nonetheless no such tendency has been witnessed in Ethiopia. Many other writers such as Koehn and Koehn (1975) and Ottaway (1976) have reached similar conclusions. Since the imperial regime *Iddirs* were not allowed to participate in politics and administrative affairs of the governments of Ethiopia. As a result, some older *Iddirs* of *Akaki*, *Nazreth* and *Kolfe* have stated in their bylaws that they would not interfere in politics and administrative affairs of the governments. Furthermore, their bylaws state that they would cooperate, accept and implement government regulations.

Due to diverse status and need of their members, *Iddirs* might not be safely play political party type of roles in politics. Since *Iddirs* are infiltrated by government structures and prohibited from interfering in politics and administrative affairs of the governments, *Iddirs* lack experience and skill in this respect. But the nature of the functioning system of *Iddirs* may be used as ideal model to teach civic education and good governance for citizens as a tool for democratization process

4.2.5 Iddir as Incipient Labour Unions in Akaki Textile Factory, and the role of factory Iddirs in Akaki town Development Efforts

In the absence of formal workers organizations, the network of mutual aid associations (*Iddir*, *Mahiber*, *Meredaja*), which were initially formed to perform limited functions, were eventually and inevitably became concerned with labor matters and began to function like incipient labor organizations. Mobilized through their mutual aid association, the railway workers staged a strike in 1947 and another strike in 1954. By the end of the 1950s, worker associations had become active in several textile factories and in the *Wonji Sugar Estate*. Sporadic strikes took place and as a result the imperial regime was forced to promulgate a Labor Relations Decree in the summer of 1962 (Markakis, 1974:174-175). In this connection *Fekadu*

(1976:369) wrote that, “in some cases *Iddir* is organized in the place or as a complementary to trade unions”.

Case 2

Regarding the case of *Akaki* according to *Ato Yirga Tiruneh*, who was one of the leaders, and many other former workers of *Akaki* Textile Factory, from 1953 - 1954 E.C., starting from the workshop division of the factory, workers' *Iddirs* were established and initiated an incipient labour movement. As a result, due to labour strike staged in 1955 E.C., the Labour Union of *Akaki* Textile Factory was formed. After the formation of labour union in 1955 E.C. workers' *Iddirs* were left the factory and established themselves in the *Akaki* town. From 1956 to 1959 E.C., though workers' *Iddirs* were legally registered, they were not organized collectively.

On the other hand, *Akaki* municipality councilors were appointed from natives' *Iddirs* and other known individuals. At the beginning of 1960 E.C., one of the workers' leaders *Ato Yirga Tiruneh* was elected by representing an *Iddir* of migrant workers, as a vice president of *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee. As a result, workers' *Iddirs* were encouraged to join the overall committee. At this time, it was decided that municipality councilors were being elected through election of *Akaki Iddirs'* leaders. In the following years i.e., in 1961 E.C., due to support of workers' *Iddirs*, *Ato Yirga* and a few other workers' *Iddirs* representatives were elected for the positions of *Akaki* municipal councilors. In 1962 E.C. the elected number of workers' representatives increased. Then, finally, from 1963 - 1966 E.C. the workers' *Iddirs* representatives took all the seven seats of *Akaki* municipal councilors. By holding positions in the *Akaki Iddirs* overall committee, workers' *Iddirs* representatives performed the activities. By designing bylaws that facilitated the relationship between the overall committee and *Iddirs*, facilitated and enabled the overall committee to engage in solving problems of *Iddir* members, and also conflict resolution efforts were performed. Participations were made in development ventures jointly, revision of bylaws of *Iddirs* were made every two years, standardizing *Iddirs* performances such as monthly contribution, acceptance and transfer of *Iddir* members from one *Iddir* to another etc were also facilitated and standardized.

On the other hand, by holding the seven seats of the municipal councilors, workers' representatives reduced license fees, facilitated the provision of social facilities and infrastructures such as electricity, road and transport services. Also the councilors had decided on preparation, extension and implementation of *Akaki* town master plan in 1955 and 1962 E.C.. Besides, community based organizations were organized and undertook development activities.

After the revolution, in 1967/68 E.C. *Iddirs* began to emerge and in 1970 E.C., *Iddirs* were fully formed in *Akaki* Textile Factory in various divisions. As usual the objective of these *Iddirs* was to support each other in incidents of happiness and sorrow, i.e., without interfering in affairs of labour and management. But through their networks, workers' *Iddirs* in the factory, forced “reactionary” labour union leaders to step down. For instance, 1971E.C. labour union leader, *Taem Yalew*, was forced to step down due to network and pressure of *Iddirs*. This time again the workers' struggle through instrumentality of *Iddirs* re-emerged.

Iddirs became a backbone and instrument of realization of workers' interests. At the verge of the collapse of the *Derg* regime there were 14 *Iddirs* in *Akaki* Textile Factory. Furthermore, these *Iddirs* were organized under the sub-committee of the factory *Iddirs*, which was directly accountable to *Akaki Iddirs* overall committee.

At the time of emergence of EPRDF regime, *Akaki* Textile Factory Labour Union, backed by the support of 14 workers *Iddirs*, was one of strong labour unions in the country. As a result, one of the three representatives of workers of the country during the transitional period, at the house of representatives, was a representative of that factory workers. Furthermore, the labour union of *Akaki* Textile Factory has challenged the EPRDF government demanding labour rights. As a result, workers' *Iddirs* in the factory were disbanded in 1987 E.C. and 1,040 workers were fired illegally. But, other factory workers' *Iddirs* were allowed to function due to their modest position and non-confrontational interaction with the government. While I was in the fieldwork for my research workers of privatized branches of the *Akaki* Textile factory were initiating to form their *Iddir* anew.

4.3 Diverse Features of *Iddirs*

4.3.1 Gender compositions of some *Iddirs* and some features of women *Iddis*

Male *Iddirs* which are also known as community, *Kebele ketena Iddirs* comprises women members. This could be mainly due to two reasons. Female household heads do join male *Iddirs* or after the death of their male partner the alive wives do join male *Iddirs* as a successor members. Indeed, it is also a possibility that spinsters may join male *Iddirs*. The following table shows gender composition of some of my informants in *Akaki Iddirs*.

Table 1: Gender composition of some *Iddirs* in *Akaki*

Name of the <i>Iddir</i>	No.of male Members	No.of Female M.	Total M.
<i>Gishen Mariam M.I.</i>	124	81	205
<i>Menbere - Hiwot M.M.I</i>	227	155	382
<i>Yegara MedhaneAlem M.I</i>	116	125	241

<i>Legehar M.I</i>	177	87	264
<i>Kidist Sillasie M.I</i>	177	128	305
<i>01 Kebele ketena 3 I</i>	133	70	203

Source : - Compiled from informants' responses

The above figures show that significant number of members are female household heads. Though the magnitude is not similar, women *Iddirs* comprise men members. Bachelors and those men who lost their wives due to various reasons join women *Iddirs*. Both male and female *Iddirs* do complement and supplement each other in their functions during mourning ceremony. Evidences suggest that women *Iddir* emerged in *Akaki* during the Derg regime. All most all types of *Iddirs* comprises both sexes. Even some whomen *Iddirs* such as *Ababora* and *Ihitimamachoch Iddirs* do comprise men members who do not have women partners and need women *Iddirs'* services at the incident of death or happiness events. Earlier the functions of women *Iddir* were performed by neighbours, friends, relatives and wives of male members of *Iddirs*. Compared to men *Iddirs* women *Iddirs* comprise smaller numbers of members. Mostly they are organized on neighbourhood basis particularly at the earlier times members of women *Iddirs* contributes not only in cash but also in kinds such as *injera* and *wot*. Recently, in some *Iddirs injera* is purchased and *wot* is prepared at the residence of bereaved family. Some women *Iddirs* members help each other at the incident of marriage, diseases, birth and wedding of their members' family. Women *Iddirs* do not have halls, offices and stores. Some *Iddirs* such as *Menbere Hiwot Medhane Alem Iddir* allow women *Iddirs* to store their materials in their halls or stores. In other cases women *Iddirs* are forced to rent rooms for storing their materials. In such cases some women *Iddirs* were stolen their property. Also some women *Iddirs* use rotation system in which materials of the *Iddir* stored for certain period of time with each members and

rotates turn by turn. Capitals of women *Iddirs* are smaller compared to men *Iddirs* on the basis of per member.

4.3.2 *Already Identified Types of Iddir, Re-emerging and Disappearing types, if Iddirs and Multi-Iddirs Membership*

The first article produced on *Iddir* by Pankhurst and Endreas (1968 : 358-361) identified three types of *Iddir*. These were community, tribal and institutional *Iddirs*. Since then types of *Iddirs* have been escalated. In this line, Feleke (1998 : 9-15) Pankhurst (2001 : 11-12), and Dejene (2001B:2) identified 10 types of *Iddirs*. These are,

- (1) Community (*Yakababi/YeKebele /Yewendoch Iddir*) which is based on locality and comprising people living in the same vicinity, *Kebele* or neighbourhood;
- (2) Tribal or ethnic (*Yegosa*) *Iddir* which is based on ethnic affiliation and home areas;
- (3) Institutional (*Yemesriabet*) *Iddir* which is based on work place including factory *Iddirs*;
- (4) Friends' *Iddir* (*Yegwadegnoch, Abroadegoch, Yeqologwadegnoch, Wondimamachoch, Ethitimamachoch*) referring to former schoolmates, or people with close friendship, who grew up together or went to school together;
- (5) Family *Iddir* (*Yebeteseb, Yebetezemed*) involving blood relatives, kin, or very close friends;
- (6) Women's *Iddir* (*Yesetoch/Yebaltina/Yeguada*) *Iddir*;
- (7) Youth *Iddir* (*Yewetatoch iddr*);
- (8) *Iddir* of displaced people *Iddir* (*Yetefenaqay/Yetemelash*) *Iddir*;
- (9) Squatters Settlers' *Iddir*;
- (10) Church or Mosque *Iddir*;

4.3.3 *Additional Evidences on Emerging Types of Iddirs and their features*

Types of *Iddirs* are becoming more diverse, specialized and multi-purpose.

- (1) It has become evident that simple and clear-cut typological classification is becoming at least a simplification of the reality, and at worst distortion. In this respect, I came-across one *Iddir* which consists three typological features. This *Iddir* is known as *Ye-Yerer Ber Yewengielawian Abiate Christianat Hibret Norobot Ye-Ihitoch Meredaja Iddir*. If we further split typological features,

- (a) *Ye-Yerer Ber* designates of *Yerer ber* locality/area,

- (b) *Ye-Wengielawian Abiate Christianat Hebret Norobot*, designates union of major biblical Christian sect,
- (c) *Ye-Ihitoch Meredaja Iddir*, - female based mutual self help association. Briefly, this *Iddir* consists three typological features, i.e., locality or area, religion based, and female gender *Iddir*. All the three features are equally important defining variables of this *Iddir*. So, one cannot reasonably classify it under one of the earlier mentioned ten types of *Iddirs*.
- (2) Besides, further specialization in service provision or function has been observed. In this line, five years ago a women *Iddir* known as *Abo Yesetoch Iddir* was further split into *Abo Ye-Irat* (dinner) *Iddir* and *Kidanemhiret Ye-Misa* (Lunch) *Iddir*. These two *Iddirs* have their own leadership, bylaws, monthly contribution, membership size, materials, duties and responsibilities. There is clear-cut division of labour. *Ye-Irat Iddir* provides only dinner service while the *Ye-Misa Iddir* provides only lunch service. A member may or may not be member of both *Iddirs*. *Ye-Misa Iddir* contribution is 4 ETB while *Ye- Irat Iddir* contribution is 5ETB per month. Both *Iddirs* were designated by religious names.
- (3) Others further specialized *Iddirs* worth mentioning are the following,
- (a) *Ye-buna Iddir* (coffee *Iddir*), deals with coffee and related services, monthly payment is ETB 1.50
- (b) *Ye-Tiratire Ina ye-Magedo Iddir* (cereals and fuel *Iddir*), which deals with the provision of fuel and cereals for the service of mourners on return from burial ceremony. Monthly contribution ETB 2.00
- (c) *Ye-Mamsha Iddir* or *Mamasha* or *Yeakababi Amshi Iddir* (for company and services provision in the evening). Contribution is ETB 2.00 to 5.00. This *Iddir* is the most prevalent among the newly emerging *Iddirs*.
- (d) *Ye-Kolo Ina Ye-Tella Iddir* (roasted cereals and local beer *Iddir*), contribution ETB 0.50

- (e) Transport *Iddir* - The purpose is to transport the mourners and corpse. This is becoming very essential because graveyards are located at the edges of the urban centers. Particularly non-orthodox Christians had serious problem and these believers might have been the pioneers of this kind of *Iddir* from the total payments for members.

On the other hand, it has been found out that in central Addis Ababa some older *Iddirs* cover the transport expense of the corpse and mourners.

Table 2: Some Informants membership by type *Iddir*

Name of the Informant	Types of <i>Iddirs</i>			
	<i>Men/community Iddir</i>	<i>Women Iddir</i>	<i>Newly emerged minor Iddir</i>	<i>Re-emerging Iddirs</i>
Fird - awek Hay	1. <i>Fanta Medhane Alem</i> 2. <i>Ketena</i> 3. <i>Yeguadegna</i>	Women <i>Iddir</i>	<i>Tiratirie ina magedo</i>	<i>Seden - sodo Meredaja Iddir</i>
Girma Bekele	1. <i>Meskeleyesus</i> 2. <i>Addis Alem Genet</i> 3. <i>Genete Tsegie</i> 4. <i>Ketena 02 K.4</i>	Women 02 <i>Iddir</i>	<i>Yebuna Iddir</i>	
Nigussie Gebrie	1. <i>Yegara Medhne Alem</i> 2. <i>Sefere Selam</i> 3. <i>Kidus Mikael</i> 4. <i>Yegara Tig</i> 5. <i>Gebrieal</i>	<i>Mikael women Iddir</i>		<i>Ye-Selalie Tewelajoch Meredaja Iddir</i>
Almayehu Degefa	1. <i>Kidus Balewold</i> 2. <i>FantaWordimamachoch</i>	Two Women <i>Iddir</i>	<i>Mamasha Idiget Ber Iddir</i>	
Girma Bezawagaw	1. <i>Legehar Sefer M.I</i> 2. <i>Ketena 1 Kebele 1</i>	Women <i>Iddir</i>	<i>Mamsha</i>	
Tadesse Tesema	1. <i>Ketena 3 Kebele 1 M.I</i> 2. <i>Debrezeit M.I</i> 3. <i>Indode Ber M.I</i>	Sefere Genet	<i>Yeakababi Amshi</i>	
Haile H. Mariam	1. <i>Babur Tabia</i> 2. <i>Bahir Hail</i> 3. <i>Biherawi</i>	Women	Sefere Genet <i>Mamsha</i>	
Zewdie G.Tsadiq	1. <i>Kidist Silassie</i> 2. <i>Ketena Iddir</i>	Women	<i>Mamsha</i>	

Source : compiled from my informants' responses .

All my informants are members in at least one women *Iddir* and several men *Iddirs*. As far as newly emerging and re-emerging *Iddirs* are concerned, only a few are members in these *Iddirs*. The residential area of members of newly emerging *Iddirs* are different. Most of my informants reported that they are members in *Mamasha* or *Mamsha* or *Yeakababi Amshi Iddirs*. This shows that among newly emerging *Iddirs* this one is more prevalent.

According to my informants in *Akaki*, it began to emerge towards the end of imperial regime and the emergence of the Derg regime. At that time its name was known as *Ye-akababi anasa Iddir*. In 1970 E.C. *Kebele* officials renamed it as *Ketena Iddir*. Properties of these *Ye-akababi Iddirs* were confiscated and transferred to *ketena Iddirs* to strengthen them. As a result people began to form or reform other *Iddirs* under the names such as *Mamasha* or *Mamsha* or *Ye-akababi Amshi Iddir*. The purpose of this kind of *Iddir* is to provide swift service, to console and avoid loneliness of the deceased family. These *Iddirs* purchase cereals during harvest period at a cheaper price and provide at the incident of death certain amount of kilograms for the preparation of *nifro* (boiled cereal). Also coffee is purchased and provided. Besides, firewood and oil is purchased, stored and provided in bundles and literes respectively. Due to the nature of its service the *Iddir* works in close collaboration with women *Iddir*. Women *Iddirs* prepare *baltina* goods to be used for the preparation of *wot*. In areas where *amshi Iddirs* exist, the roles and functions of major male or community *Iddirs* are to perform burial service, to effect payment and to provide materials whenever needed. And members are not obliged to console or company in the evening and eat dinner with the mourners. Emerging *Iddirs* have their own bylaws and usually adopt bylaws of conventional *Iddirs*. Leaders are elected every two year. General assembly has been conducted every six months. Non-compliance entails penalty. New applicants are required to pay membership fee. Indeed, membership fee is very small compared

to other *Iddirs*. In the case of *Sefere Genet Mamsha Iddir*, the membership fee is ETB 30.00 only. *Iddirs'* money has been kept with leaders or deposited in the bank in the name of leaders. In most cases the number of leaders is similar to other conventional *Iddirs*. Membership size ranges from 20 - 100 in most cases. It is strictly organized on the basis neighbourhood. These *Iddirs* are not legally registered. It was reported that some of these *Iddirs* have acquired *Iddir* materials such as tents, cups and the like. Indeed, *Mamsha Iddir* is not available or prevalent in all corners of *Akaki*. In *Kebele 06 Mamsha Iddir* is not in existence. In *Ketena 2* of *kebele 01* of *Akaki* one *mamsha Iddir* was dissolved as a result of embezzlement of the *Iddir* money by one of its leaders. In its absence major *Iddirs* attempt to fill some of the gaps. Other *Iddirs* such *Ye-kolo ina Yetela Iddir*, *yebuna Iddirs*, *Yemagedo ina Yeteiratirie Iddir* do undertake further specialized but activities that are mostly covered by *Mamsha Iddirs*. Earlier *Tela*, *Tej*, *Arekie* have been served in the evenings. Later on due to cost and problems emanated from intoxication this kind of service has been stopped.

Some of the newly emerged *Iddirs* are formed for specialized, specific and simpler functions compared to functions of other conventional *Iddirs*. They fill the gap or vacuum which is not covered by both men's and women's or any other *Iddirs*. In the absence of these newly emerged *Iddirs*, the bereaved family has to cover those costs. Hence, the rationale of these *Iddirs* is to reduce the financial burden of the bereaved family and enable the bereaved family to use payments of other *Iddirs* for other purposes. The contributions of newly emerging *Iddirs* are smaller compared to other types of *Iddirs* and they are based on a neighbourhood basis. Due to closeness to each other neighbours might have felt the need of these types of *Iddirs*. The strategy employed here is that to form new *Iddirs* for the newly identified felt-needs. As this research cannot be considered as exhaustive many other similar and different kinds of *Iddirs* may exist in *Akaki* and elsewhere. In conventional terms these “*Iddirs*” may not be considered as *Iddirs*. But

people consider them as their *Iddirs*, which emanated from their own felt needs. The newly proposed definition in chapter seven can incorporate or cover these and other kinds of *Iddirs*.

On the other hand, in the face of newly emerging types of *Iddirs*, at least two types *Iddirs* are dying or withering away in the cases of *Akaki* and *Nazreth*. These are *Hawilt* (Tomb or monument) *Iddir*, and *Deret Memcha* or *Aslekash Iddir*. Because these two activities are considered as harmful traditional practices by *Iddirs* of *Akaki* and *Nazreth*. For *Howilt Iddir* and *Aslekash Iddir* monthly contribution by *Iddir* members was ETB 1.00 and 0.20 cents respectively.

4.3.4 Re-emerging *Iddirs* and Their Features

During the two former regimes of Ethiopia, religion, ethnic and region based types of *Iddirs* were discouraged by local officials. But they are re-emerging in the current regime. In *Akaki* these include region based *Iddirs* such as *Jibatina Mecha*, *Ginchina Tulubolo*, *Ye-Selalie Tewelachoch*; ethnic based *Iddirs* such as *HadiyanaKambata*, *Seden Soda*, and religion based *Iddir* such as *Mulu-Wengel Hibret Begeta Meredaja Iddir* has re-emerged. Interestingly, one ethnic based *Iddir* designated its name as *Ye-abro-adeq wondimamachoch Iddirs*. But all members of *Abro-Adeg Wondimamachoch Iddir* are from *Gurage* ethnic group only, though their name does not indicate their ethnic group.

Sedeen Sodo Iddir seems to be a bit different. In that it draws its membership on the basis of descent lineage from three sons of *Sodo*, namely, *Oditu*, *Tumbe* and *Liben*. The lineage of the would be members should be descended from the three sons and this can be traced and counted on the basis of mother or father lines. This seems to be a kinship *Iddir*. No other *Iddir* draws or accepts their membership on the basis of lineage. If one wants to be a member of *Seden Sodo Iddir*, he or she has to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that he or she is descended from one of the three sons of *Sodo*.

4.3.5 Some features of Re-emerging *Iddirs* and their Membership

These *Iddirs'* membership is based on common ethnicity and kinship, region and religion of members. Earlier, in the imperial regime, *Iddirs* designated under ethnic and regional names were not excluding others with the exception of some *Gurage Iddirs*, such as *Ye-Gurage Wetatoch Iddirs* and *Yegurage Meredaja Iddir*. This means that the re-emerging *Iddirs'* membership is strictly exclusive unlike *Iddirs* in the 1950s and 1960s. E.C. as reported by my informants in *Akaki* and *Nazreth*. All members of these re-emerging *Iddirs* are members in at least more than two other *Iddirs*. These *Iddirs* do not possess conventionally known materials of *Iddirs*. Hence, their support is limited to financial support. Indeed, as some members claim, non-material and non-financial supports, which include moral, psychological and social supports could be more stronger than their other *Iddirs*.

Members of these emerging *Iddirs* are residing in all eleven *Kebeles* of *Akaki Zone*. All these *Iddirs* are legally registered and certified. All are beneficiaries of ACORD project in *Akaki*. Most of them were formed in the year 1986/87 E.C., i.e., all were formed after the fall of *Derg* regime. Members of these *Iddirs* claim that they know and trust each other more than others. Also, they help each other in times of sickness, unemployment, imprisonment, etc of members. Hence, their *Iddirs* avail additional network facilities which is crucial in their life.

4.3.6 Multi-Iddirs Membership, Its Extent and Purposes

In the cases of *Akaki* and *Nazreth*, some of my informants are members of as much as seven *Iddirs*. This multi-*Iddirs* membership has its own merits and demerits. The merit or the advantage is that, if one is a member of many *Iddirs*, he may obtain a good amount of payment in a lump sum. Also, *Iddir* material can be available from more than one *Iddir*. Hence, one may not incur costs to obtain more materials in the form of rent. Also, different *Iddirs* cover different expenses and pay for different purposes. Hence, at times, different *Iddirs* complement and supplement each other in satisfying the requirements of members. On the other hand, the

disadvantages is that, monthly contribution is high, payments and discharging responsibilities take a long time and are tiresome. *Iddirs'* membership based contribution for the government may escalate per head contribution of *Iddirs*, whenever *Iddirs* are required to contribute per member for different purposes.

Citizens' strategies in forming recently emerging specialized *Iddirs* is to maximize benefits and to obtain as much as possible from network facilities. Also the in-built assumption seems to be the calculation that if one or two *Iddirs* fail to survive and serve, others eventually substitute. As some people tend to assume, *Iddir* or multi-*Iddirs* membership is not only a peculiar feature of low-income people (Mesfin and Social, 2000). But also medium and higher income people and higher educational status groups may exhibit similar trend. For instance, *Dejene Aredo* of the Economics Department, who has been undertaking research on *Iddirs* has declared that he is member in nine *Iddirs*. Besides, *Dejene* (2001B:9) wrote that "there are many people who are members of more than seven *Iddirs* and contribute more than Birr 70 per month". Other educated and high income people might be members in a similar number of *Iddirs*. The difference between the low and high income people could be that, the low income people expend a large amount of their income for *Iddirs'* contribution while high income people expend a lesser amount of their income for their *Iddirs'* contribution. The following table shows the contributions of some of my informants to their *Iddirs* in relation to their income, dependent family number and percentage of their contributions out of their total income.

Table 3: Some Informants' membership in numbers of *Iddirs*, their Monthly Income and total Contributions

Name of Informant	No. of Dependent Family	Monthly Income	Monthly Contribution	Membership In No. of <i>Iddirs</i>	% of Contribution Out of Income
Firdawek Hay	8	186.00	38.00	7	20.43
Girma Bekele		266.00	43.50	6	16.35
Teka Tafesse	6	265.00	28.50	4	10.75
Shewa-Liul Bekele	8	362.85	33.00	4	9.09
Nigussie Gebre	8	600.00	61.00	7	10.17

Girma Sagin	7	266.00	41.00	5	15.14
Tadesse Tesema	5	286.00	37.50	5	13.11
Girma Bezawagaw	5	250.00	30.00	4	12.00
Wolde Haile-Mariam		251.00	38.00	5	15.14

Source: compiled from the informants' responses

The above figures show, a high level of monthly contributions of some of my informants to their *Iddirs* from their meager monthly income. Indeed, some multi-*Iddirs* members were forced to withdraw from some of their *Iddirs*. For instance, *Girazmach Gugsa Tufer* of *Nazreth* had 5 *Iddirs* earlier. Currently, he is member of only three *Iddirs* by dropping membership in two other *Iddirs*. In some extreme cases, some poor people were forced to withdraw from all their *Iddirs*, due to loss of the capacity to pay escalating monthly contribution.

4.3.7 Multi-purpose *Iddirs* as hybrid form of organization

Recently *Iddirs* have aimed at diverse goals and functions. *Abo Tsebel Sefere Selam Meredaja Ina Limat Iddir* consists of two major components, namely, *Meredaja* and *Limat* (mutual support and development) as its identification and purpose. As a result, this *Iddir* claims that its burial and related services constituted 25% of its total activities, while 75% of its activities are directed towards development. Besides, it has organized its activities under five sub-committees, which consist of burial and related support execution; women *Iddirs*; credit and saving service; kindergarten and elementary school; and, development, health and environmental care committees. This *Iddir* is one of emerging types of *Iddirs* in the country and it cannot fit into the conventional types of classification. Different and somewhat similar features are emerging in both rural and urban areas. *Awraris Iddir* of Addis Ababa is in the process of transforming itself into share company (Awraris, 1992 E.C.:26 - 28). On the other side, in rural area of *Gojam*, Yigremew (2000:53) has observed the transformation of religious *Mahiber* into an *Iddir* (burial association) with a function of multi purpose development agency. Also, in urban areas, family

(*Yebeteseb*) *Iddirs*, friends' *Iddirs* and other conventional *Iddirs* have included in their objective the intention to participate in development and business activities. All the above typologies are hybrid types of organization, which requires their own classification. To further complicate the typological classification, some family and friends' *Iddirs* have included entertainment functions and roles in their *Iddirs* bylaws.

In a related development, some kinds of associations organize their exclusive occupational *Iddirs*. In this respect Fecadu (1976:369) has identified that people of professional categories, i.e., employees of some department of the government, teachers, army and police units and the like can be cited. Besides, some professional associations have included the function of *Iddirs* side by side with their professional interest. Former bank, and Ethiopian airlines employees can also be cited in this respect. These dual purpose associations are beneficiaries of insurance policy of the Ethiopian insurance corporation. Inclusion of *Iddir* in other associations may further strengthen the relation or ties of members. In this line, Fecadu (1976:377) wrote that, "Idir generated dyadic social ties and other types of associations among its members". Hence, in this kind of double ties and relations people may enter into common business venture with comfortable confidence and trust among each other.

4.3.8 Death and Dynamism of *Iddirs*

Case 3

Like human beings and legal persons, organizations such as *Iddir* may either die a natural death or survive by employing survival strategies. In the course of the former path, some *Iddirs* have died and disappeared, some others have changed their forms and names and continue to survive under different names and forms. In this regard, the last secretary of *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee has informed me that 15 *Iddirs* died up to 1983 E.C.. Similarly the current *Nazreth Iddirs'* overall committee leaders also informed me that 12 *Iddirs* died or disappeared in *Nazreth*. These are general pictures. When we come to specific *Iddirs* of my research site, in *Akaki* among the first five pioneer *Iddirs* two *Iddirs*, namely, *Tiliku Iddir* and *Yegara Iddir* sold their properties, divided them among members and disappeared. The other two namely, *Fetno derash Iddir* and *Gelan Ber Iddir*, were merged with other *Iddirs* and formed other *Iddirs* under new names and forms. The first formed *Iddir*

in *Akaki*, *Babur Tabia Iddir* is on the verge of collapse. Out of 360 members at one time in the past, only 20 members are surviving, and are very old people. The *Iddir* cannot provide all conventional services of *Iddirs*. Hence, the *Iddir* has not only advised its members to enter and be members of other *Iddirs*, but also it paid for its members entry or registration fee to *Iddirs* in which they wanted to be members. *Babur Tabia Iddir* members are divided between two positions. Some would like to sell their property and divide it among themselves like *Tiliku Iddir* and *Yegara Iddir*. Others would like to open membership to others to join their *Iddir* and build the capacity of their *Iddir* to provide full services. *Iddir's* members could not reach a consensus on either stand and are waiting for the time when the *Iddir* collapses and dies away.

The collapse and failure of the first five pioneer *Akaki* natives' *Iddirs* may be explained in terms of both internal and external factors. To begin with, *Akaki* natives' *Iddirs* had closed the opportunity for non-natives to join their *Iddirs*. Therefore, their membership was limited only to *Akaki* natives. This, eventually, entailed limited membership and resources. This was an internal problem of those *Iddirs*. On the other side, nationalization of urban and rural lands and extra urban houses destroyed the economic and political capacity of members of natives' *Iddirs*. This was directly reflected in the overall capacity of natives' *Iddirs*. Besides, the *Derg* regime had the policy to weaken particularly natives *Iddirs* for they were considered as remnants of the feudal system. All these internal and external factors contributed towards weakening and finally the death of those *Iddirs*.

In this respect it has to be noted that the death of all 14 workers' *Iddirs* of *Akaki* Textile factory was due to a direct government decision. But in the sold branch of this factory, workers have started to reorganize their *Iddirs*. This shows the struggle of the workers to form their *Iddirs* whenever it is possible. As stated earlier, the combination of both internal and external factors weakened and finally destroyed the capacity of those natives' *Iddirs* to survive and function. Furthermore, the leaders and members of these *Iddirs* could not devise survival strategies such as opening membership to others to join, or merging with each other to become stronger. In this respect, the experience of two *Iddirs* from *Woreda 25* of Addis Ababa is informative.

In *Kolfe*, *Woreda 25 Kebele 07*, there were two natives *Iddirs* which were known by the names of their founders, namely, *Daba Duresie Iddir*, and *Woldaregay Belete Iddir*. At one time both *Iddirs* became weakened. As a result they decided to merge and form one *Iddir*. To distinguish themselves from other *Iddirs* of non-natives they named it, *Nabar Kolfe Iddir*, literally meaning *natives of Kolfe Iddir*. On the other hand, there was an older *Iddir* in *Woreda 25 Kebele 16* around *Asko* Shoe factory. The name of the *Iddir* was known as *Yeagerew Iddir* literally meaning, "*Iddir* of the natives of the land". Earlier, like all other natives' *Iddirs* its membership was not open to non-natives. Later on, it was forced to open its membership to non-natives. As its membership was dominated by non-natives, its name was changed to *Hibret Yetefetene Medhanit Meredaja Iddir*, which literary means, "unity Tested saviour to mutual self help *Iddir*". The newer name indicates the importance of being united as a time tested solution.

In fact, for effective performance and service, sometimes division or splitting into parts might be a better strategy as it has been done in *Akaki* and *Nazreth*. Among *Akaki Iddirs* *Medhane-*

Alem Iddir split from *Tiliku Iddir* and became the sixth natives' *Iddir*. Similarly, some *Iddirs* were formed by splitting themselves from their main *Iddirs* in *Nazreth*.

4.4 Iddir-state Relation under three regimes

4.4.1 Conflict Over the Naming System and the Names of Iddirs

Case 4

The names of *Akaki*, *Nazreth* and *Kaliti Iddirs* exhibit various categories. Some *Iddirs* were named according to the names of their founders and were later changed. These were common in the earlier times and are rare recently. The names of some *Iddirs* tend to show the real or aspired social status. For instance, *Tiliku* (the great) *Iddir* of *Akaki* is believed to reflect the social status of founders and members, at least to a large extent. Similarly, *Talaqu Iddir* of *Kaliti* tends to have the same connotation.

Most *Iddirs* in *Akaki* and *Nazreth* designate their names in terms of the founders' or members' regional and ethnic background. In *Akaki*, in the imperial regime, since July 1962 E.C. *Iddirs* were pressurized to change their ethnic and regional names into saints' names. This decision was implemented forcefully by the government offices. Later on, in its turn, the *Derg* regime was not happy with religious names of *Iddirs*. Both regimes had their own reasons. The former regime believed that regional and ethnic names tend to strengthen difference and disunity and hence entail conflict. In this respect, my informants have confirmed to me that there were some minor and non-political conflicts among various regional and ethnic groups, particularly, during holidays such as *Meskel* and *Timket* holidays. Indeed, the case of *Mechaina Tuluma Meredaja Mahiber* was considered as the cause for the regime's decision to act against regional and ethnic names.

For the *Derg* regime's Marxist politicians, since religion was considered as an "opium of the people", religious names were disliked. In the case of *Nazreth Iddirs*, officials ordered *Iddirs* to change ethnic, regional and religious names into numbers. i.e. similar to *Kebeles*, which were designated in terms of numbers. But this kind of names were meaningless for the people and it was disliked. Another alternative of *Derg* officials was to establish *Ketena Iddirs* in each *Kebele*, or one *Kebele Iddir* when the size of *Kebele* was small. The meaning people attached to *Ketena* was "drought, famine, suffering." Hence, the very name *Ketena* itself was very much disliked. A similar problem was not reported from *Kolfe*.

Hence, the naming of *Akaki* and *Nazreth Iddirs* show conflicts of interest, value and meanings attached to names of *Iddirs* by both former Ethiopian regimes and *Iddirs* themselves. As a result, people refused the imposed names, whenever they could do so. Even if they are forced to accept imposed names for the time being, they wait for the time when it is favourable to change it. In this respect the *Derg* imposed *Ketena* names were abandoned with the fall of that regime. Particularly, in *Kebele* 05 and 06 of *Woreda* 26 of *Akaki* all *Ketena* names were abandoned, as it is reported by my informants. On the other hand, the disbanded religious, regional and ethnic names are re-emerging, which include names such as *Jibatina Mecha*, *Ginchina Tulubolo*, *Yeselalie Tewelajoch*, *Kambatana Hadiya*, *Seden Sodo*, and also religion

based type and name recently appeared was *Ye-Mulu Wengel Hibret Begeta Meredaja Iddir*. One can simply understand that naming and names of *Iddirs* have been, among other things, battlegrounds for former regimes and *Iddirs*. The underlined reason is the “Surplus meaning” and implications attached to the names by both parties. The following table shows examples of changes of names of *Iddirs* in the three regimes.

Table 4: Change of Names of Akaki Iddirs Under the three Regimes

Imperial	Derg	EPRDF	Remark
<i>Yegeberewoch Meredaja Iddir</i> 1960-1971 E.C	1. <i>Kebukaya Wede fire</i> (1971 - 1979 E.C.) 2. <i>Ketena 3 Kebele 01 Iddir</i>	<i>Kebele 01 Ketena 3</i> from 1990E.C. onwards	In 1971 E.C. merged with <i>Rufeal Iddir</i>
<i>Gelan Ber Meredaja Iddir</i> 1949 E.C.	<i>Kebele 05 Ketena 3 Iddir</i>	<i>Yegara Medhane-Alem Meredaja Iddir</i> 1984 E.C.	One of the pioneer <i>Iddir</i> in <i>Akaki</i> formed in 1949E.C.
<i>Yegaraw Medhane-Alem</i>	<i>Kebele 05 Ketena 1</i>	<i>Menbere Hiwot Medhane-Alem Meredaja Iddir</i>	Merged with <i>Misrak Chora Iddir</i> and included new members during <i>Derg</i>
<i>Fetno Derash + (one of Pioneer Iddirs)</i>	<i>Ketena 1 Kebele 04 Iddir</i>	<i>Kebele 04 Ketena 1</i>	<i>Fetno Derash</i> and <i>Genete Tsigie</i> merged during <i>Derg</i> regime.

Source : Compiled from informants' responses

Some *Iddirs* still retained the *Ketena* names for its convenience. According to some of my informants arrangement of *Ketena Iddirs* is very convenient for *Iddir's* services, because it is based on the neighbourhood basis and members are close to each other. Hence, Swift service provision is possible. On the contrary, non-*ketena* and non-*kebele* based *Iddirs* are inconvenient since members of *Iddirs* are not close to each other. This explanation was suggested in both *Akaki* and *Nazreth*. Surprisingly, in a similar vein before late 1960s G.C. *Iddir* leaders were arguing for *Ketena* and *Kebele* type of neighbourhood based *Iddirs* (*Alemayehu*, 1968). But in the recent context, people's dislike and the decision to abandon *Ketena* and *Kebele Iddirs* was mainly due to counter-action against imposition of former *Derg* regime.

As far as composition of ethnic and regional named *Iddirs* are concerned, my informants of both *Akaki* and *Nazreth* have confirmed that from the very beginning these *Iddirs* were not strictly composed of members of specified ethnic and regional groups. I have proved this claim with some evidences from *Akaki* and *Nazreth Iddirs*. Indeed, exceptions were reported among few *Gurage Iddirs* at their early stage. For instance, *Yegurage Wetatoch Iddirs*, and *Yegurage Meredaja Iddir*, were strictly excluding others membership. These *Iddirs* later

merged and formed *Fanta-MedhaneAlem Iddir* and were transformed into a polyethnic *Iddir*.

4.4.2 *Akaki and Kolfe Iddirs Relations with State Structures under the Three Regimes*

Case 5

One of the primary conditions that creates links or relationships of *Iddirs* with state structure is registration of *Iddirs* with official state structure. In *Akaki* the first *Iddir*, *Babur Tabia Iddir*, was registered with *Akaki* Municipality in the year 1950 E.C. (1957/58 G.C.). Consecutively five other natives' *Iddirs* were registered. At that time the registration fee was *Birr* 5.00. Also, these pioneer *Akaki Iddirs* formed the *Akaki Iddirs* overall committee in the year 1956 E.C.. The formation of *Akaki Iddirs* overall committee was initiated, facilitated and promoted by state structure, namely, *Akaki* branch office of MNCD. The purpose of the Ministry was to tap the resources of *Iddirs* in order to promote *Akaki* town development projects.

Furthermore, *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee or federation was an active participant in promoting community security in collaboration with the police force and administrative structures. In this line, in January 1957 E.C. the committee had discussed security problem that emanated from laid off and unemployed workers. It was reported that unemployed workers committed illegal acts of theft. Hence, the committee had suggested to the *Woreda* Governor of *Akaki* the need to ensure that those migrants who remained unemployed left the town. This was stated in the minutes and letter of the committee. In addition, Mullenback (1976:167) indicated this situation in his research paper. A committee was established from concerned government offices and from the overall committee members to implement that decision. Also, it has been reported that some leaders of *Iddirs* were chairpersons of security committees in *Akaki*.

Particularly since the early 1960s E.C. *Akaki Iddirs* were strictly warned that meetings of *Iddirs* were prohibited without permission from authorized officials. Unregistered *Iddirs* were also strongly warned not to undertake any function before they get registered and certified. Indeed, the association registration regulation of 1966 G.C (1959 E.C.), i.e. the legal notice no. 321 of 1966, made registration an absolute prerequisite for legal existence of any association. The office of Association Registration was established within the Ministry of Interior. Earlier *Iddirs* were registered with Municipalities and MNCD branch offices.

During the *Derg* regime, *Iddirs* were registered within the security office. Currently, *Iddirs* at federal level are registered with the Ministry of Justice, and others are registered with regional states delegated offices or Bureau. In Addis Ababa city Administration, the office of Security, Demonstration and Associations registers *Iddirs* of Addis Ababa.

Up to December 2001 G.C. more than 3,500 *Iddirs* have been registered. In order to get registered and certified, according to *Ato Markos Bizuneh*, head of the office, *Iddirs* are required to undertake a general assembly meeting of members and prepare minute of the meeting, which indicate elected officials and signature of members. This should be submitted

to the *Kebele* officials. And then with recognition and approval of the *Kebele*, it should be submitted to *Woreda* officials. Finally, with recognition of *Woreda* officials it should be submitted to the Office of Security, Demonstrations and Associations in the Addis Ababa City Administration. After due examination, the office registers the applicant *Iddir* and endorses letters to the Commercial Bank, Police, and Bureau of information. Registration and re-registration (every year) fees of *Birr* 150 and 50 are required to be paid respectively. The office has been registering not only individual *Iddirs* but also umbrella organizations of *Iddirs*. Indeed, there is no legal provision to register umbrella organizations of *Iddirs*. But the office argues that even if there is no legal provisions, as long as their intent is to serve the society, it is justifiable to register and certify umbrella organizations of *Iddirs*. Also, regarding the legality of registration and re-registration fees, the office argues that the city administration has the right to collect registration fees and use it for the good of the community. In this connection, some *Iddirs* complain that the procedure for registration is too long and time consuming. The registration and re-registration fee is also unreasonably high.

Regarding relations of *Iddir* and state structures in the *Kolfe* area, *Ato Nigussie Desta of Kebena kifle Iddir* has shared with me his experience of the last 50 years. According to *Ato Nigussie*, in earlier times some people were not members of *Iddirs*; when they died the *Woreda* administration was forced to undertake the burial responsibility. Hence, the *Woreda* governor was pressurizing or encouraging *Iddir* leaders to make all residents of the area their members. Also the *Woreda* officials were undertaking meetings with *Iddir* leaders every month. At that meeting leaders of *Iddirs* were supplying information about the community to the *Woreda* officials. Leaders of *Iddirs* were serving as a watchdog regarding the status of the new-comers to *Kolfe*. During the Imperial regime, Leaders of *Iddirs* were invited to the imperial palace on holidays. Also, on official visits of foreign leaders *Kolfe Iddirs'* leaders mobilize residents turn out for the parade. On the other side, *Kolfe Iddirs* represent residents in facilitating provisions of transport service, water and electricity facilities, and infrastructures such as road by contacting concerned government structures.

The *Derg* regime has been famous for its notorious measures against *Iddirs*. During its earlier years, the *Derg* has expropriated material of *Iddirs* such tents, cups, and the like. Also, it curbed out and marginalized the development role of *Iddirs*. Various attempts were made to link *Iddirs* to its political structure and manipulate them. The *Derg* infiltrated the structure of *Iddirs*. This was particularly evident in the cases of *Akaki* and *Nazreth*. In *Akaki* almost all leaders of *Iddirs* and their overall committee members were made members of the ruling party, workers party of Ethiopia (WPE). Earlier, the *Derg* structures in *Akaki* and *Nazreth* had attempted to establish its own *Iddirs* to weaken and dismantle older *Iddirs*. But, later on, on some occasions *Iddirs* were invited, for instance, to participate on public discussion of the *Derg* constitution.

Currently due to failure of *Kebeles*, there is a tendency to use *Iddirs* as a mechanism to mobilize the public for political purposes. In fact, this has been similar practice in both Imperial and *Derg* regimes. During political elections, leaders of *Iddirs* were required to mobilize the public for the election turn out. All three regimes required *Iddirs* to contribute their resources to satisfy the needs of their political systems.

Recently there is a tendency to channel all community activities through *Iddirs* by government structures and NGOs. Hence, some *Iddirs* leaders feel that they are overstretched. Also *Kebeles* are pressurizing leaders of *Iddirs* to call and mobilize the public for *Kebele* meetings. Besides, *Kebeles* usually make use of *Iddir* forums for their various purposes, such as election and administrative matters. Financial contributions required from the public are usually ordered to be collected by *Iddirs* directly from their resources or from members. All the above conditions created disappointment and conflict between members and leaders of *Iddirs*. In that, on the one hand, *Kebeles* pressurize *Iddirs'* leaders to implement their decision. On the other hand, members challenge their leaders for working outside their mandate for the cause of *Kebele* and government. Members argue that our *Iddir* leaders are not *Kebele* officials. As *Iddir* leaders they should be accountable to and work for *Iddir* members' interests only. On the other hand, if *Iddir* leaders could not convince their members to satisfy *Kebele* demands, it is considered as sabotage by *Kebele* officials. Hence, some elected *Iddir* leaders were forced to resign from their post. As one leader of *Iddir* has put it, being an *Iddir* leader means being like Ethiopian Christmas bread, which is burned from top and bottom simultaneously.

Summary and Conclusion

Regarding the internal dynamism of *Iddirs*, through evolutionary process significant changes have been observed. Impermanent contributions were made permanent and it have increased from 0.10 cents to more than 10.00 Birr. Indeed, proportionally payments to members at the incident of death has increased up to Birr 1,500.00 and more in some *Iddirs* for members. Earlier new members were not required to pay membership fee. But recently membership fees are becoming a heavy burden for those who want to join older *Iddirs* in particular. Earlier penalties for non-compliant members were not as high as what is being observed today. Bylaws of *Iddirs* have been continuously in the process of improvement as the result problems faced. In this respect, *Akaki Iddirs* have introduced new type of organizational arrangement which is known as *ye-Iddir Mikir Bet* (council of the *Iddir*), which is the decision making body by representing the General Assembly. One of my informants, *Ato Yimer Mariye* defined it as, "the pillar of *Akaki Iddirs*."

In addition to burial service, the roles and functions of *Iddirs* entered into diverse aspects of the lives of members and the community which includes trade unions, social insurance, socio-

cultural and political change, economic development, poverty alleviation and the like. Regarding the features of *Iddirs*, they have been expanding radically. Various types of *Iddirs* have emerged. This chapter has presented evidences on the already identified *Iddirs* in the face of newly emerging *Iddirs*. Due to the favourable conditions once disappeared *Iddirs* have re-emerged with their own unique features. With diversification of *Iddirs* a phenomena of multi-*Iddirs* membership has been observed. Both death and dynamism of *Iddirs* have been evidenced.

As far as relations between *Iddir* and political regimes are concerned, through some distinctions have been observed, in general evidences show that there have not been favourable and positive relations. Conflicts have been observed in all kinds interactions between *Iddirs* and state structures. However, some distinctions should be noted. Unlike the two former regimes the current EPRDF regime does not interfere with names of *Iddirs*, and their ethnic, regional and religious compositions. The *Derg* regime has attempted to dismantle older *Iddirs* and establish its own appendage *Iddirs*. The *Derg* has aggressively curbed out development role of *Iddirs* unlike the Imperial and EPRDF regimes. The current regime seems to be less violent compared to the former two regimes in some respects.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. The Role and Problems of *Iddirs* in Promoting Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development: Efforts on Their Own and in a Collaboration with Governments and NGOs.

5.0 Introduction: - This chapter comprises four sections. The first one deals with efforts of *Iddirs* in collaboration with the three regimes of Ethiopia. The second section deals with efforts of *Iddirs* in poverty alleviation in collaboration with NGOs and ACORD in particular. The third section deals with independent self initiated efforts of *Iddirs* individuality and in the form of umbrella organizations. The last section deals with problems and limitations of *Iddirs* in poverty alleviation and development.

5.1 Joint Efforts of Iddirs with State Structures during Three Political Regimes of Ethiopia

Case 6

During the Imperial Regime, *Akaki Iddirs* had contributed their resources to alleviate poverty problems of the *Akaki* community and contributed towards sustainable development. In this respect, some notable contributions can be indicated. In *Akaki*, earlier *Iddirs* had bought the land to build the branch office of MNCD, and later on built the office and the community center. Through the office and community center services and trainings such as adult education, carpentry, handicrafts work, home economics courses and the like were provided. Besides, a clinic was built in which the poor in the community enjoyed free service, and of course others with reasonable payment. Pipelines were connected to provide safe water to the community. One high school and a few elementary schools were constructed. These enabled children of the community to attend schooling. To ensure peace, stability, law and order, a police station was constructed and maintained. Electricity lines were connected. Also, a city bus transport service was made available by contacting concerned authorities and offices. The market place was improved.

During the *Derg* socialist regime, due to its ideology, *Iddirs* were denied a role in development, and their role was replaced by *Kebele* structures. But there were some minor joint efforts. To promote literacy programme *Iddirs* had made available their halls free of charge. In addition, they contributed finance for the programme. They also encouraged and mobilized illiterate members of the community to participate in the programme. On the other hand, *Akaki Iddirs* contributed financially to the Red Cross Society of Ethiopia and influenced the Society to open its branch office in *Akaki*.

In *Kebele* 08 of *Akaki*, *Akaki Iddirs* constructed a community hall and library in the year 1970 E.C. Indeed, *Kebele* 08 administration has played a coordinating role. Recently, the hall and library facilities were transferred to the Ministry of Culture and Sports without proper consultation of *Iddirs* and the community. Some *Iddirs* claim that as usual their property (the hall and the library) was expropriated by the current government. After the expropriation, if *Iddirs* would like to use the hall, they are obliged to pay the hall rent. In addition, some *Iddirs* leaders say that after expropriation, proper maintenance has not been made for the hall. As the result the hall is getting dilapidated. Earlier in *Nazreth* during the *Derg* regime *Kidus Mikael Kutir Amist Iddir's* houses, which were constructed for rent in

order to obtain supplementary income for their *Iddir*, were nationalized and also in *Akaki* the hall of Indo-Textile youth *Iddir* was nationalized by the *Derg* regime. On the other hand, in the recurrent drought and famine, during the *Derg* regime, *Iddirs* have contributed financially and materially to alleviate the problem and save the lives of Ethiopians.

During the current EPRDF regime, *Akaki Iddirs* have contributed *Birr* 100,000 (one hundred thousand) for construction of a clinic in *Kebele 06 Wereda 26* of *Akaki*. Other joint efforts of *Iddir* and state structure in development activities started in *Akaki* in 1988 E.C.. Indeed, the role of *Iddirs* became obvious lately. Earlier *Kebele* officials simply appointed some *Kebele* residents to *Kebele* development committee. This approach entailed its own limitations, because those people appointed by the *Kebele* officials could not mobilize the community and ensure contribution of money for development projects, for the appointees were not elected and known by the community. As a result, attempts were made to conduct general assembly of *Kebele* residents. But *Kebele* residents did not respond to the calls of *Kebele* officials. Finally, as it has been the case in *Kebele 02* of *Woreda 26 Iddirs* in each *Kebele* were requested to send their representatives to *Kebele* development committees. This time each *Iddir's* general assembly elected a representative to the *Kebele* development committee. On the other hand, as it has been the case in *Kebele 06* of *Woreda 26*, leaders of *Iddirs* were appointed by *Kebele* officials as members of *Kebele* Development Committee. In this case members of *Iddirs* told their leaders that they were elected for their *Iddirs* leadership but not for *Kebele* Development Committee. But they could not change the situation. Hence, *Iddir* leaders continued to impose *Kebele* orders on members. In this connection, it has to be noted that like the *Derg* regime, the EPRDF regime, in principle, does not recognize the development role of *Iddirs* as independent legal entities and development actors. As a result, after joint projects were initiated, it has been announced as if it has been done by the government with the community by ignoring the role of *Iddirs*. This has created a bad feeling among some *Iddir* leaders. As the result of participation of *Iddirs'* representatives in the *Kebele* Development Committee, it has been possible to realize contributions from members of *Iddirs*. Each *Iddir* member contributed *Birr* 5.00 and the total contribution was deposited in the designated bank account.

But people had not been informed about the progress of the project and the financial status of the project. Hence, a serious conflict was escalating, because it was realized that development committee members were required until contributions were collected. After contributions were deposited in the bank, decisions were made by *Kebele* officials without consulting development committee members of *Iddirs'* representatives. In theory the development committee was considered as if it was in full charge of development activity. But in practice it has no power and role, for the committee works under the auspices of the *Kebele* officials. Only *Kebele* officials are in a position to make decisions and withdraw joint funds of the projects. The development committee of one *Kebele*, *Kebele 04* of *Woreda 26*, has been reported to perform its role relatively better by challenging *Kebele* officials. Others simply play the role of rubber-stamping the decisions made. Hence, *Iddirs* of some *Kebeles* such as *Kebele 02* decided not to contribute any more for any kind of joint projects. Because *Iddirs* and their members were disappointed by the fact that their role was limited to financial contribution only, i.e., without any gain and power to decide on their contribution.

Ideally, the community and its representatives should participate from the beginning up to the

end of the project, i.e., from identifying the need up to evaluation of the final outcome. But the practice is quite different. Let us consider a case from *Kebele* 01 of *Wereda* 26. To construct an internal road in the *Kebele* 01, 10 percent of the project cost, Birr 100,000 was to be contributed by *Kebele* residents. Hence, Birr 2,000 was assigned to be contributed by each *Iddir* from its capital. In addition, each member of *Iddirs* was to contribute Birr 20. *Iddirs* forced their members to pay the allotted amount of contribution. The complaint voices of some poor members were not heard. These poor members faced difficulties to pay the normal monthly payment of the *Iddir*, let alone the additional Birr 20 due to their meagre income. But *Iddirs* refused to accept monthly payments unless those poor members paid 20 Birr for the project. Indeed, this kind of practice is not in line with the bylaws of the *Iddirs*. Anyhow, since there was no way out and not to be cancelled from their *Iddir*, the poor were forced to pay under very hard situations.

Alarming, the people and their representatives have no power to decide how this money is to be expended for their direct benefit. Only *Kebele* and *Wereda* officials have the power to decide on it. This kind of inhuman and immoral contribution has created a conflict between some *Iddir* members and leaders. *Iddir* members bitterly oppose this kind of imposed contributions. On the other hand, *Iddir* leaders are obliged to implement decisions of the majority of members and *Kebele* officials. If *Iddir* leaders tend to hesitate to implement the decision, it is viewed as sabotage, particularly if the *Iddir* leader was a member of the former regime's ruling party, the implication is very serious. There is widespread suspicion that joint funds of the projects are embezzled jointly by *Kebele* and *Woreda* officials. This suspicion is based on absence of reports, lack of transparency and participation of representatives of *Iddirs* on the bid, absence of good quality performance, and lack of follow up and control by the stakeholders. *Iddirs* leaders and community members argue that participation of *Iddirs* should not be limited to contributions of money. Participation should be all round. *Kebele* and *Woreda* officials tended to say that "give us the money, we will do development for you".

Regarding reactions of *Akaki Woreda* and *Zone* officials, they have asserted that contribution of *Iddirs* is commendable. 10% financial contribution and labour inputs in projects have been crucial. Development activities have been performed in line with government plans. Sources of funds are two types, namely, rehabilitation fund, and environment development office budget. In the former case, activities are coordinated by *Kebele* offices. Community representatives participate in the bid and as signatories on the check. This seems to be rhetoric as stated earlier.

As far as environmental development projects are concerned, bids are conducted by the office itself, but contracts signing and payments are done at *Woreda* level. Hence *Woreda* officials themselves are complaining about this kind of performances. On the other hand, *Kolfe Iddirs* complained that they had contributed, ETB 70,000 (seventy thousand) but they could not find out about the whereabouts of the contributed money and the road has not been built.

Generally, government structures may play an enabling and disabling role depending on their political interest, policy and legal provisions. In this respect a number of problems were identified. The *Kebele* is the lowest political structure that is close to the grassroots people. In all my research sites, namely, *Akaki*, *Kolfe* and *Nazreth* my informants have stated their complaints regarding the *Kebele* administration. Officials of *Kebeles* are considered as non-

cooperative, non-considerate to the needs and problems of the community. My informants express criticisms that "*Kebele* officials are there to get their salary and fill their stomach." They are not accountable to the people and not transparent in their activities. They ask *Iddirs* only to contribute money. They suspect and obstruct all independent efforts of people to solve their problems. In this line consumers' cooperative formed by 11 *Iddirs* of *Kebele* 05 of *Akaki* was disbanded by *Kebele* 05 Administration officials. In a similar vein a study made by Aklilu and Dessalegn (2000:45-46) concluded "government institutions are seen (by people) as important only in so far as they provide official documents such as I.D. Cards. They are not directly related to well beings."

My informants asserted that the *Kebeles* have nothing to offer to the people and only take from the people. *Iddir* and the community contributed for infrastructural development, but people were not informed of progress activities and financial status of the projects. During elections all kinds of promises were given to the people. But once they are elected and held office, they do not care for the interest of the people. On the other hand, Non-government affiliated candidates who were elected did not hold official positions. Therefore, people were frustrated and decided not to respond to the calls of *Kebeles*. As a result, *Iddir* leaders were required to call people for *Kebele* meetings. This has created a conflict between *Iddir* leaders and members, on the hand, and between *Kebele* officials and leaders of *Iddirs*, on the other. In this kind of conflictual environment, cooperation for development is difficult. What rather complicates the problem is that, as a study has shown, in both urban and rural areas peoples believe that most of their problems were caused by the government policies (Aklilu and Dessalegn, 2000:45).

Another side of the problem is that people and the administration do not trust each other. This kind of problem is not limited to *Kebele* officials. Some people express their doubt about the intent of the government. They fear that the government may expropriate their *Iddirs* money. Some of my informants have asserted that Ethiopian governments since the imperial regime are "sources of our poverty." Successive governments expropriated *Iddirs* resources in one way or another. Recently, this kind of suspicion is heightened particularly when government officials and media talk about the role of *Iddirs* in development. What further strengthens and complicates the suspicion of the people is that the government has no favourable policy at all, which supports *Iddirs* and their activities. Like the former regime, the current government is facing difficulties in this respect, Aklilu and Dessalegn (2000:46-48) asserted that people do not consider the present government to be a friend of the poor. Evidences indicate the alienation of the poor from the state and their lack of confidence in public officials.

For infrastructure and social facilities such as roads, schools and health stations, people are required to contribute money. Sometimes 10% of the project is required to be contributed by the people. Since these kinds of projects are costly, the share of the people is beyond the financial capacity of *Iddirs* and their members. However, *Iddir* leaders are ordered and dictated by the officials to collect and submit the contribution of the people. At this juncture, eventually *Iddir* leaders enter into conflict with *Iddir* members. The complaint is that it is not the role of *Iddir* leaders to perform *Kebele* duties. Mostly, the required amount of contributions is far beyond the capacity of *Iddirs* and members. Sometimes contribution are made from the capital of *Iddirs* without proper consent of members. Members complain that

their capital is eroded by immoral decisions of officials. This kind of trend may deplete the scarce resource of *Iddirs*. Some members of *Iddirs* argue that the purpose of *Iddir* money is merely for burial expenses of members not for development and other purposes. In addition, members are forced to pay contributions with monthly payment of the *Iddir* as a mandatory sanction. Hence monthly *Iddir* contribution is not accepted unless imposed contribution is also paid simultaneously. Consequently, failure to pay monthly contributions for three consecutive months entails dismissal from *Iddir* membership. Though this kind arrangement is not in line with the bylaws of *Iddirs*, *Iddir* leaders impose this kind of coercive measure on their members as a result of pressure from *Kebele* officials. On the other hand, if *Iddir* leaders fail to impose official decisions on their members and fail to collect the required money, their act is considered as sabotage by *Kebele* officials.

I have attempted to inquire why *Kebele* and people are not collaborating for development? Why do people not attend *Kebele* meetings? What factors created the gap? Why are *Iddirs* pressurized to mobilize people for *Kebele* purpose? My informants responses to the questions are summarized as follows.

The conflict between *Kebele* and the people started in the Derg regime. *Kebeles* forcefully mobilized the people for the interest of the Derg regime. Also *kebeles* were instruments for the red terror of that regime. Currently *Kebeles* have nothing to offer the people. Though people elected *Kebele* officials they do not serve the interests of the people. They distrust people and obstruct people's self-help initiatives to solve their problems. They are not accountable to the people but are accountable to and are merely servants of the government. Besides, *Kebele* officials are not popularly credible people. They are not considerate to the needs of the people and people have no control over them. Hence, people realized that they do not have their own genuine representatives in the government structure. Hence, people developed the feeling of hopelessness, political apathy and hence ignored any call for participation by *Kebele* officials.

5.2 Effors of *Iddirs* in Collaboration with NGOs in Poverty Allevations, Change and Development

5.2.1 Efforts of some NGOs in collaboration with *Iddir* and *Iddir* - like associations in poverty alleviation and development

Regarding collaborations between community based organizations such as *Iddirs* and NGOs, Bekalu (1997 G.C) has conducted a kind of survey and analysis. In his research Bekalu has covered about 26 NGOs and analysed six cases of ACORD-Dire Dawa, Oxfam-Deder, SOS Sahel - Meket, PCF-Dimtu, Oxfam-Addis Ababa and GPSDO-Gurage (Bekalu, 1997:7). In this respect, I have obtained additional research materials on PCF (Pestalozzi Children Fund) project in Dimtu *Woreda* of Jimma Zone which was based on coffee labour groups known as *Dado*. PCF has also

a project in Jarso *Woreda* of North-West Shewa where credit scheme was provided through religious association *Mahiber* and *Iddir* (burial association (Haile Gebriel, 2000)

In Meket *Wereda* of North Wollo through instrumentality of *Iddir* - like Qirie based seed distribution was initiated by SOS Sahel (Pratten, 1997). This programme was developed into development programme later on, according to SOS Sahel.

In urban areas a local NGO known as Mary Joy has organized umbrella organizations of 41 *Iddirs* in Asko area of *Woreda* 25 and 08 of Addis Ababa, and 75 *Iddirs* of Awassa in line with the interest of its projects. In Addis Ababa, Mary Joy has conducted poverty alleviation activities such as supply of bono water, supporting children of poor family, training for 12th grade graduates, provision of credit facilitates for poor women, income generating activity for street children, payment of school fee for poor citizens, construction of library, youth center and kindergarten (personal communication, Mary Joy Addis Ababa). Besides, Mary Joy employed joint committee arrangement from *Kebele* and *Iddir* leaders.

5.2.2 Joint Efforts of *Iddirs* and ACORD in Alleviating Poverty and Sustainable Development in *Akaki*

ACORD (Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development) is one of the international NGOs which works with *Iddirs* in Ethiopia since 1995 G.C.. It is a consortium of NGOs working in 18 countries of Africa. In principle, ACORD works with local structures and groups, with the objective of providing material and non-material supports, in order to help and strengthen community initiatives towards poverty alleviation efforts. Among local structures or associations, ACORD has decided to work with *Iddirs* due to its internal strength compared to others such as *equb*, *debo* and the like. Its effort to work with economic CBOs both in *Akaki* and Dire Dawa has been found ineffective. ACORD works with *Iddirs* in Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and Shashemene.

Indeed, the recent effort of ACORD to work with *Iddirs* in development is not a new phenomenon. As discussed earlier, the imperial regime had been working with *Iddirs* in its joint development ventures, which was aborted by the Derg regime. Hence, the effort of ACORD was to re-start a process that was aborted during the Derg regime. According to its programme proposal of September 1996, the overall objective of ACORD Addis Ababa CBO support programme was to promote the role of CBOs as grassroots organizations that are important actors in the development process.

5.2.3 Comparison of nature of intervention of the Imperial regime and ACORD in promoting involvement of *Iddirs* in development

The imperial regime opened community development center in its urban project areas. Likewise, ACORD opened sub-offices in its project sites. Through its center the imperial regime promoted programme activities such as adult education, women's educational programmes, youth and recreational activities, kindergarten, schooling for children, and similar social and cultural services. Also training in areas such as carpentry, weaving, dying materials and similar vocational training programmes were provided for some interested individuals in the community (Kebebew, 1978:25)

On the other hand, ACORD through its sub-office in the project sites provides packages of training and awareness creation lessons. One aspect of the training is directly related to saving and credit scheme such as bookkeeping and recording, saving and credit cooperatives management, how to start and improve business, and entrepreneurship, etc. On development issues, *Iddir* and development, gender and development and the like were included. Earlier skill upgrading courses on sewing and embroidery, wood work and the like were provided for the beneficiaries.

In November 1972 G.C. the imperial regime had organized a seminar on the role of *Iddirs* in development which was considered as the first of its kind. On its turn, ACORD organized workshop on *Iddirs* and grassroots participation in December 2001 G.C. which was considered as the second of its kind. The papers presented at the seminar of Imperial regime and at ACORD's workshop are the following.

Table 5: Papers presented at the seminar and workshop

Papers on Imperial regime's seminar*	Papers on ACORD's Workshop**
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Iddirs</i> and its appropriate direction • Indigenous organizations and change • Selection of projects and fund raising strategies and campaigns • The collaboration between government and people for community development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role and space of <i>Iddirs</i> participation in Ethiopia • <i>Iddir</i>: A look at a form of social capital • The role of civil society in increasing grassroots participation • <i>Iddirs</i> involvement in development • Experience of ACORD working with <i>Iddirs</i> • The existing legal framework for civil society institutions • Government policy and grass-root participation

Sources: Kebebew 1978* and compiled from ACORD's workshop ** December 2001

In both ACORD's workshop and imperial regime's seminar actual case studies on *Iddirs* were not presented. Only general and theoretical issues were dealt with. The voices and choices of the grass-root people were not reflected. The general approach seems to be top-down imposed elitist approach. To work with *Iddirs* the starting point is to study and understand all aspects of *Iddirs* in their overall context. Senior ACORD staffs told me very astonishing stories in their experience. But these are not documented and analysed. Generally research on *Iddir* is very scarce and understanding of the subject under consideration is at a rudimentary stage. In this respect, Dejene (2001B:9) has stated that,

NGOs and other development actors know very little about the nature, goals, and logic of Iddirs. First, they make limited efforts to acquaint themselves with the already available information. Secondly, they have failed to support basic research on indigenous

institutions. Before deciding on the question of collaborating with Iddirs, it is a must to understand Iddir itself.

In this connection, it should be noted that one cannot work with *Iddirs* efficiently and effectively with rudimentary knowledge and simplistic assumptions. In the face of absence of sufficient study and evidences on *Iddirs* and related issues NGOs such as ACORD are aiming to work with *Iddirs* by designing their long term and short term objectives.

In Addis Ababa ACORD has started its projects in two sites, namely, French Legation and *Akaki* of Addis Ababa City Administration. When ACORD started its operation, there were a number of challenges from the community. To begin with, ACORD was suspected by the community whether of having hidden political and religious agendas. Secondly, in its history the community knows only those people who take from *Iddirs* but not those who help *Iddirs*. Hence, people were wary not to incur costs. As reported by ACORD staff members and the *Iddirs* themselves suspicion was very high. People questioned the reliability and sustainability of the project.

In its endeavours ACORD was caught in contradictory interests of the community and *Akaki* administration. On the one hand, many *Iddirs'* leaders were members of *Iddirs*, of the former ruling party, namely, the Workers Party of Ethiopia. For the members as long as former party members of Workers Party of Ethiopia are trusted by them, they do not worry about their political background. On the other hand, the *Akaki* administration do not want to see former party officials on the scene. The administration was not comfortable with former party officials position in the leadership of *Iddirs*. Hence, ACORD was blamed for organizing former ruling party officials. Also, the administration was insisting that ACORD should participate in infrastructure construction. But ACORD's project was not designed to do so. Anyway, in 1997 G.C. a grant provision was started. The formula was that ACORD would provide a 90% grant

for male (community) *Iddirs* while they are expected to contribute 10% through saving. For women *Iddirs*, ACORD provided 95% grant and women *Iddirs* were expected to provide 5% through their savings. One male and another female *Iddir* satisfied the requirement and received the grants for the first time in 1997 G.C. Then many *Iddirs* were ready and demanded the grant. 33 *Iddirs* receive the grants in *Akaki*. Though many *Iddirs* were on the waiting list, ACORD stopped its grant provision. As a result, these *Iddirs* were disappointed and returned savings to their members.

Iddirs that received grants from ACORD started saving and credit schemes. Members, who received credit were engaged in activities such as opening small shops, groceries, extension and maintenance of their homes, retail trade, cereal trades, local drinks, making injera and tella, and the like. In this connection, both ACORD staff and beneficiary informants have stated that though ACORD encourages and pressurize beneficiaries to engage in profitable activities, it has not conducted a market survey to indicate profitable activities. As a result, many beneficiaries failed to obtain profits from their engagement in trade activities. Many informants claim that *Akaki* is not a favourable site to undertake profitable business activities due to poverty of its residents and due to the engagement of large proportion of the people in informal trade. Hence, efforts of many members of *Iddirs* who engaged in business activities have failed and incurred loss, hence, their poverty was further aggravated. Indeed, some have succeeded in their efforts, though they still complain that their efforts are not sustainable and a fundamental change in their life and income is not likely be achieved.

Regarding the mode of intervention, in Addis Ababa ACORD project only members of *Iddirs* who were willing to join saving and credit scheme were made beneficiaries of the project. But in Dire Dawa and Shashemene as it is informed by ACORD staff the whole members of *Iddirs* were made beneficiaries. But the project agreements were signed among *Iddir* leaders,

Kebele officials and ACORD officials, while grant agreements were signed in the name of saving and credit schemes, i.e. not in the name of *Iddir* leaders. But the signatories are the same. As we will see later on, towards the end of this section, this kind of arrangement has created complications and confusions among stakeholders. Some ACORD officials claim that their organization considers *Iddirs* as partners in the development process, while other NGOs uses *Iddirs* as entry points. This issue will also be examined in line with the actual facts and practices in *Akaki*. After the grant agreement was signed, the money was said to be given to representatives of the saving and credit cooperative which was not in existence in legal terms even at the end of 2001 G.C.. Due to absence of legal personality the money was either deposited in the *Iddir's* bank account or kept with the treasurer. In the later case, the money was exposed to embezzlement like *Legehar* saving and credit cooperative, and in the former case particularly where leaders of the *Iddir* and, saving and credit cooperatives are different persons conflict was likely to arise as in Kidist Silassie case.

According to my informants, since an appropriate system of finance and management of credit and saving schemes was not set in motion before the grant was given, and due to lack of sufficient training of concerned authorities of the cooperative, the saving and credit scheme has faced serious problems in some cases. As a result, the number of beneficiaries of saving and credit has been radically declining. Some problems that emanated from the loan system have forced some members to withdraw from some *Iddirs*. For instance, three informants told me that the loan system requires members to present guarantor. As a rule if a debtor fails to pay the guarantor is obliged to pay. Hence, some defaulters were sued for their default and guarantors were forced to pay on behalf of the debtor. Since then people refused to be a guarantor for anybody. Hence, members of saving and credit could not get loan. As a result, they decided to take their saving and withdraw from saving and credit scheme. On some cases where

embezzlement of saving and credit money become evident, members decided to take their money and withdraw in order not to lose their money. Indeed, it is a possibility that due to loss of the capacity to save, members might have decided to withdraw. As a result of combination of the afore-said and other possible factors the number of saving and credit scheme members have declined radically. Indeed, from the very beginning by doubting the feasibility of the project only small number of *Iddirs* members joined the project. The following table shows number of *Iddir* members, saving and credit members and declining trends.

Table 6: Members of *Iddirs* and Saving and Credit Scheme

Name of the <i>Iddir</i>	Total Member of the <i>Iddir</i>	Members of Saving and Credit Scheme		% of Recent members out of total <i>Iddir</i> M.	Year of formation of the <i>Iddir</i>
		Earlier	Recent		
Legehar	264	80	42	15.9	1961
Ket. 3 Keb. 01	210	84	56	26.7	1980
Senden Sodo	81	80	50	61.7	1986/87
Mahdere Mariam	38	n.d	20	52.6	1980
Yeselalie Tew.	150	61	22	14.7	1986
Ababora	43	n.d	32	74.4	1967
Kidist Selassie	305	209	50	16.4	1954
Jibatina Mecha	39	n.d	37	94.9	1983
Abroadeg Won.	58	31	58	100.0	1991
Gishen Mariam	205	201	43	21	1956

Source: - Compiled from informants' responses

Except for the exceptional case of Abro-Adeg Wondimamachoch *Iddir*, which consists of only members of Gurage ethnic group, members of all *Iddirs* in saving and credit scheme shows a sharp decline. Numbers of recent members of saving and credit scheme compared to the total member of *Iddirs* shows a very large difference. This is an indication that ACORD works with very small number out of total *Iddir* members in *Akaki*.

According to statistics compiled by ACORD Addis Ababa, more than 41% of the beneficiaries are civil servants (including factory workers), about 15% are unemployed citizens, about 14% are pensioners, 7.3% each are business persons and private employees. In this

connection, my informants have reported that those who were already in business had made the best use of the loan received from saving and credit scheme. The following table shows the monthly income of beneficiaries of *Woreda 26 of Akaki*

Table 7: Monthly income of Beneficiaries of *Woreda 26 of Akaki*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below 153	246	29.9	29.9	29.9
153-253	157	19.1	19.1	49.0
254-354	135	16.4	16.4	65.5
355-455	79	9.6	9.6	75.1
456-556	33	4.0	4.0	79.1
557-657	19	2.3	2.3	81.4
658-758	16	1.9	1.9	83.3
759-859	5	.6	.6	83.9
860-960	6	.7	.7	84.7
961+	10	1.2	1.2	85.9
nv	116	14.1	14.1	100.0
Total	822	100.0	100.0	

Source : ACORD Addis Ababa, November 2001

The above table shows the fact that in addition to low income people, medium and high income people are also beneficiaries of the project. In this respect, ACORD (1998:9) has stated that, “*Iddirs* are not homogenous in terms of income/ standard of living. The membership criteria have little to do with poverty. It is therefore difficult to target the poor in a situation where both poor and better off are members.” The educational status of beneficiaries of *Woreda 26 of Akaki* 12th grade up to degree level beneficiaries constitute 15.4%. Statistics on beneficiaries by sex indicates that about 40% of beneficiaries of *Woreda 26 of Akaki* are female while the rest 60% are male.

The facts and figures indicated are in line with the conclusion reached by Thomas (in CRDA, 1997: 3) which says that, “It would not however, be true to say that NGOs always reach the poorest of the poor as this clearly is not the case in Addis Ababa as in other cities. Individuals and groups who are not poor have also managed to capture project benefits.”

In brief one can deduce from the evidences in this chapter the fact that ACORD has never worked with *Iddirs* as entities but works with members of *Iddirs* organized under different organization, namely, saving and credit cooperative. Even then if we further go down to examine the reality, we may observe the fact that ACORD employed saving and credit scheme or cooperative as an entry point to reach and encourage those individuals who are capable to help themselves. Here below a case history of an individual beneficiary of ACORD project has been presented.

Cast 7

A case History of a Beneficiary of ACORD's saving and credit scheme in Akaki

My name is Israel Alemu. I was born and grew up in *Gojam-Debere Markos*. I come to Addis Ababa in 1971 E.C. and to *Akaki* in 1979 E.C. I and my husband used to work in *Berta* construction agency. This construction agency was nationalized by the *Derg*. As employees of the agency we were living in *Berta* camp. After seizure of power by EPRDF in the place of *Derg*, *Berta* construction was returned to the former owners and both of us fired by the owners.

In relation to my membership in *Iddir*, I am member of *Mahidere Mariam* women *Iddir*. I am chief accountant of the *Iddir*, and secretary of *Mahidere Mariam* saving and credit cooperative (P.L.C). Our *Iddir* comprises 38 members while our saving and credit scheme comprises 20 members at this time i.e. November 2000 G.C. (*Hiddar* 1994 E.C). Our *Iddir* does not have its own hall. Hence we usually conduct our meetings in the field. I became member of the *Iddir* in 1985 E.C.. As women *Iddir* we have acquired women *Iddir*'s materials. We put our materials in a rented room. We rented that room for ETB 20.00 per month, i.e. ETB 240 per annum. Earlier we have attempted to keep our materials in each member's houses turn by turn. But later on in due to shortage of space and rooms in members' residences, we decided to rent a room in order to store our materials.

At the moment monthly contribution of our *Iddir* is ETB 6.00. This consists ETB 3.50 direct contribution for our capital, ETB 2.00 for *injera* expenses at the incident of death, and ETB 0.50 cents for the rent of our store (membership fee for new applicants is ETB 75.00.) Earlier instead of contribution for *injera* we were contributing *injera* in kind at the incident of death. Due to various reasons we decided to contribute ETB 2.00 to cover the expense of *injera*. Since our *Iddir* do serve lunch and dinner for three consecutive days, the expense of *injera* had depleted our financial capital.

Regarding our saving and credit scheme, ACORD pressurized us to undertake profitable trade projects. But among our members some could not undertake profitable business and obtain profit. Some others who were already in business took loan and benefited from it. Some members took loan without realizing their capacity and objective conditions of *Akaki*,

and in the final analysis ended up in bankruptcy. Here in *Akaki* it is difficult to start new business by loan such as ours and perform sustainable business. But it may be possible merely to obtain income which enable to cover day to day consumption expenses. From our saving and credit capital 14 members took credit. Two of our members benefited most from the credit they took, because their husbands are merchants.

As far as I am concerned, through ACORD project fund I was trained for six months in sewing by traveling to Addis Ababa every day. While I was attending the training, I entered into conflict with my husband. After graduation without sufficient orientation, I borrowed ETB 2000.00 to buy sewing machine and to start business. I bought a sewing machine for ETB 1200.00. There was no market assessment. To that matter I had no skill to do so. Out of the received loan I paid ETB 50.00 to subsidize my *Iddir* for its service. Also out of the left over money I rented a room for ETB 80.00 per month for a period of three months, i.e., $80 \times 3 = \text{ETB } 240.00$. There was no sufficient left over money to buy clothes in order to sew and sell in the market and earn income.

On the other hand, since in our culture women sewers are not known, people were not coming to me to get my sewing service. Anyhow, later on to advertise my self I started to sew in front of my residence. Also I started small shop business to retail minor goods. Since shops were plenty all over our vicinity, I was forced to stop it. As my family faced difficulty in surviving we sold the sewing machine for ETB 600.00, (which was bought for ETB 1200.00 earlier). Anyhow, we paid the loan.

Later on I took the second loan which amounts to ETB 1000.00 and I bought a hybrid cow (*Yeferenj Lam*). From the sale of milk my family is earning ETB 240.00 per month. From my earning I am paying part of my loan every month, and with the left over money I do cover consumption expenses of my cow and my family. Fortunately, later on my husband got a job and he is earning ETB 300.00 per month. My future plan is to buy another cow to augment the income of my family.

Though ACORD has expended ETB 3000.00 for my sewing training I could not benefit from it. On the other hand, ACORD lost ETB 3000.00 without any effect. ACORD has not conducted a study from the very beginning. Had the project been designed properly, it would have been effective. In this respect ACORD had no work plan and market assessment. They run for solutions after the problem is faced. Also during the training, we were not trained in line with the contract made. We had not lunch per diem. Indeed, we received ETB 90.00 for transport allowance.

For *Akaki* saving and credit cooperatives, ACORD has not performed permanent business for us. We are not strengthened. It has not worked a job that convince the people here in *Akaki*. It would have been better If ACORD establish one common business for beneficiaries. It should not leave us as we are helpless now.

Regarding ACORD's per diem and training, earlier, ACORD was not paying per diem. Breakfast, lunch and transport services were provided. At that time money people were not participating in training. Today per diem of ETB 10.00 is being paid per day. It would have been sufficient if ACORD make it ETB 20.00. Those members who were trained by

ACORD do not train other members in our case. Experience sharing visits do stimulate, encourage and provoke others to participate in various activities. The *Iddir* members who are not members of saving and credit scheme do not have good attitude towards us. Since there are quarrels among members of saving and credit scheme, our *Iddir* members are frightened by this incident. Earlier they were afraid that saving and credit scheme may affect the *Iddir* negatively. But saving and credit do not affect the *Iddir* by any means.

Regarding the interest rate of saving and credit scheme of ACORD project in *Akaki*, it was reported that it was 21% per annum. Beneficiaries of the scheme, i.e. my informants have asserted that the interest rate was 100% which is very high compared to the interest rate of the banks in the country, which is 10.5% per annum at that time. But when it is compared to "Arata Abedari" (illegal lenders) it is small. The interest rate of illegal lenders is not constant. In a similar saving and credit scheme of ACORD in Dire Dawa, Fantahun (2000:11) has noted that,

As regards interest charged, it is interesting to note that different rates are applied in different CBOs (Iddirs). About 4 CBOs charge below 10%, while 26 CBOs charge rates between 11 to 20 percent. 62 CBOs charge between 21 - 30 percent and 9 CBOs operate at above 30% interest rate.

Unlike Dire Dawa, *Akaki* saving and credit schemes charged a similar interest rate, i.e. 21%. ACORD staff asserted that it is up to the beneficiaries to decide on the interest rate. Though leaders and members of the scheme complained that the rate was too high, no attempt was made to decrease it. But while I was in the field for my data collection, when legalization of saving and credit scheme was initiated, the interest rate was decreased to 10.5% in line with the regulation of the National Bank of Ethiopia and proclamation of cooperatives no - 147/91 E.C.. Generally it seems that the earlier interest rate of ACORD projects in Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa was too high. It is questionable whether that high interest rate has benefited the poor to alleviate their poverty problem. Rather it might have an excluding and debilitating impact on the targeted poor. Recently the interest rate was declined to 3% by the decision of the government. This measure may discourage saving and encourage lenders of money for development purpose.

In a related issue, beneficiary *Iddirs* complained that ACORD did not provide them the second phase of the grant in line with their signed agreements. On its part, ACORD argues that beneficiaries did not fulfill the requirement to get the second phase of the grant. This issue has created suspicion and misunderstanding between the two partners. *Iddir* leaders suspect that the promised grant might have been used in their name but for other purposes. On the other hand, in some cases due to delay of the grant some *Iddirs* have returned the collected savings to their members.

In relation to the training component of the project, my informants have stated related problems. Market assessment and relevant trainings were not given prior to the grant and provision of the loan to members. As a result, some members have faced serious loss. On the other hand, due to various reasons concerned and relevant officials of the saving and credit scheme could not participate in some trainings. Simply to meet the given quota some members were sent to the training provided by ACORD. But lately trainings were arranged on Saturdays and Sundays. This has improved the timing problem faced by some saving and credit scheme officials. Some essential trainings that are important to all *Iddir* members are only given to beneficiaries of the scheme. In other words, non-beneficiary *Iddir* members are excluded from the training. Due to irrelevant and limited participants in the training, financial handling and governance of the scheme and the *Iddirs* as a whole have not improved. As a result, some serious problems have been observed. On the other hand, as I have observed quality of the training itself is questionable. English and professional jargons were employed by some trainers. Also, text book models such as Ben Diagram were employed. There is no effort to identify the existing capacity of beneficiaries and to build upon it.

One serious problem emanated from the informality of *Iddirs* in two project sites of ACORD. In both Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa projects, ACORD has faced similar shocking experiences.

Two falsely ready-made *Iddirs* approach ACORD offices of both Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa. After all the necessary standard requirements were met and checked by the concerned staff, the grants were given. Finally ACORD realized that those *Iddirs* were non-existent in reality. In the case of Addis Ababa programme, an *Iddir* known as Wondimamachoch *Iddir* received grant of birr 7,185 in the year 1999 G.C.. The so called members of that *Iddir* took the loan according to their airtight application. They failed to repay their loan and finally it was realized that members divided the grant among themselves and dispersed, and then the *Iddir* was no longer in existence on the ground. (ACORD Addis Ababa CBOs support programme, 2000:28-29; and personal communication with Kasech Abegaz, coordinator of Addis Ababa ACORD and Fikre Estifanous, former project staff of ACORD Dire Dawa).

5.3 Independent Self-initiated Efforts of *Iddirs*

5.3.1 Efforts of individual Iddirs

Evidence on a few self-initiated efforts of *Iddirs* on their own is available from my research sites and elsewhere. Also *Fetno Derash Iddir* of *Nazreth* has started saving and credit scheme for its members on its own. *Awra Godana Iddir* was in the process of starting a project. These kinds of efforts are not limited to urban areas. Yigremew (2000:53) has reported a similar case from rural Gojam. In that case *Mariam Mahiber* (Religious Association) which was established in 1910 E.C. (1917/18 G.C.) and has transformed itself into multi-purpose association, which includes burial service, and has been engaged in the provisions of services such as credit service, settlement of disputes, burial services and covers of costs that emanate from burial and mourning ceremony at the incident of death among members and their relatives. This self administering association acquired elements of modern association and comprised more than 300 household head members.

Though the imposed peasant associations by the former *Derg* regimes were disbanded, their properties dismantled and looted in *Gojam* and other parts of the country, this self-initiated voluntary *Mariam Mahiber* is getting stronger and incorporating functions that satisfy the needs of its members. As its members claimed their *Mahiber* is everything for them, as reported to *Yigremew*. Likewise *Abo Tsebel Sefere Selam Meredaja Ina Limat Iddir* located in *Kebele 55 Woreda 19 Zone 3* of Addis Ababa City Administration is becoming everything for its members. The case of this *Iddir* is presented here below.

Case 8

Abo Tseble Sefere Selam Meredaja Ina Limat Iddir was formed in 1978 E.C. (1985/86 G.C.) by 30 founding members. Each member contributed 0.50 cents each. This means that the initial capital of the *Iddir* was only ETB 15.00 at the initial stage. Since the area is new settlement area, members were drawn from two housing cooperatives, namely, *Lema* and *Lemlem* housing cooperatives. The members' initial purpose was to form mutual support burial association as it has been the tradition here in Ethiopia.

Regarding the increment or growth of members and capital of the *Iddir*, as stated earlier at the initial stage founding members were 30. This number was increased to 280 in the year 1987 E.C. In December 2001 G.C. (*Tahisas* 1994 E.C.) the number of members were 350. At this moment it might have increased. At December 2001 G.C. monthly contribution of members was ETB 6.00. The *Iddir's* payment at the incident of death is ETB 1200.00 for the member and his/her partner, for children ETB 600, and for fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers of both partners ETB 500.00 is being paid. Compared to other *Iddirs* in *Akaki*, *Kolfe* and *Nazreth* this *Iddir's* monthly payment is relatively low and payment at the incident of death is relatively high. This could be due to the fact that the *Iddir* is backed by other sources of income.

The *Iddir* makes election of its leaders every two years. According to its bylaws one can be elected only twice i.e. for 4 years period service. But this provision was revised and made possible the election for the third time, i.e. for 6 years period service. This revision was necessitated in order to give the current leader, Ato Tilahun Tamiru, the opportunity to accomplish his plan of development for the *Iddir*. Ato Tilahun was elected as an auditor of the *Iddir* in 1988 E.C. and in 1990 E.C. he was elected as a leader, chairperson or *Dagna*, of the *Iddir*. Since then he had made at most effort to transform the *Iddir* and incorporate development agenda. In this respect, the first effort was to revise the bylaws and include development agenda. At this stage there were strong opponents to this move. The fear or the suspicion of the opponents was that inclusion of development agenda may politicize the *Iddir* and jeopardize the major burial function. Anyhow the majority voted for the inclusions of development agenda. The current leaders of the *Iddir* asserted that 5% of the members were opponents to the inclusion of development agenda and efforts of the leaders.

Since Ato Tilahun enjoyed the upper hand, he continued with his change and development agenda of the *Iddir*. One master bylaw and five bylaws were prepared for five subcommittees, namely, burial execution and support sub-committee (*Yekebir Ina Irdara Asfetsemi*); women *Iddirs* (*Yesetoch yeguada Chigir Aswegage*) sub-committee; saving and credit service (*Yegenzeb Kuteba Ina Bidir Agelglot*) sub-committee; Kindergarten and elementary school administration (*Yeatsede Hitsanat Ina Andegna Dereja Timihirt Bet*) sub-committee; and Development, Health and Environmental protection (*Yelimat, yetiena Ina yeakababi Inkibikabie*) sub-committee.

The burial execution and support committee performs burial and related services to members of the deceased family & to facilitate its functions, members were classified and organized on the basis of *ketena* in line with members residential areas.

Women's *Iddirs* were re-organized under a form of umbrella organization. 14 women *Iddirs* with about 350 members were reorganized and strengthened their activities.

Saving and credit scheme was started with 36 members in 1990 E.C. and reached 139 in December 2001 G.C. (in *Tahisas* 1994 E.C.). It has disbursed ETB 36,000.00 for 27 members. Savings of members range from ETB 5.00 to 200.00.

Kindergarten and elementary school committee has provided opportunity for 90 children to attend K.G., and 90 to 100 adults attend night school in the evening. For K. G. children of deceased members attend K.G. free of charge. 4 poor family children pay only half of the normal payment. In this connection, 8 employees who are relatives of the members got employment opportunity with per month payment that ranges between 60-250 ETB. Total salary being paid per month amounts to ETB 1000.00.

Development, health and environmental protection committee constructed a bridge which costed ETB 7,500.00. Indeed, the *Iddir* has constructed teaching room, store and offices for its use.

The near future plan of the *Iddir* is to construct a multi-purpose hall for the *Iddir*, to open women shop and consumers' cooperative shop, to form youth HIV-AIDS club, to open a clinic, and facilitate entertainment center for the community in the area. According to the project proposal prepared by the leaders of the *Iddir* in December 2001 G.C. (*Thisis* 1994 E.C.) 80% of the cost is expected to be covered by donation while the rest 20% is to be contributed by the *Iddir*.

Regarding the financial capital of the *Iddir*, though the initial capital was ETB 15.00 in 1978 E.C., at the end of December 2001 G.C. (*Tahisas* 1994 E.C) it has reached ETB 100,000.00. The *Iddir* has won ACORD'S Award prize in 1999 ETB 3,500.00 and in 2001 ETB 25,000.00. Earlier the *Iddir* has received ETB 15,000.00 from ACORD to support its saving and credit scheme which was primarily aimed to benefit members of the women *Iddir*. Also when the *Iddir* started to incorporate development agenda in its efforts, ACORD has provided its support in the form of training and awareness creation of members. The *Iddir* was also privileged to enjoy favourable support of administrative organs in the area. All

these conditions boosted the moral of the *Iddir* leaders to forge forward in their efforts. At the moment they claim that out of the total performance of the *Iddir* 75% to 80% constitute development while 20% to 25% constitute burial service, the mainstream function of *Iddirs*.

All the afore-mentioned performances of the *Iddirs* seems to be mainly master minded by its leader, Ato Tilahun Tamiru. I requested Ato Tilahun whether the initial development Idea was his own or obtained from ACORD. He confirmed that the idea was his own and he heard about ACORD and met its staff later on. Indeed, he confessed that his idea and effort was enriched by ACORD's support. On the other hand, ACORD has benefited a lot by using *Abo Tseble Sefere Selam Meredaja Ina Limat Iddir* as a teaching model for its programme beneficiaries. In fact, ACORD's head office in London has published the *Iddirs'* success story in its 1999 annual report by considering the *Iddir* as one of its beneficiaries. On of the leaders of the *Iddir* claimed "ACORD takes more from the *Iddir* than it gives us."

As a result his relentless effort Ato Tilahun has become a very famous person. His efforts were portrayed over Ethiopian Television on the *siket* (success) programme. Later on in the recent election Ato Tilahun competed for *Woreda* council election by representing one of the ruling party, namely, Oromo People Democratic organization (OPDO), currently, he is a member of *Woreda* 19 council. Also, he is chair person of *Zone 3 Iddirs'* umbrella organization. Other members of the *Iddir* leaders are also leaders of *Woreda* 19 and *Kebele* 55 *Iddirs'* umbrella organizations. Since the extended time expires in April 2002 G.C. (1994 E.C) regarding the future prospect of the current momentum of the *Iddir* in its development efforts, I requested the comments of three members of the executive committee, namely, Ato Geremew, Ato Seid, and Ato Sisay. They asserted that for the successful continuation of development efforts of the *Iddir* the leadership of Ato Tilahun is decisive. In his absence things may change their direction. On a similar issues Ato Tilahun reacted that since bylaws were designed properly and members of the *Iddir* have vested interest, even in my absence the current momentum eventually will forge forward. In this connection, I have noticed some areas that might entail serious problem. That is all five sub-committees of the *Iddir* have their own income and finance. Since they do not have legal entity of their own their money is deposited in one account of the *Iddir*. Since Ato Tilahun is a professional accountant, he had not problem in managing and controlling different money in the same account. Unless a person with similar skill replace him problem may arise. On the other hand, Ato Tilahun has been in a position by devoting his time, energy and money for the success for his project. A new comer may not shoulder the burden. Even his colleagues have not shown the gut to replace him. Hence, the future direction of the *Iddir* is to be seen in the coming years.

5.3.2 Efforts via umbrella organizations of *Iddirs*

In 1968 E.C., due to escalated price of consumption goods of both factory and agricultural products, *Akaki Iddirs'* leaders and members decided to establish their own community shops. To materialize this idea, all *Iddirs* contributed a certain amount of money from each *Iddir's*

capital. Those shops were providing goods at a reasonable price. *Iddirs'* halls were used as shops and stores. Also, fertilizer was stored in *Iddirs* halls freely, which was to be distributed and used by poor peasants. Community shops of *Iddirs* were functioning until it was overtaken by *Kebele* in the year 1970 E.C. by the order of *Akaki* officials. During the drought and famine of 1976/77 E.C. (1983/84 G.C.), the price of cereals escalated. Again *Iddirs* engaged in supplying cereals to their community. This effort was short lived and was abandoned.

During the EPRDF regime, in the year 1990/91 E.C. due to escalated price of cereals, eleven *Iddirs* of *Kebele* 05 of *Wereda* 26 (*Akaki*) started an initiative to establish a consumer's cooperative. These *Iddirs* contributed up to Birr 7,000 each. By using temporary permission obtained from the Cooperatives' Office a committee was organized and undertook a first round purchase of cereals for the community. Before the committee was engaged in its second round of purchase, *Kebele* 05 administration intervened and obstructed the effort. In the first round the committee obtained a net profit of Birr 3,000.

On the other hand, two umbrella organizations of *Iddirs* are to start business activities. The *Nazreth Iddirs* overall committee officials have informed me that they had completed a basic precondition to engage in business activity. They had obtained a registration certificate from Oromia Justice Bureau. The Deputy President of the Committee, Ato Sia Seboka, believes that since small business activities are not viable, it is essential to engage in joint large scale business activities. This requires the design of a proper system of operation, proper division of labour and, checks and balances in the operational process. Leadership and organizational capacity building, preparation of feasible project proposals and the like are among the preconditions that should be worked upon after a legal certificate is obtained. In this respect, the *Nazreth Iddirs'* overall committee is seeking support and donations from the government, donors and NGOs. As it

indicted in the following chapter *Nazreth Iddirs'* overall committee has about one hundred member *Iddirs*, with more than 30,000 household heads.

In *Kolfe Wereda 25* of Addis Ababa, 19 *Iddirs* came together and organized themselves on their own initiative to undertake social and economic development activities. The names of the organization is known as "Tesfa Mahiberawina Limat Akef Mahiber". It has obtained its legal registration certificate. Member *Iddirs* are ready to contribute a certain amount of fund. But due to limited resource, this umbrella organization is also seeking support from the government, donors and NGOs. This kind of development may create or entail conflict of interest from NGOs and the private sector. In this respect Minas (2001:3) has asserted that,

Since recently, there has been growing pressure from community based organizations (CBOs) to be treated as NGOs with all the privileges like access to donors funding and duty free provisions. However, given a thinking that CBOs being inward looking and self-directed, they could not meet NGO definition. The idea is that in as much as CBOs do not spend funds that may be gathered to beneficiaries outside of their members, allowing them to be classified as such is like allowing a conflict of interest.

On the other hand, some people from the private (market) sector have already expressed their opposition over the mass media to organized associations' engagement in business activities, i.e., by considering it as a threat to their existence and interest. Hence, in the absence of protective government policy and legal environment, efforts of the people collectively and individually may not forge forward to bear fruits in alleviating poverty and in promoting balanced development.

5.4 Problems and Limitations on The Role of *Iddirs* in Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development

To begin with, it seems obvious that most *Iddirs* have limited amount of financial and material resources. In this line, ACORD's data may provide us some kind of additional hint. A survey in Dire Dawa revealed that 70% of the *Iddir* have no or small asset while 80% claimed

they have no or less than Birr 800 cash. In Shashemene 43% of 166 *Iddirs* claimed that their cash is less than Birr 1,000 (ACORD, 1998:5). Also, *Iddirs* of *Akaki*, *Nazreth* and *Kolfe* have problem of scarcity of resources. This problem is further aggravated and complicated when *Iddirs'* resources are further depleted due to various reasons. Three major factors can be cited in this respect.

The first factor that has been depleting the resources of *Iddirs* is the Ethiopian political regimes since the imperial time. In the name of development, national sovereignty, and the like, *Iddirs'* financial and material resources have been exploited and the trend has its own momentum. For instance, in *Akaki* in *Kebele* 01 of *Woreda* 26, each *Iddir* was required to contribute ETB 2000 in the 1993 E.C. for internal road construction. Each member or dweller was also required to contribute ETB 20. similar contributions were required in the last two regimes. Since the Derg regime contributions for national sovereignty have been paid one after the other. Obviously, these contributions are one of the factors that depleted the resources of *Iddirs*.

Secondly, leaders of some *Iddirs* have been embezzling *Iddirs* financial resources. This kind of problem has been reported from all sites, namely, *Akaki*, *Nazreth*, and *Kolfe*. In this case, not only informants but also archival documents show that many leaders of *Iddirs* have embezzled *Iddirs'* finance. Many cases were taken to courts and decided. As a result of embezzlement, many *Iddirs* were at the verge collapse.

Thirdly, some members acquired *Iddirs* fund by providing false request and evidences. From all the three sites similar cases were reported. By employing long legal procedures, some *Iddirs* have managed to get back their illegally taken funds. Some cases are under legal procedure. Also, some mischievous members were disappeared.

In terms of financial resources, most *Iddirs* have scarce financial resources. In this connection, it has to be noted that internal and external factors aggravate the vulnerability of

financial resources of *Iddirs*. Internal factors include low level of monthly contribution, high death rates, embezzlements by *Iddir* leadership, illegal appropriation of *Iddir* money by members and the like. The external factor is the expropriation of *Iddirs'* money by the government in the form of forced donations, taxes, contributions for various purposes. As a result of combinations of all internal and external factors, many *Iddirs* from *Akaki*, *Nazreth* and *Kolfe* had reported that at one time they were unable to pay their dues to members at the incident of death. Some were even at the verge of collapse. In this respect, very recently during my fieldwork in *Akaki*, *Yeselale Tewelajoch Iddir* could not pay its dues at the death of a member's daughter. Among many others cases, *Kidist Silassie Iddir* and *Menbere Hiwot* of *Akaki*, *Yeageriew Iddir* and *Nebar Kolfe* of *Kolfe Woreda 25*, and similar cases from *Nazreth* were reported as the cases where *Iddirs* could not pay their dues at the incident of death due to absence of *Iddir* money. Hence, the deceased families were forced to wait until the contributions were collected from members i.e., a long time after the deceased is buried. Some *Iddirs* were forced to rehabilitate and build the capital of their *Iddirs* by contributing extra contribution in addition to normal monthly payments. Also, to get back their embezzled money by their leadership, and illegally appropriated money by their members many *Iddirs* were engaged in protracted legal procedures.

In relation to scarce resources of *Iddirs*, chains of problems and reactions have been observed. Earlier in the experience of *Akaki Iddirs*, membership of many relatives in one *Iddir* entailed depletion of *Iddirs'* resources at the incident of death due to payment of a large sum of money simultaneously. As a result, the former *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee advised *Iddirs* not to accept close relatives in their *Iddir*. This has been accepted and practiced among *Akaki Iddirs*.

Another problem that is not yet addressed properly is the payments of *Iddirs* for their members' large family members at the incident of death. In this respect, I have seen, among

others, a form of one member of an *Iddir* in which 27 brothers and sisters, 2 mothers and 2 fathers, and 4 children of partners were registered. This means that including the two partners the *Iddir* is expected make payments for 37 individuals at the incident of death. If we hypothetically calculate actual payments at the current rate of payments for brothers and sisters $27 \times 350 = 9450$, For Fathers and mothers $4 \times 400 = 1600$, for children $4 \times 500 = 2000$, for two partners $2 \times 1000 = 2000$. The total payment amounts to ETB 15, 050. The monthly contribution of the *Iddir* is ETB 10.00. To balance the payment the *Iddir* member has to pay for 1,505 months. This is equal to 125 years and 5 months payments. The life expectancy in Ethiopia is less than half of the calculated payment years by the member. In this relation, some leaders of *Iddirs* have reported to their general assemblies on the impact of payments for large family members. But, only *Sedeen Sodo Iddir* has reported its payment for nuclear family members only, i.e., for the member, his or her partner, and their children. In this connection, the following table shows some *Akaki Iddirs* total members, montly contribution, payments at the incident of death and their capital as of may 24, 2002.

Table 8: Some *Akaki Iddirs* monthly contributions, payments at the incident of death and their capital.

Name of the <i>Iddir</i>	No of members	Monthly contribution	Payments at the incident of death for - ETB	Capital as of May 2002 ETB
Yegaraw MedhaneAlem	214	10.00	Spouse - 1,200 Children - 400 Mother/Father - 350 Brother/Sister -350 Dependent/ guest- 155	25,000
Sefere Selam	190	10.25	Spouse - 1,000 Children - 400	31,000

			Mother/Father - 350 Brother/Sister - 300 Dependent/ guest- 120	
Menbere Hiwot	380	10.00	Spouse - 1,700 Children - 700 Mother/Father - 500 Brother/Sister - 400 Dependent/ guest- 100	60,000
Kidus Balewold	440	10.50	Spouse - 1,700 Children - 700 Mother/Father - 500 Brother/Sister - 350 Dependent/ guest- 150	57,000
Fanta TekleHaymanot	481	10.50	Spouse - 1,700 Children - 700 Mother/Father - 400 Brother/Sister - 300 Dependent/ guest- 250	48,000
Babur Tabia	20	5.00	Spouse - 500 Children - 150 Mother/Father - 150 Brother/Sister - 120 Dependent/ guest- No	3,000
Kidist Silassie	300	10.00	Spouse - 1,000 Children - 500 Mother/Father - 400 Brother/Sister - 300 Dependent/ guest- 200	15,000
Kambataina Hadiya	58	5.00	Spouse - 400 Children - 200 Mother/Father - 180 Brother/Sister - 160 Dependent/ guest- 120	6,000
Gishen Mariam	209	10.00	Spouse - 1,200 Children - 350 Mother/Father - 350 Brother/Sister - 350 Dependent/ guest- 150	7,000

Source : Compiled from informant's responses

In terms of number of members of *Iddirs* and their capital, the above table presents picture of *Iddirs* at different levels. According to leaders of *Iddirs*, payments for the death of brothers and sisters of members take the lion share of the total payment. Payments for members has been sharply increasing. In *Akaki* recently the highest payment reported is Birr 2,000.00. In the face of escalating payments at the incident of death, the large of number of family size and

relatives of members, combined with high death rates eventually entail depletion of financial resource of *Iddirs*.

Regarding the impact of the killer disease, HIV/AIDS , Dejene (2001B:9) has concluded that “If the epidemic would remain unabated, it is possible that many *Iddirs* in Addis dissolve as their savings are depleted.” In this respect some *Iddirs* have doubled their monthly contribution. Also, there are reports that in some *Iddirs* in central Addis Ababa are at the verge of collapse due to high death rate and related payments.

Problems do arise from both registration and non-registration of Iddis. Non-registration entails informality and illegality of *Iddirs* while registration entails formality and legality of *Iddirs*. In *Akaki* three of my informants are leaders of non-registered informal and non-legal *Iddirs*. As a result, they cannot deposit their *Iddirs'* money in the bank. Hence, one of them is keeping his *Iddir's* money in the bank in his name. The two are keeping their *Iddirs'* money in their home. All of them are aware of the risk that might take place. On the other side, the long process and procedure of registration is costly, time consuming, and unbearable for them. Also they are not sure what formalization or registration may entail. They are in paradoxical dilemma. These are typical cases of informal *Iddirs*. Anyway in this kind of situation *Iddirs'* money might be wasted or may not be used for the benefit of development either through bank or through members.

Though this situation has been improving through experience, some *Iddirs* have problems in their bookkeeping and recording systems. Indeed, this could be a favourable ground for leaders to embezzle and remain unaccountable. Even if the leadership is genuine, sometimes audit may show imbalance of the received and paid money. In this line, *ketena 3 Kebele 01 Iddir* of *Akaki* had experienced such a problem. From the audit report, a few thousand Birr was

considered to be embezzled but later on it was found out that the money was properly expended but not properly recorded.

As a result of scarce and limited financial resources, the role and contributions of *Iddirs* in poverty alleviation and sustainable development is very much limited and insignificant. In this regard, my informants argue that due to scarcity of resources, *Iddirs* cannot go beyond burying each other. In this connection, the issue at stake is whether *Iddirs* can meaningful participate and contribute in the poverty alleviation and development processes. Another debatable issue is what the impact of involvement of *Iddirs* in business and development activities would be on their very existence and on the life of their members.

Regarding the problems related to the leadership of *Iddirs*, diverse issues may be raised. Generally *Iddir* leaders are part time workers. Indeed, some leaders are pensioners, and others are private or government employees. Hence, *Iddir* leaders do lack time and labour to spare for poverty alleviation and development efforts, which is completely different from the role of conventional *Iddir* leadership role and service. In this connection, the challenging question is whether a good leader of *Iddir* can be a good development leader. This question needs further verification. Development projects require leaders with relevant skill, vision, commitment and appropriate leadership quality.

On the other hand, decision of *Iddirs'* members not to participate in any kind of development and poverty alleviation efforts does hamper the role of some *Iddirs* in this direction. Furthermore, even if *Iddirs'* members are willing to participate in poverty alleviation and development efforts, the afore-mentioned serious problems do debilitate the capacity of *Iddirs* to contribute in this line. Hence, let alone poverty alleviation and development efforts but the very existence and function of *Iddirs* may require support of the government favourable policy and others in order to undertake the conventional burial service, because if *Iddirs* fail to provide

burial service in a community the government may be obliged to perform it. As a result, it is imperative for the Ethiopian government to design a favourable policy environment and legal framework to enable *Iddirs* to perform burial service, and wherever possible to participate in poverty alleviation and development activities for the benefit of their members and the community at large.

Furthermore, absence of research and understanding of the overall nature or aspects of *Iddirs* eventually impede efficient and effective use of resources for genuine poverty alleviation, change, and development efforts of the concerned actors.

Summary and conclusion

In considering the role of *Iddirs* in poverty alleviation, change and development, three categories of approaches have been identified, namely, *Iddirs* in collaboration with governments (three regimes), with NGOs, and efforts of *Iddirs* on their own. All categories of approaches have their own problems and limitations. Though all approaches may be important, the self-initiated efforts of *Iddirs* can be considered as ideal models for *Iddirs*' participation in development, poverty alleviation and change, because the two categories of collaborative efforts seems to be largely co-opted rather than cooperation. The reason is that in the process, *Iddirs* and their leaders were influenced and mobilized to make them part of the intended project by the powerful outsiders, namely, governments and NGOs.

Regarding differences among the three regimes, the imperial regime's aim was to tap resources for development projects. during its reign *Derg* has marginalized the development role of *Iddirs* and establish *kebele* administration. On its turn EPRDF introduced matching fund for development projects with limited participation of *Iddirs*. As far as *Iddir* problems related to finance are concerned, available evidences suggest that *Iddirs* have limited financial resources. This problem is further aggravated by internal and external factors which further deplete the

already scarce and vulnerable financial resources. As a result, some members and leaders of *Iddirs* have reported that at least at one time their *Iddirs* were not in a position to pay their dues for members at the incident of death. HIV/AIDS may have further aggravated and complicated the financial problems of *Iddirs*. In this kind of desperate situation some *Iddirs* may fail to perform the conventional burial service and mourning ceremony, let alone poverty alleviation and development activities. Hence, the support of government and other actors could be essential. On the other hand, *Iddirs* that have actual and potential capacity to undertake poverty alleviation and development activities should be given due support and favourable policy environment and legal frameworks should be provided. Also extensive capacity building and empowerment measures are highly essential. In the face of limited capacity of *Iddirs* on individual basis, the formation of umbrella organizations could be a viable coping mechanism. The following chapter deals with problems related to umbrella organizations of *Iddirs* in *Akaki, Kolfe* and *Nazreth*.

CHAPTER SIX

6. *Iddirs'* Umbrella Organizations of *Akaki, Kolfe* and *Nazreth* Under the Three Ethiopian Regimes:- Their History, Performances, Problems, and Relations with the State

6.0 **Introduction** :- This chapter begins with a very brief review of literatures on *Iddirs'* umbrella organizations of some urban areas such as Addis Ababa, Harar and Dessie. This is following by a sub-section which deals with original research findings on the origin,

development, role, and relations of *Akaki Iddirs'* umbrella organization with the Imperial regime. Eventually, activities and problems of *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee during the emergence, seizure of power and rule by the Derg regime has been examined. The growth of constituent member *Iddirs* of *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee and *Kolfe Iddirs'* umbrella organization and citizens' critical comment has been briefly discussed. The next section deals with attempts to organize and re-organize *Iddirs'* umbrella organizations by different actors such as NGOs, self-initiated *Iddirs* and government structures in Addis Ababa. One of the major sections in this chapter is the one which deals with *Nazreth Iddirs* umbrella organization across the three regimes of Ethiopia. Finally, conclusion and recommendation in relation to *Iddirs'* umbrella organizations has been presented.

6.1 A brief review of literatures on history of umbrella organizations of urban *Iddirs*

Regarding the history of umbrella organizations of urban *Iddirs*, the cases of Addis Ababa, Harar, and Dessie has been reviewed very briefly. In Addis Ababa, according to Koehn and Koehn (1975:401), all ten *Woredas* of Municipality of Addis Ababa initiated the establishment of umbrella organizations of registered *Iddirs* in the name of coordinating committees in 1968 G.C.. These committees were working under the auspices of *Woreda* governor or his deputy, and they held their meetings regularly to discuss common problems, pool resources, and receive communication from the Municipality officials. In November 1972 G.C. a four day seminar was conducted on *Iddirs* and government cooperation in development activities. In this relation, on the basis of analysis of situations, it has been concluded that the intent of the government was not promote genuine community development but to infiltrate, control and manipulate *Iddir* structures in order to mobilize the community for its political interest.

In Harar in 1974 and 1975 G.C., various attempts have been made to organize umbrella organizations of *Iddirs* and *Afoshas/Afochas* under central coordinating committee and sub-

committee levels by the Community Development Center of MNCD. Due to the policy and measures taken by the Derg regime, the development role of *Iddirs* and *Afoshas/Afochas*, and their umbrella organization was marginalized (Koehn and Waldron, in Ottaway, 1976: 412-421).

In Dessie between 1966 and 1973 G.C. a federation of 120 *Iddirs* was active in development projects. But it was disbanded for 19 years, i.e., between 1974 - 1992 G.C. It was reformed in 1993 G.C. (Yeshiwas, 1995:1). In this connection an interesting case of umbrella organizations of rural *Iddir*-like *Qirie* organizations have to be mentioned. In his study of *Meket Woreda* of South *Wollo*, Yeshiwas (1995:2) has indicated that in certain cases there was cooperation between local *Qiries*, in that a small number of groups have elected an overall chairman to act as an arbiter in cases of disputes. In a similar vein in other parts of *Wollo*, Western *Woredas* of *Legambo* and *Saynt*, a research team found umbrella organizations of *Qirie*, which were known as *libas* and *bokko* respectively. The team noted these supra-*qirie* organizations normally embrace 3 to 4 *Qirie* and these *supra-qirie* organizations do not go beyond acting as a kind of appellate court to consider cases of individuals who claim they had been wrongly subjected to the most serious penalty such as dismissal by their *Qirie* (personal communication Dr. Yeraswork Admassie, Leader of the research team).

6.2 The Origin, Historical Development, Performance and Problems of *Akaki Iddirs*'

Overall Committee During The Imperial Regime

Case 9

Akaki Iddirs' overall committee was formed in 1956 E.C. (1963/64 G.C.). The founders were six *Iddirs* of *Akaki* town's natives and dwellers. Founder *Iddirs* were *Tiliku Iddir*, *Yegara Iddir*, *Babur Tabia Iddir*, *Fetno Derash Iddir*, *Gelan Ber Iddir* and *Medhane-Alem Iddir*. The committee conducted its first meeting on June 27, 1956 E.C. (1964 G.C) in the *Akaki* Branch office of MNCD. The idea of organizing *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee was initiated and facilitated by head of the *Akaki* branch office, *Ato Hailu Gebre-Hana*. The *Akaki* branch office of the Ministry was the office and meeting venue for the committee. Also, the committee was making use of facilities and resources of the branch office. In the committee's first and consecutive minutes, the head of the branch office was indicated as a member of the

committee. The committee used to hold its meetings every Saturday. The minutes of the committee indicate that on all the agenda issues, the head of the branch, *Ato Hailu*, was providing the committee with necessary information and explanations as a resource person. At the first day meeting of the committee issues discussed included,

- annual work plan of the committee, which was to be submitted to the Ministry of National Community Development, for the budget year June 1956 to June 1957 E.C,
- the water problem of *Akaki* residents and remedial measures to be taken,
- the need to educate women through women’s committees in order to facilitate better child-care in the *Akaki* community,
- prevalence of and protection from insecticides in and around *Akaki*
- the permanent venue and regular meeting of the committee. Also, in its consecutive meetings, among other things, the committee discussed issues such as the market place problem, administrative matters and implementation of earlier decisions, acceptance of new *Iddir* members into the overall committee, and how to penalize the absentees and late-comer members of the committee to the meetings.

In mid 1957 E.C., the committee wrote a warning letter to *Akaki* municipality regarding the unsolved water problem of the town. In that letter the president of the committee, *Ato Teshome*, had made it clear that, "If the municipality fails to solve the water problem, the people would have to submit their appeal to the Emperor". In this connection, it has to be noted that during that formative stage, the committee was discussing public problems and striving for solutions on behalf of the people as a representative body of the people. The demands of the committee were expressed in strong terms of order or warning. (Maybe this is due to the status of the leader of the committee.)

Migrant workers' *Iddirs* began to join the overall committee from 1958 E.C, i.e., 1965/66 G.C.. In the following year (1959 E.C.) a representative from a non-native *Iddir* held the leading position of the overall committee. He was *Ato Girma Belay* of *Yetigre Teklay Gizat Tewelajoch Meredaja Iddir*. At that time the term of office was for one year, with re-election permitted. From 1956 - 1960 E.C the committee was working without its own written bylaws or statutes.

Regarding the social status of prominent leaders and their *Iddirs*, according to my informant *Ato Haile Habte-Mariam*, the first president of the committee, *Ato Teshome Bahre*, was a member of the royal family and close relative of the Emperor. He was one of the landlords and well-to-do family members in the area. Also, he was one of the prominent founders and members of *Tiliku Iddir*; which was the *Iddir* of “high class” people in the area. The vice president of the committee, *Ato Haile Habte-Mariam*, who is also my informant, was a trader and representative of *Babur Tabia Iddir*. Later he became secretary of *Rist Kifl* (division). The secretary, *Ato Fekade Mulatu* was a relative of the president (*Ato Teshome*) and represented *Medhane-Alem Iddir*. In the election of 1959 E.C., the president and vice president were replaced by *Ato Girma Belay* of *Tigre Iddir*, and Amde-Silassie Sahlu of *Tiliku Iddir* respectively. *Ato Amde-Silassie* was a close relative of *Ato Teshome* (the former president) and he was a member of the educated elites in the area. He was a professional who had been working in the branch office of the Ministry of Agriculture. He had served as president of the committee from 1960 to 1963 E.C.. During this period the Vice President

was *Ato Yirga Tiruneh*, who was worker of the Textile factory, and representative of a migrant workers' *Iddir*, which is known as *Melkashne Kidus Mikael Iddir*. *Ato Yirga* had replaced *Ato Amde-silassie* in 1963 E.C. (1971 G.C.) and served until *Derg* regime was overthrown on May 20, 1983 E.C. (May 27, 1991 G.C.) for more than two decades.

Ato Yirga Tiruneh, *Ato Haile Habte-Mariam* and other informants have informed me about, how the branch office of MNCD was opened in *Akaki*, the role and contributions *Iddirs* and workers of Indo-Ethiopian Textile share company in that incident, how and why the Ministry and its branch office had engaged in organizing *Iddirs* in an overall committee structure and consequent efforts.

Regarding emergence of *Iddirs* in the Textile factory, According to *Ato Yirga* and other workers of the Indo-Ethiopian Textile Factory, from 1951 to 1955 E.C. due to the absence of a labor union, workers were forced to organize themselves under various *Iddirs*. Through instrumentality of their *Iddirs'* networks, the workers were discussing their problems and organizing themselves, and finally approached the management of the factory in order to seek solutions for their problems. Due to lack of a favorable response, the workers continued to organize their efforts through their *Iddirs* and finally staged a strike in December 1955 E.C. (1962 G.C.). The workers submitted their appeal to the Emperor at his palace in Addis Ababa. The Emperor received the workers appeal and recognized their right to establish a labor union, and then ordered the Minister of MNCD, *Ato Getahun Tesema*, to open a branch office in *Akaki* as soon as possible and entertain workers problems accordingly. This was on 21 December, 1955 E.C. (1962 G.C.).

However, the Ministry faced the problem of land to construct its branch office in *Akaki*. As a result, it contacted natives' *Iddirs* to obtain support. The six *Iddirs* bought the land from a landlord and handed it over to the Ministry. Later on again *Iddirs* had contributed for the construction of a branch office and a clinic by the Ministry. On the other side, *Ato Yirga* claims that not only *Iddirs* but also the workers had contributed the lion's share of the total contribution and or cost. Hence, according to my informants, the Ministry was encouraged to tap resources of *Iddirs* and mobilize them for community development. This was the background reason for the Ministry's efforts to organize *Iddirs* under the overall committee, on its own initiation and under its full control and supervision. On the other hand, *Akaki* municipality councilors were initially appointed from amongst native *Iddirs*, elders and known traders and or wealthy individuals. These councilors were not sensitive to the needs of the workers. They represent only the interest of their class. In the meantime, due to establishment of factories people were migrating to *Akaki* in search of employment particularly since 1951 E.C..

Since the migrant workers were not allowed to join those natives' *Iddirs*, they were forced to establish their own *Iddirs* under the names of their regional and ethnic names. Indeed, workers who did not want to organize themselves under ethnic and regional names established two *Iddirs*, namely, National *Iddir* and youth *Iddir* of Indo-Textile factory. The factory *Iddirs* were flourishing since 1952 E.C.. But they started to join the overall committee since 1958 E.C.. At this juncture, appointment of councilors of the municipality was replaced by election through *Iddirs* leaders or representatives. Workers and their *Iddirs* made the best use of that opportunity to elect municipality councilors from amongst the workers who represent the

workers and their interest. As a result, from 1960-63 E.C. workers representatives through their *Iddirs* were competing and succeeded in holding most of the positions, and particularly from 1964-1966 E.C. all seven seats of councilors of *Akaki* municipality were held by workers representatives. Indeed, it is a well known fact that, finally, the landlords and wealthy class people lost their position once and for all as a result of nationalizations of urban lands and extra houses, and other basic means of production such as factories by the socialist oriented military *Derg* Regime in 1975 G.C.(1967 E.C.)

Prior to 1960 E.C., *Ato Yirga* claims that, the overall committee was not well-organized. Its contribution to development was limited. It had not designed its by-laws, and formulated its link with member *Iddirs*. Participation of workers *Iddirs* was very limited. But, since 1960 E.C. *Akaki Iddirs* overall committee was re-organized and strengthened. The number of workers *Iddirs* that participated in the overall committee was escalated. By-laws which stipulated the internal administration and facilitated links with member *Iddirs* were designed. The committee started to intervene and see problems that were arising between *Iddir* members and their leaders. An attempt was made to standardize *Iddirs'* monthly contributions, bylaws, and transfer of membership from one *Iddir* to another. Development efforts of *Iddirs* were organized by their umbrella organization, i.e., *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee. Particularly since 1961 E.C., the number of representatives of workers *Iddir* had increased dramatically and worker *Iddirs* representatives began to participate in the competition for the positions of municipality councilors, and they won some seats every year from 1961 to 1963 E.C. Then from 1964 to 1966 E.C. all seats of Municipality councilors were held by migrant workers' representatives. By holding Municipality councilors seats the representatives of worker *Iddirs'* were in a position to decide on,

- a. the reduction of inappropriately high license fee, which was excluding low income people due to their low capacity
- b. provisions of social facilities such as transport, water, roads, electricity, etc,
- c. coordination of community based organizations for common development,
- d. master plan preparation for the town,
- e. reduction of school fees to make it affordable to workers and low income people

As a member of former municipality councilors, *Ato Yirga* has identified a conflict of interest between the municipality and the newly elected workers' councilors, who were representing the interest of migrant workers. In this regard, the mayor of the municipality was the chairperson of the councilors and the secretary of the councilors was a staff member of the municipality. Besides, since some employees of the municipality had vested interests, they were aspiring to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, the workers representatives strived for the change of the status quo and to the benefit the workers and lower level strata of the people. According to *Ato Yirga*, the struggle was between the “progressive forces” and “reactionaries” at that time. Anyway, the councilors were bold enough to decide on the transfer and firing of a few employees of the Municipality. There were even some who were arrested for their misbehavior. The problems observed were corruption, failure to implement rules and procedures, lack of transparency and incompetent leadership, despotism, struggle for power and the like.

Akaki Iddirs overall committee organized a meeting on June 11, 1962 E.C.. 42 *Iddirs* of *Akaki* met in the Municipality and decided on, among other things, two basic conditions related to

Akaki Iddirs. These were, to change regional names of *Iddirs* into saints' names, and the other decision was that each *Iddir's* members size should not be less than 100 and not more than 500. According to the later condition, if the number of members of one *Iddir* was less than 100, it was required to merge with another *Iddir*. In line with the former decision, changes of names were made. The following are cases in point.

Table 9: Names of *Iddirs* changed in the early 1960s E.C.

Former names before 1963 E.C.	newly designated name
Yearusi Meredaja Mahiber	Genete Tsigie K.Gabriel M.M
Yewolo Meredaja Mahiber	Yegishen Mariam M.M
Yegojamina Gonder Meredaja <i>Iddir</i>	Yemeskel Eyesus M.I
Yeharer Wetatoch Meredaja <i>Iddir</i>	Yekulubi Gebriel M.I
Yemenzina Bulga <i>Iddir</i>	Kidist Silassie <i>Iddir</i>
Yeadis Alemina Sebeta <i>Iddir</i>	Kidus Balewold <i>Iddir</i>
Yetigre Teklay Gizat Meredaja <i>Iddir</i>	Yeaxum Tsion M.I
YeNazrethina Debrezeit <i>Iddir</i>	Yedebrezeit <i>Iddir</i>
Yebulgana Kinbibit <i>Iddir</i>	Yelideta Mariam <i>Iddir</i>

Sources : - Informants and archival documents

In the newly designated names, interestingly enough, one can note change of names were shifted from regional names to regional saints, such as *Yegishen Mariam* of *Wollo*, *Axum Tsion* of *Tigray*, *Kulubi Gebriel* of *Harer*, and the like. In relation to changing of names of *Akaki Iddirs*, it is important to note that the issue of changing of regional names of *Akaki Iddirs* was initiated in June 1962 E.C. (1970 G.C.), i.e., after the incident of an attempted coup against the Emperor in 1966 G.C., in which some leaders of *Mechaina Tulema* Association were seemingly involved, and also after the legal notice no.321/66 was declared in the same year.

But officials of the overall committee claims that they undertook the initiative on their own freely. This claim was communicated to Fecadu in 1972 G.C. (See Ottaway, 1976:369). But some of my informants disagree with this claim of the former overall committee officials, in that they argue that the meeting was manipulated by the government officials through their structure. Also, there is archival evidence which supports this argument. In 1963 E.C. officer of *Akaki* branch office of the Ministry of National Community Development, *Ato Abate Kassa*, in his letter dated *Yekatit* 16, 1993 E.C. Ref. No. 214/33/34/35/63 indicated the order of his office given to *Iddirs* to change their names into the names of saints. *Abate* wrote that to get feed back how far the order of his office was made into practice. In addition to change of regional and ethnic names of *Akaki Iddirs*, major problems indicated in the letter that had been written to *Iddirs* were the role of *Iddirs* in keeping security and peace of the community with police force of *Akaki* administration.

Besides, activities and meetings of non-registered *Iddirs* were considered as strictly illegal and punishable by law. The situation at that time seemed to be very tense. There were all sorts of warnings to residents of *Akaki* not to be involved in any anti-social activity. In this kind of environment, non-registered *Iddirs* had a hard time. Some *Iddirs* were accused for not being registered and non-compliance with the law. On the other hand, registered *Iddirs* were pressurized to join the overall committee and to contribute ETB 343.90 for clinic and

community development office building.

In November 1963 E.C. (1971 G.C.) the overall committee had finalized and declared its bylaws for all stakeholders. The bylaws indicates in its preamble that the office of the committee is the office of *Akaki* branch office of the Ministry of National Community Development. The objectives of the committee, as stated in the bylaw include; to bring all *Akaki Iddirs* under one organization without making difference on the basis of religion and ethnicity and also to,

- to cooperate and work with governmental and non-governmental organizations in line with the civil code, without interfering in the politics of the government,
- to facilitate and ensure financial and other contributions of member *Iddirs*, i.e., in line with the development plan,
- to resolve conflicts that may arise between *Iddirs* and within one *Iddir*,
- to undertake audit on member *Iddirs* financial activities,
- to facilitate, mobilize, coordinate, and enable the community to resolve its problems by undertaking development projects.

The other articles of the bylaws indicate that all legally registered *Iddirs* of *Akaki* would be members of the *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee. Besides, the bylaw made it clear that without the permission of the committee other *Iddirs* cannot form any other umbrella committee or gathering. Also, *Iddirs* could not be registered without obtaining permission from the overall committee first of all.

To be member of the overall committee, applicant *Iddirs*, were required to submit their applications and bylaws to the community development officer and general secretary of the overall committee. The registration fee was ETB 5.00, and each member *Iddir* was expected to pay ETB 5 per month as a membership contribution. Failure to pay the membership fee each month entailed a fine of ETB. 2; 4; 6, consecutively. The general assembly of the committee comprised two representatives from each member *Iddirs*. The general assembly met quarterly and had the highest authority. Administrative performances were undertaken by 8 elected overall committee members, who were also the executive body. Also, an officer of the community development office was a member of executive body. To undertake special duties, the overall committee was entitled to establish sub-committee of *Iddirs*. In this line, available evidences indicate that at least two sub-committees were established at the initial stage during the Imperial regime. Furthermore, duties and responsibilities of the chairperson and his deputy, secretary, financial officer and treasurer were stated in the bylaws. All modern elements of organizational principles were incorporated into the bylaws.

Akaki Iddirs overall committee, which consisted 40 of member *Iddirs*, in collaboration with *Akaki* municipality conducted three a days seminar from July 2 - 4 1963 E.C. (1971 G.C.) in *Akaki*. In fact, the master minds of this seminar were officials of *Akaki* branch office of the Ministry of National Community Development.

Similar seminar was conducted in Addis Ababa by Addis Ababa Municipality and the Ministry of National Community Development in 1965 E.C. (1972 G.C.) from October 29 to November 3. This five days seminar had included one day educational and experience sharing

visit to *Akaki*. In fact, the mayor of Addis Ababa Municipality *Dr. Haile-Giorgis Workneh* had written letter of appreciation and thanks you to *Akaki* Municipality for its effective job in hospitalizing and sharing of commendable experience in community development through participation of *Iddirs*.

From the early to mid 1960s there were very strong pressures exerted from all government offices and the overall committee itself on *Akaki Iddirs* in order to ensure they joined the overall committee. As a result, all registered *Iddirs* were forced to become members of the overall committee and the total number of member *Iddirs* reached 56 on June 11, 1966 E.C. As stated earlier many other non-registered *Iddirs* were charged and harassed in many directions. There was no favorable environment for *Iddirs* survival without joining the overall committee. Also, archival documents indicate that some *Iddir* leaders were embezzling *Iddir's* financial resources. As a result, officer of community development office had ordered all *Iddirs* leaders of *Akaki* to deposit their *Iddirs'* money in the bank.

On October 19, 1964 E.C. the mayor of *Akaki* ordered *Akaki Iddirs* through their umbrella organization to ensure citizens' high turn out for the parade on the anniversary of the emperor's 80th birth day on October 23, 1964 E.C (1971 G.C.). Towards the final years of the imperial regime, on September 27, 1966 E.C. the last election of councilors of *Akaki* municipality was conducted. After the mid of this year popular strike against the old imperial regime was staged by different sections of the community. This was followed by popular revolution that took place between the end of 1966 E.C., and 1967 E.C. (1974/75 G.C)

6.3 *Kolfe Iddirs'* Umbrella Organization Under the Imperial Regime

The *Kolfe Iddirs* overall committee was formed by seven *Iddirs* of *Kolfe*. The idea of forming that committee was raised by the *Woreda* Governor. The reason was that due to mistreatment of some *Iddir* leaders, members of *Iddirs* were filing their charges and *Woreda* officials were not in a position to handle all those charges. As a result, the idea of formation of *Kolfe Iddirs* overall committee as an appellate body was suggested. The president of that committee, *Balanberas Bisrat Workneh*, was not a member of any of the *Kolfe Iddirs*, rather he was government appointed. He was an official of government security department. This means that *Kolfe Iddirs'* overall committee was infiltrated by government security.

6.4 *Akaki Iddirs'* Overall Committee During the Emergence, Seizure of Power and rule by the Socialist Oriented Military *Derg* Regime

case 10

At the time of the revolution in 1966/67 E.C. (1974/75 G.C.), the *Akaki* people were divided into two political stands. The landlords, the wealthy and elderly people supported the Emperor and the imperial regime. Workers and other community members were not happy with this expressed support, because this large section of the community were aspiring for change of the status quo. Hence, there was a conflict of interest between those who supported the maintenance of the status quo, and those who wanted to see a change of the regime and maximize benefits from the newly emerging political system.

Some time later, the *Akaki Iddirs* overall committee officially declared its support for the *Derg*. The Emperor was overthrown and the Imperial regime was replaced by the *Derg* regime. Imperial administrative structures began to be replaced by new structures such as *Kebeles*. With the establishment of *Kebeles*, which were considered as progressive development forces, the development role and contribution of *Iddirs* was undermined due to the government policy. This created conflict between *Kebeles* and *Iddirs*. At this juncture, the overall committee advised its members to withdraw from any kind of development activities, and also advised them not to make any kind of confrontation. *Iddirs* activities were limited to burial and related services to their members. Later on, since 1968 E.C. eventually, *Kebeles* and branch office of Ministry of National Community Development began to request support and cooperation from *Iddirs* on various matters. This included on matters such as facilitating meeting forums to communicate to the public on measures taken by governments, to postpone meetings of *Iddirs* on *Kebele* meeting days, facilitating the use of *Iddirs* halls for literacy campaign, prevention of crime in the community in collaboration with *Kebele* and police, and the like. In this connection, *Ato Abate Kassa*, who was officer of community development, was also appointed as administrator. In his consecutive letters, he was tending to continue his earlier efforts which had involved *Iddirs* in development and other activities. But this was not in line with the interest of *Kebele* officials and political cadres of that area. As a result, participation of *Iddirs* was very limited.

In the meantime, due to political change the price of consumption goods was skyrocketing. As a result, the life of the community was seriously affected. Hence, *Iddirs* leaders, members and the community as whole decided to help themselves by using their *Iddirs* organizational resources and facilities. In this respect, under the coordination of *Iddirs'* overall committee, *Akaki Iddirs* established community shops by contributing a certain amount of money from each *Iddir*. *Iddirs* meeting halls were used as shopping centers and as stores for consumption goods. In this effort the overall committee mobilized support from *Kebeles* and other administrative structures.

Iddir shops were effective in not only providing consumption goods at low prices but also in obtaining a reasonable amount of profit. The service was praised not only by the community but also by administrative officials. This has been observed from both my informants and archival documents. *Iddirs'* community shops had been in operation for about three year, from September 1968 E.C to July 11, 1970 E.C.

On July 11, 1970 E.C., *Akaki Municipality* officials organized a meeting in which overall committee officials and *Iddir* leaders were informed to stop activities of *Iddirs'* shops. The

decision was to reimburse the *Iddirs'* contribution and replace *Iddirs'* shops by newly emerging *Kebele* shops at that time. This measure enabled the *Kebele* officials to control their *Kebele* residents, because, in order to get access to the *Kebele* shops, *Kebele* residents were given shopping cards. In addition to shopping cards, other cards were distributed. These were used to control the participation of residents in the *Kebele* meetings and demonstrations. If a person failed to attend *Kebele* meeting and demonstration, he was denied access to *Kebele* services and shops, until he was penalized for his absence.

On the other hand, earlier on October 14, 1970 E.C. *Akaki* administrative officials and their structures aimed at putting *Iddirs* structures under their administrative structure. In this respect, they came up with the idea of organizing and reorganizing *Iddirs* under each *Kebele* by avoiding earlier membership and structures of old *Iddirs* across many *Kebeles*. The justification was based on convenience for administrative, development and social activities. Hence, *Kebele* officials started to take aggressive measures to dismantle old *Iddirs'* structures. The overall committee and its member *Iddirs* submitted their appeals and attempted to influence the measures of *Kebele* officials through all possible networks. Fortunately and accidentally, due to political divisions/factions, some *Kebele* officials were fired and aggressive measures were slowed down. The overall committee took tactful measures to support and incorporate established *Kebele Iddirs* into its membership. But the problem was not resolved once and for all. Again after 10 years, on October 8, 1980 E.C. *Akaki* administration decided to reorganize *Iddirs* at the *ketena* level in each *Kebele*. As a result, *ketena Iddirs* were established in all *Kebeles* of *Akaki*. This time direct aggressive measures against other *Iddirs* have not been reported, because, *Iddir* officials had already joined the ruling party and the government. Anyhow, residents were pressurized to join *Kebele* and *ketena Iddirs*. Former *Iddir* halls and materials were made available to those *Iddirs* by the order of *Kebele* officials. The target of this effort was to create an appendage to the *Kebele* structure. Both *Kebele* and *ketena Iddirs* were expected to report and be accountable to the *Kebeles*.

Evidences indicate that *Iddir* resources had been used to subsidize the government structure in *Akaki*. On July 25, 1974 E.C. *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee general assembly had decided to contribute and purchase office equipments which amounted to ETB 10,000.00 for mass organizations such as the Ethiopian Trade Union, women, youth, peasants and teachers' associations branch offices in *Akaki*. These equipments were handed over on November 13, 1975 E.C.. On the other hand, the *Akaki* council or municipality refused the request of *Iddir* leaders to exempt building and land tax of *Iddirs* halls and its compounds. In this connection, some informants have reported that *Iddirs* halls and their plots of land were tax exempted during the imperial regime, but in the *Derg* regime despite their free services to the public and government tax exemption was denied. This has created disappointment among some *Iddirs* leaders and members. *Akaki Iddir* overall committee organized the construction of one common big hall in *Kebele* 08 of *Woreda* 27. A few years ago, this hall was transferred to the government, specifically to the branch office of Ministry of Culture and Sports. *Akaki Iddirs* are very unhappy about this measure, because they lost the ownership of their hall, and furthermore are required to pay rent whenever they use this hall for meetings.

In 1978 E.C. *Akaki Iddirs* overall committee revised its constitution and established its sub-committees at all *Kebele* and factory levels. The revised constitution of *Akaki Iddirs* overall

committee included some basic changes. Under its first article, two sub-articles made clear the relationship of the committee to *Akaki* administration. The two sub articles state in Amharic as follows:

1.1 ለገቢ ገንዘብ ለማግኘት ግብር ማውጣት፣ ለሥራ ማጠናከራ፣ ለሥራ ማጠናከራ፡፡

1.2 ገንዘብ ለማግኘት ግብር ማውጣት፣ ለሥራ ማጠናከራ፣ ለሥራ ማጠናከራ፡፡

Literally this means that,

1. This organization is known as all *Akaki* town *Iddirs'* overall committee
2. The organization is accountable to *Akaki* town overall council which is the higher body and close leadership provider.

The overall committee was also entitled to coordinate sub-committees of *Iddirs* at *Kebele* and factory levels. The constitution also declares that all *Akaki Iddirs* shall be organized under this committee and the establishment of other sub-committees is strictly prohibited. Also it declares that conflict resolution will be undertaken by *Kebele Iddirs'* sub-committee. But the appellat body was created in the overall committee. Various committees which include development, law, election, certificate and information, entertainment and the like were organized under the overall committee. The purpose of the sub-committees was, among other things, to serve as a bridge between *Kebele* and the community, and to accomplish tasks designated by the overall committee, town administration and the government. On the other hand, the committee was obliged not to interfere in politics. In the constitution of the sub-committees member *Iddirs* were obliged not to accept any body as a member from another *Kebele* . Surprisingly, *Iddirs* were also obliged to collect vital statistics. All *Iddirs* structures at all levels were obliged to contribute finance and labor when ever required.

6.5 Increment in Number of *Akaki Iddirs* From 1956 -1980 E.C

Despite all restrictions and unfavourable conditions imposed on *Iddirs*, the number of *Akaki Iddirs* has been escalating sharply. This could be due to felt- need of citizens and increase of the population of *Akaki*. In addition, since unregistered *Iddirs* cannot function openly, *Iddirs* that were operating informally might have been forced to be registered and join the *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee. As discussed earlier since early 1960s E.C *Akaki Iddirs* were highly pressurized to get registered and join the overall committee.

Table 10: *Akaki Iddirs'* Overall Committee Membership Growth (1956 - 1980 E.C.)

Year E.C.	No. of <i>Iddirs</i>
1956	6
1961	36
1963	40
1966	56

1974	84
1979	106
February 1980	119

Sources: - Compiled from Archival documents

6.6 Citizens' Critical Comments on *Akaki Iddirs'* Overall Committee's relation with the two regimes

Case 11

My informants expressed their dissatisfaction regarding their *Iddirs'* overall committee relations with both Imperial and *Derg* regimes. To begin with, in the Imperial regime, the overall committee had established very close relationship with *Akaki* branch office of Ministry of National Community Development, in that, the committee was accountable to that branch office rather than to the *Iddirs* and the community in general.

Though some development efforts were beneficial to the community, there was no democratic community participation. Costs of some development projects were very high and were not affordable to *Iddirs*, and should have been done by the government itself. Particularly poor members of *Iddirs* were unnecessarily exploited. Not only the overall committee, but also *Iddir* leaders were not sensitive to the problem of their poor members. As some of them put it, "our *Iddir* structure has been used as an instrument to implement the government policy and interest." To that end, "our leadership had been co-opted and they maximized their own benefit at our expense." These problems were further aggravated during the *Derg* regime. Particularly after the establishment of Workers Party of Ethiopia, the ruling party of the *Derg* regime, they emphasize with disappointment that "our *Iddirs* and the overall committee were infiltrated by the party." It is further stated that "all elections of *Iddirs* were manipulated and our leaders were not accountable to us. Decisions were made at the top without any kind of consultation and participation at the bottom. Financial contributions were imposed on us from the top."

I asked *Ato Yirga Tiruneh* and his colleagues to respond to these comments. They confirm that there were some complaints since the imperial regime. These complaints arose, they argued due to lack of awareness. "We were forced to become involved in development projects on the basis of community needs and demands. Decisions were passed at the community level by majority vote. It was understandable that the government was not in a position to solve our problems, and hence, we resorted to our self-help efforts. The overall committee made no decision on its own. To pass decisions which affect all *Iddirs*, we called general assembly meetings which represented all member *Iddirs*. These *Iddirs* representatives participated not only in the decision but also in the implementation of their decisions. And since the overall committee, subcommittee and all *Iddirs* were obliged to cooperate with government, there was no way out." Indeed, the bylaws of *Iddirs*, sub-committee and overall committee stated that they have the obligation to cooperate with the government structures.

Ato Yirga joined Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) in 1974 E.C. (1982 G.C). When the overall committee disbanded in 1983 E.C. (1991 G.C.) only one of the officials of the overall

committee was not a member of W.P.E.. In this respect, citizens argue that not only the overall committee members but also all *Iddir* leaders, and as a result, almost all members of the general assembly were members of the W.P.E. Hence, they were not in a position to defend the interest of their *Iddirs*. All WPE members who were also members of the overall committee and *Iddirs* leaders informed me that they were pressurized to join the party. They added that, as government employees and sole breadwinners of their families, they were not in a position not to join WPE, and face the consequence. Indeed, the only official of the overall committee, *Ato Negash Wordofa*, who was not member of WPE was self-employed. Also, earlier in the 1980s G.C. there was one official of the overall committee, *Ato Tadesse Tena*, who was not member of W.P.E.. He was bold enough to challenge *Akaki* political and administrative officials on issues related to *Iddirs* and their interests.

6.7 Attempts to organize and reorganize *Iddirs*' umbrella organizations under the EPRDF

6.7.0 *Under the EPRDF*: since 1991 G.C. various attempts have been observed to newly organize, and reorganize earlier *Iddirs*' umbrella organizations. These actors can be divided into three major categories. These are NGOs initiatives, *Iddirs* leaders/members initiatives, and Government structure initiatives. NGOs initiative consists of ACORD's and Mary Joy's efforts, while *Iddirs*' leaders and members initiatives consist of efforts by

- 28 *Iddirs* in *Hibret Godana Iddir* in *Ferensai* Legation area,
- 50 *Iddirs* of *Kechene* area,
- *Nechach Betoch* 4 *Iddirs* of *Gerji* area
- 11 *Iddirs* of *Kebele* 05 of *Akaki Woreda* 26
- and most recently 19 *Iddirs* of *Tesfa Mahiber* in *Kolfe*.

One the other hand, initiatives of government structure include initiative of *Zones* 3, 5, and 6 administrative officials of Addis Ababa City Administration. The above mentioned efforts or initiative and related problems and limitations will be briefly discussed below.

6.7.1 The Effort of ACORD in Reorganizing Akaki Iddirs Umbrella Organization

Case 12

It has been reported that in its first project area, Dire Dawa, ACORD has attempted to form an umbrella organization of *Iddirs* at the Dire Dawa city level. But this did not succeed. Later on the NGO succeeded in establishing smaller umbrella organizations of beneficiary *Iddirs* at

a *Woreda* level, which seems to be a more favourable ground to form beneficiaries umbrella organization at that *Dire Dawa* city level. In a similar vein, ACORD had made an attempt to establish or form an umbrella organization of *Iddirs* in *Akaki*, i.e., in one of its project sites in Addis Ababa City Administration. Its approach was aimed at gathering *Woreda Iddirs* and enabling them to elect their representatives, who were given the responsibility to organize *Iddirs* umbrella organization in *Akaki*. As a result, in May 1991 E.C. *Iddirs* of *Woreda 26* and *27* of *Akaki Zone* were called for meetings at different times. The gathered *Iddirs* of each *Woreda* elected a committee, which consisted of seven members each. Hence, 14 members committee from both *Woredas* came together and elected their common leaders. In this process ACORD was playing a facilitating role. For experience sharing purpose, ACORD took the committee members to *Nazreth*. After their return from *Nazreth*, the committee members started to draft the bylaws/statutes of the would be umbrella organization of *Akaki Iddirs*. In August 1991 E.C. the committee submitted its first draft to its constituent members. The committee received and included comments, and then after one month, in September 1992 E.C. the general assembly was called on to ratify the bylaw and to re-establish the *Akaki Iddirs* umbrella organization.

In that general meeting the committee submitted its report, its final draft of the bylaw, (which was expected to be ratified), and the proposal to form the *Akaki Iddirs'* umbrella organization. Among the participants, the chairpersons of *Woreda 26* and *27*, some *Iddir* leaders and members challenged the committee and ACORD on various issues. Issues raised include the mandate and intent of the committee. Some participants were wary of the content and implications of the draft bylaw. The two *Woredas* officials were also unhappy about the process and suggested re-invention of the wheel from the very beginning by including their structure in the process. The committee was not in a position to accept the suggestions forwarded. As a result, the meeting was dismissed without any further outcome.

On the reorganization of *Akaki Iddirs* umbrella organization, major stakeholders were involved. These were ACORD, administrative officials, and *Iddir* leaders and members. All have vested interests from their own perspectives. To begin with, from the perspective of ACORD, *Iddirs* umbrella organization would facilitate the success and sustainability of its project goal. Because the umbrella organization would, eventually, entail getting together of the people to discuss their problems, share information and experience, and finally join hands towards a common goal. Particularly, upon the phasing out of the programme, it was envisaged that the umbrella organization can be of paramount importance in realizing the continuation and sustainability of project activities in the community (*Getinet*, 2000:13). Furthermore, this effort was considered as part of its advocacy effort.

Form the *Iddirs* leaders' and members' point of view, reorganization of their *Iddirs* umbrella organization can be beneficial, if it is properly managed and work for their interest. But they do not want to be manipulated and exploited as has been the case in the former two regimes. Some informants doubt the good intent of ACORD and the committee to reorganize *Iddirs*. They suspected that this effort would eventually lead them towards a disadvantageous and vulnerable position.

Administrative officials also see the importance of *Iddirs* umbrella organization. Because if *Iddirs* are organized under one organization, it is simple to approach and mobilize them. The

problems of administrative officials were, to begin with, all members of the organizing committee were members of the former ruling party of the *Derg* regime, namely, the Workers Party of Ethiopia (W.P.E). So, they had doubts as to the good intent of these former WPE officials. On the other hand, the participation of their administrative structure was absent. Hence, they were not sure about what was going on. Besides, what further complicated the problem was that, a field officer and a bookkeeper of ACORD *Akaki* Branch office were registered candidates for the election of the parliament. The suspicion was that the whole effort was aimed at mobilizing *Iddirs* for political support in the election. In addition, the two administrative officials were not happy with the content of the draft bylaws submitted by the committee. Also, challenges and disagreement of some *Iddirs* leaders and members were good grounds for the two officials to disqualify the attempt to reorganize *Akaki Iddirs'* umbrella organization formation. But, as we will see later, an effort was made by administrative officials to form *Iddirs* umbrella organization starting at the level of *Kebeles* in *Woreda* 26 of *Akaki*, which eventually failed.

6.7.2 *Mary Joy's Effort in Organizing Iddirs Umbrella Organization*

Case 13

Mary Joy is a local or national NGO, which has started its operation around *Woreda* 25 and 8, (in *Kebeles* 01 and 16 of *Woreda* 25, and *Kebele* 02 of *Woreda* 08), in 1994G.C (1986/87 E.C.). Initially it started its operation without involving *Iddirs*, and at this time it had hard time with *Kebele* officials. Later on, it started to involve *Iddirs* and *Kebele* development committee in its development activities. In this respect, in August 1992 E.C., Mary Joy conducted a seminar on "The Role of *Iddirs* in the Development Activities." At this time, it brought together 41 *Iddirs* from the three *Kebeles* and form an umbrella organization, which is known as "*Iddirs* coordinating committee." Leaders of this umbrella organization were incorporated into community Development Committee, which consists of the *Kebele* Administration, the *Kebele* Development committee, and the *Iddirs* coordinating committee. This is a different approach from that of ACORD. *Iddirs* coordinating committee of Mary Joy has diverse roles to play. It facilitates contributions of *Iddirs* in terms of money and labour. It also actively participates in different sub-committees and activities. In the final analysis, it is expected to take over the project activities during the project phase out. But, there is no policy and law which facilitates the hand over of NGO projects to *Iddirs* during the project phase out.

6.7.3 *Self-initiated umbrella organizations of Iddirs and their Efforts*

In the past decade of the EPRDF regime, *Iddirs* in different areas have organized themselves on their own initiative to solve their problems by their own resources. In this connection, *Getinet* (2000:11-12) has identified a few such cases.

1. In 1988 E.C., 28 *Iddirs* of Ferensai Legation area organized themselves under the name *Hibret Godana Iddir*, with the aim of solving their problems, such as graveyard shortages, inability to afford mourning practices and construction of tombs and the like. In addition, their stated objectives include undertaking development and employment-generating activities. This *Iddir* as joint organization has acquired its legal personality.
2. In line with the above mentioned objectives, various groups of *Iddirs* in different areas have been reported. 50 *Iddirs* of *Kechene* area and 180 *Iddirs* of 6 *Woredas* gained legal personality in 1990 E.C.
3. Through the coordination of 4 *Iddirs*, the residents of Gergi area of Addis Ababa have established *Nechach Betoach* consumers' cooperatives in 1996 G.C. (1987/88 E.C.).
4. On the basis of the experience sharing visit facilitated by ACORD regarding *Nechach Betoach* consumers cooperative, 11 *Iddirs* of *Kebele 05 of Akaki Woreda 26*, collected funds from their *Iddirs* to establish of consumers' cooperatives. They brought *Teff* and sold it at a lower price to their community. However, *Getinet's* paper does not include the following points. I was informed that they were forced to stop their effort by officials of *Kebele 05*. As a result, *Kebele 08 Woreda 27 Iddirs* initiative to do same was frustrated. *Kebele 05 Iddirs'* consumer cooperative obtained profit of ETB 3000, and also received a container in the form of donation from an NGO, which is standing still in front of *Kebele 05* office.
5. Very recently, a new finding of a joint organization of *Iddirs* from around *Kolfe* area is emerging. The new joint *Iddirs'* organization is known as *Tesfa Mahiberawina Limat Akef Mahiber*. It consists of 19 member *Iddirs*. It has received its registration certificate on October 24, 1993 E.C. from Addis Ababa City Administration. Besides, recently, March 15, 1994 E.C. they gained a certificate from the associations registration office of Ministry of Justice.

6.7.4 Involvement of Government Structures in *Iddirs'* Umbrella Organization Formation

Case 14

In Addis Ababa City Administration, *Zones 3, 5, and 6* have been involved in forming umbrella organization of *Iddirs* at different levels. This administrative structures are working towards this goal without declared or certain policy of the government. In other words, they are working in a policy vacuum.

According to the heads of social sector divisions, the self-initiative of authorities of these *Zones* was initiated by the advocacy work of ACORD. Particularly, zonal social sector officials started their initiative after orientation from ACORD senior advocacy staff. January

1993 E.C. the umbrella organization formation was started and since then the process in *Zone* three has been slow, compared to *Zone* 5. Both *Zone* 5 and 3 started the formation of umbrella organization at the *Zone* level, in 1993 E.C. and followed by *Woreda* and *Kebele* levels consecutively. The approach is a top down one. In all workshops, the issue of formation of umbrella organization of *Iddirs* has been treated at the end of the meeting of each workshop. Which mainly discussed history of *Iddirs*, *Iddir* and development, and *Iddirs* and HIV-AIDS problems. I was participant observer in the workshop of *Kebele* 16 *Iddirs* of *Woreda* 25 and I had the opportunity to see the video films of meeting of *Iddirs* at *Zone* 5 level. Also, I have interviewed some officials of the umbrella organization of *Zone* 5 *Iddirs* and also *Woreda* 25 *Iddirs* council officials were interviewed. Participants of the workshop challenged the officials of the *Zones* by raising issues related to the intent of the government, why top down approach was preferred? What will be the degree and kind the autonomy and independence of the umbrella organization? What is the guarantee for non-interference of the government? Also the lack of mandate of the participants to form *Iddirs* umbrella organization was raised and the legality of the whole process was under-question. Particularly in *Zone* 5 it has been reported that some *Iddirs* of *Woreda* 8 had refused to join the umbrella organization. Anyhow, umbrella organization formation is in progress, at least in these two *Zones*.

The bylaws prepared by *Zone* 5 *Iddirs*, one the one hand, state that the *Iddirs* council shall be free from any political affairs. On the other hand, in the same paragraph it states that the council will work in collaboration with the government. Besides, the preamble of the bylaws had made it clear that the "*Zone* 5 *Iddirs*' council was organized/formed at the initiative of *Zone* 5 administration." Furthermore, the bylaw states that all *Iddirs* in the *Kebele* are obliged to join *Iddirs*' council. It adds, all member *Iddirs* are obliged to contribute ETB 500 at once when they join the council. In addition, there will be monthly and annual contributions for the council depending on financial capacity. Indeed, only registered members were capable of joining the council of *Iddirs*. *Woreda* and zonal *Iddirs* received their legal personality certificate from the registration office of Addis Ababa City Administration, namely, Registration Office for Associations, Demonstrations and Security. In *Akaki* an effort was under way to re-organize an *Iddirs*' council which started at a *Kebele* level through the mechanism of *Kebele* structure. The responsible person for this activity was the vice chairman of *Woreda* 26 administration. At the end of November 2001, a meeting of *Iddir* representatives was conducted. The purpose was to form a consecutive umbrella organization at *Woreda* level. But participants were not informed about the agenda. And all participants refused and left the meeting hall, because, they argued that their *Iddirs* have not delegated them to form umbrella organization similar to former *Akaki Iddirs*' overall committee, which had perpetuate injustices on the people of *Akaki*.

6.8 The Nazareth Iddirs' Umbrella Organization Across The Three Regimes :- Its Origin, Historical Development, Performances, Features, and Relations with Regimes

Case 15

The umbrella organization of *Nazareth Iddirs* was formed in 1942 E.C. According to available evidence, this umbrella organization seems to be the first of its kind. Also, it might

be the first umbrella organization of its kind that survived across three political regimes of Ethiopia, namely, the Imperial, *Derg*, and EPRDF Regimes. According to my informants, in *Nazreth* the first formally recognized *Iddir* was *Sodo Meredaja Iddir*. It was followed by four other *Iddirs*. The period was in 1934 E.C. Its emergence could be a bit earlier. But official recognition was acquired in that year by the governor of the town. After a few years, in 1942 E.C., *Nazreth Iddirs'* umbrella organization was formed under the leadership of *Ato Alemu Worku (Later Kegnazmach)*. He was a leader or president of the organization from 1942 - 1964 E.C., i.e., for more than two decades. The next leader, *Ato Tegene Abebe*, served for three years. The third leader, *Mellese Ayano*, had been in that position for seven years, i.e., 1967 - 1974 E.C. This later leader is still alive and is one of my informants.

The idea of the formation of an umbrella organization of *Nazreth Iddirs* originated from school construction committee and, the major factor that necessitated it was reported to be its importance to easily facilitate collection of money from the community and mobilize the community for development. In this direction, *Nazreth Iddirs'* overall committee had played a significant role in mobilizing community resources and contributions for schools construction and expansion, for road, church and mosque building, and various social activities.

In the *Derg* regime, during *Ethio-Somali* war, the *Nazreth Iddirs'* overall committee collected from its members ETB 175,000 which was donated in support of government effort. Similarly recently during the *Ethio-Eritrean* war, *Nazreth Iddirs* contributed through their umbrella organization ETB 150,000. Also, earlier like other *Iddirs*, *Nazreth Iddirs* made obligatory donations of *Iddir* materials such as tents in 1968 E.C for the *Derg* regime.

Regarding its organizational structure, from 1942 - 1972 E.C. each individual member *Iddir* was using its own bylaw. In 1972 E.C. a common bylaws for members of *Iddirs'* was prepared for the first time. And it was operational until 1975 E.C. In 1975 E.C. the first bylaw was replaced by revised and improved ones. These second bylaws were operational up to 1985 E.C. Again in 1985 E.C. the third common bylaws were prepared and made operational until 1991 E.C. The fourth and the present common bylaw was improved and made operational since 1992 E.C. These revisions, amendments and improvements show how the umbrella organization has been attempting to adjust itself to the objective realities and requirements of its constituent members. The current bylaws consists of 49 articles and more than 250 sub-articles.

As far as challenges of *Nazreth Iddirs* are concerned, their umbrella organization had a hard time particularly during the *Derg* regime. With the emergence of the socialist oriented military (*Derg*) regime, just like other urban *Iddirs*, their role was marginalized due to the establishment of *Kebeles*. Besides, since names of *Nazreth Iddirs* were based on religious, regional and ethnic names, *Nazreth* administrative officials and cadres were not happy about it. Hence, they proposed and ordered all *Iddirs* to change their names into numbers. This is similar to *Kebele* numbers. But this was not easily appealing and acceptable to *Iddirs* and their members. As a result, conflict escalated between *Iddirs* and government structures in *Nazreth*. The next aggressive measure was aimed at dismantling the *Nazreth Iddirs* structures. In this line, *Nazreth Kebeles* were fully engaged in establishing *Kebele* and *Ketena Iddirs* under their control. To realize their objective, they were pressurizing *Kebele*

residents to join *Kebele* and *ketena Iddirs*. Furthermore, they were pressurizing residents to stop their relation with former *Iddirs* and their umbrella organization. At this juncture, *Nazreth Iddirs* and their umbrella organization were forced to directly present their complaint to, colonel *Mengistu Hailu Mariam* the head of the state. According to *Ato melesse Ayano*, who was president of the committee at that time, fortunately, his response was quick and favourable to them. In that *Mengistu* ordered *Nazreth* administration through colonel *Debela Dinsa*, who was the then governor of *shewa Kifle-Hager*, to postpone their action for indefinite time. As a result, aggressive and dismantling measures were slowed down and finally stopped.

As far as the number designated names are concerned, even today both designated number and earlier names are used in combination. For instance, the first *Iddir* is designated as *Kutir Anid Sodo Meredaja Iddir* (number one *Sodo Meredaja Iddir*).

Regarding the relationship among *Kebele* and *ketena Iddirs*, on the one hand, and other *Iddirs* and their umbrella organization, on the other, up to the fall of the *Derg* regime they had no contact and relationship. But after the fall of that regime, *Kebele* and *ketena Iddirs* of *Nazreth* have joined the overall committee.

After the earlier problematic situation was normalized, in 1975E.C. the fourth leader, *Ato Ketsela Kidane*, was elected. At this stage the second revised version of the bylaws were made operational. Up to 1975 E.C., *Nazreth Iddirs'* umbrella organization had not acquired its own office. A small room (of 3 x 3mt. Square) was given to the organization for office use by the *Nazreth* Branch Office of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

From 1975 E.C. on wards, the organization had built its own two rooms office, a hall which can accommodate more than 1,200 persons and a store (of 105sq. meter area), and purchased various material for members' use freely, and for non-members use with rent payment. In this connection, membership benefit is not limited to access and free use of the organization's common facilities and equipment, but also it includes facilitation of opening savings accounts in the bank, free appellant services for *Iddirs'* members, legal aid and support in solving problems, facilitation of elections of member *Iddirs* leadership.

Again, *Nazreth Iddirs* faced a challenge after the fall of the *Derg* regime. At this time, the problem was raised as a result of internal conflict, and it was a serious threat for existence of the organization. A large number of member *Iddirs* stopped their membership and requested the sale and sharing of the common property. The number of members reduced from 132 to 40. This was a shock for the overall committee leadership. The committee made its effort to stabilize the situation, and it was evident that the problem was caused by the leadership of *Iddirs* due to various reasons. The reported reasons include leadership committee attachment to W.P.E. and the damage it has entailed on *Iddirs*, insignificant contribution and benefit from the overall committee, *Iddir* leaders aspirations for independent power, corruption, and the like. The committee decided to inform members of *Iddirs* about the problem, and as a result of concerted efforts, the umbrella organization has recovered from that danger and currently it has about 100 members. According to the current officials of *Nazreth Iddirs'* overall committee, 12 former member *Iddirs* were dissolved. Also a few others were merged. One or two *Iddirs* split into two or three. Currently, it is estimated that

there are about 120 *Iddirs*, out of this about 100 are constituent members of the overall committee. About a year ago, *Nazreth Iddirs'* overall committee has acquired its registration certificate from Oromia Justice Bureau. Surprisingly, till this time it had not acquired legal personality or registration certificate. Besides, none of the *Nazreth Iddirs* had acquired registration certificate/legal personality from any office. But they have official recognition from *Nazreth Municipality*.

Some distinctive feature of *Nazreth Iddirs* include, *Iddirs'* payment are undertaken every week usually on Sundays; payment at the death of member or his family is based on the number of members, i.e., for instance, payment for a member's death is calculated on the basis of ETB 4 per member. Unlike other *Iddirs'* umbrella organizations, *Nazreth Iddirs* have common property and source of income. All member *Iddirs* of the overall committee have one common bylaw. *Nazreth Iddirs* have not acquired a legal personality of their own individually throughout their history. The overall committee received its legal personality only last year (1993 E.C.). Despite challenging threats, *Nazreth Iddirs* umbrella organization survived across three regimes from 1942 E.C. to this date. The common bylaw prohibits and penalizes for what it calls harmful traditional practices. Besides, officials of *Nazreth Iddirs* and their overall committee leaders are paid on monthly basis. But the salary is small. The maximum payment is reported to be ETB 50.00 per month.

6.9 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

From the mid 1950s E.C. up to now (1994 E.C. or 2002 G.C.) throughout the three regimes, there has not been a declared policy and legal provisions which facilitate the formation of umbrella organizations of *Iddirs*. Indeed, this is against the constitutions of all the three regimes which theoretically promulgate the right of citizens to form and join associations. Despite the policy vacuum and absence of legal provisions, umbrella organizations have been formed and recognized by government structures. In this kind of situation, citizens may face dilemmas. On the one hand, umbrella organizations have been recognized by government structures. However, citizens do not have the legal basis to claim the right to form umbrella organizations. If a disputable issue arises even in an administratively recognized umbrella organization, Ethiopian courts have no legal basis to entertain the charges. Paradoxically, in the absence of legal provisions imperial and EPRDF governments have been initiating and inducing the formation of umbrella organizations of *Iddirs* in urban areas. Before the EPRDF regime

evidences suggest that all umbrella organization of urban *Iddirs* were initiated by government structures at various levels. These government structures use community development projects as a pretext and aim at infiltrating, controlling, manipulating and mobilizing the community and tapping of resources for its political purpose. Hence, generally speaking umbrella organizations of *Iddirs* formed under the auspices of government structures have served government structures rather than the interest of the community. Leaders of the *Iddirs* were co-opted by the regimes and could not defend interest of their constituents. Recently both government and NGOs are interested in and started the formation of umbrella organizations of *Iddirs*. These efforts seem to be co-optation rather than co-operation, which may endanger the interest of the members and that of the community in general.

Self-initiated attempts by some *Iddir* leaders and members are emerging very recently. If this is based on the full consultation and consent of members, it is the ideal step towards formation of autonomous civil society organizations, which can be accountable to members, transparent and democratic in their operation. As stated in this and the preceding chapter, some leaders of *Iddirs* and their members envisage to use umbrella organizations of their *Iddirs'* as a coping mechanism to solve their problems on their own. In the face of escalating poverty and failure of state and market mechanisms, *Iddirs* are joining their hands, minds and resources to help their community. Many have already formed independent umbrella organization on their own initiative. When they explain the purpose of their coming together, they refer to the famous Ethiopian saying, ፎካ ለሰው ጎረቤት ለሰው፣ which literally means, "If threads get together, they can be strong enough to tie a lion". Also they say that, "organization is power". Indeed, this kind of awareness and determination is an asset for development effort in this country. This kind of self-initiative should be encouraged and supported. No effort should be made to obstruct or frustrate it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7. Analysis of The Research Findings and Related Issues

7.0 Introduction : In this chapter an attempt has been made to analyse definitions, history and origin of *Iddirs*. In addition, an analysis is made on diversification of roles, functions and features of *Iddirs*, contradictory assumptions and arguments and problems of *Iddirs'* in sustainable development and change. Furthermore, *Iddir* and civil society-state relations, extent

of participation and empowerment of *Iddirs* are briefly discussed. Also, issues such as social capital, *Iddir* as an arena for conflicting interests of stakeholders are included and discussed.

7.1 Analysis of Definitions and definitional limitations of *Iddir*

During my field research, in my discussions with my informants and document analysis, I have observed that different terms were used for the same thing, *Iddir*. Terms such as *Meredaja Mahiber*, *Meredaja Iddir* and *Iddir* were used interchangeably and flexibly in discussions and also in various official documents and bylaws of *Iddirs*. But some authors tended to generalize *Meredaja Mahiber* as regional and ethnic associations with the aim of developing their home region in addition to their mutual self-support of their members. But *Meredaja Mahibers* in *Akaki* were purely *Iddirs* or "burial associations" to be more specific. In this respect, I probed my informants about how a regionally designated *Meredaja Mahiber* can be limited to a burial service of their members. Their response was that, "as a migrant workers with a very small salary and as a result a very minimal contribution for our *Meredaja Mahiber*, let alone development of our region, at times we couldn't cover our members burial expenses". Hence, their *Meredaja Mahiber* were merely *Iddir* to cover burial and related expenses with no aim of developing home region of members. After all region designated *Meredaja Mahiber* in *Akaki* simply signify the name of the *Iddir of migrnt workers*.

As far as the limitations of some defining variables and features of *Iddirs* are concerned, to begin with, *Iddir* is considered as a voluntary association. Indeed, overtly there is no law and legal body which dictates that one should be a member of one *Iddir* or another. But covertly people are informally pressurized by family, friends, relatives and neighbours to be members of one or another *Iddir*. Besides, there is a culturally built-in need not to face a pauper's funeral. On the other side, there is no institution which performs burial services by receiving due payment. Furthermore, if a person does not join an *Iddir*, he can be completely isolated from the

community. In this kind of context, we need to qualify the degree of voluntariness in joining *Iddir*. One may justifiably argue that one is circumstantially, socially and culturally forced to join *Iddir* involuntarily at least in relative terms.

Pankhurst and Endreas (1958) wrote that people through their *Iddir* help each other during incidents of death, disease, marriage, and birth. This could have been true in urban *Iddirs* during 1950s and 1960s E.C.. Even today this could be a usual practice in rural *Iddirs*. Also some urban women and some other *Iddirs* help each other if these incidents happen to their members. Beyond these incidents people helped one another when members lost their job during earlier times (Alemayhu, 1968) and also this is true today among re-emerging *Iddirs* in *Akaki*. But among male or community *Iddirs* the afore- said mutual support has been disbanded due to various reasons. Hence, through time, at least among some *Iddirs*, former functions of *Iddirs* have been eroded and minimized to a large extent to burial service in urban *Iddirs*. This means that the afore-mentioned mutual support during earlier times has been abandoned among some *Iddirs* and limited to burial and mourning ceremony. As a result, some of my informants, such as W/o Makida W/Kidan has commented with disappointment that her *Iddir* has lost its human flavour and considerateness for the members' problems. This may be considered as the result of growing impersonal urban life and relations.

Alemayehu (1968) defined *Iddir* as "a voluntary association established for the purpose of mutual aid of burial and other community concerns." The limitation of this definition is that, *Iddir* is not established on the basis of community concerns rather it is established on the basis of concern and felt-needs of its members. On the other hand, in 1972 G.C. Municipality of Addis Ababa and MNCD attempted to redefine *Iddir* as an agency of community development. But this was an administratively imposed definition. No *Iddir* has defined itself as an agent of community

development. Indeed, recently some *Iddirs* have expressed their intent to participate in business and development activities in addition to their mainstream *Iddir* function.

There is a widespread tendency to define *Iddir* as a burial association. In the Ethiopian context the role of *Iddir* is more than burial service. This kind of definition is simplistic and reductionist. On the other hand, some consider *Iddir* as a sort of insurance programme. But there is a fundamental and inherent difference between *Iddir* and an insurance service. An insurance service is organized on the basis of profit. But *Iddir's* service is non-profit or free service. Insurance service is merely limited to money provision. But *Iddirs* provide psychological, moral and social services in addition to the provision of money. Hence, comparing insurance with *Iddir* seems to be distortion, simplification and reduction of the complex reality.

Some define *Iddirs* as NGOs. But there are basic differences between *Iddir* type organizations and NGOs. In that, *Iddirs* are membership based, serve interest of members and are self-reliant. In contrast NGOs as private voluntary organizations that are non-membership based, established to benefit a third party by mobilizing resources from voluntary sources.

Legally, according to article 404 of the Civil Code of Ethiopia, *Iddir* as an association is defined as a grouping formed between two or more persons with a view to obtaining a result rather than the securing or sharing of profits. But, in actual fact, at least some *Iddirs* are participating in business activities which inevitably entails securing or sharing profits, and more are tending to do so. Recently, some *Iddirs* are tending to participate as share holders in business investments and act as formal financial institutions. Hence, the ground to consider *Iddir* as an informal financial institution is being eroded through time.

Generally some definitions of *Iddirs* can be categorized as functional and typological. But in fact, functions and typologies of *Iddir* are changing from time to time. In this connection, the challenging questions are, can conventional and static definitions capture and correctly define

dynamically changing functions and types of *Iddirs*? Can we impose definitions on various *Iddirs* and homogenize them? The answers to these questions does not seem to be positive. This is because, *Iddirs* are more complex and diverse and dynamically changing compared to the existing static definitions. There is no ground to homogenize or generalize on the detail aspects of *Iddirs*. The two general features of *Iddir* that seems to be permanent are, firstly, *Iddirs* are based on the principle of reciprocity or mutual support. In other words, *Iddirs* are not basically to help the helpless on the basis of the principle of altruism. Secondly, *Iddirs* are formed through social contract. Contracts can be written or unwritten with common understanding of the parties. In conclusion, *Iddir* can be redefined as an association established to deal with mutual support of its members for all kinds of their felt-needs which basically incorporate burial services and mourning ceremony at the incident of death among members and their families or relatives.

7.2 Analysis of The History and Origin of *Iddirs*

As far as the history of *Iddir* is concerned, as various authors have agreed there is insufficient data. But it seems plausible to suggest that the history of associations such as *Iddirs* may be date back to history of human life itself. This is because human beings as social animals have lived in common collectively under different forms of organizations or associations. In the early human life, in food gathering and hunting certain kind of collective efforts through certain kind of communal association or organization was inevitable. Common organizations were employed by people as coping mechanisms or survival strategies in order to satisfy their basic needs. Not merely existence but the development of human beings, among other things, depends on the nature and essential role of human organizations. With the advent of modern and developed systems appropriate organizations or associations of various kinds, such as cooperatives, trade unions, various associations were required in the modern society. Hence, the history and development of associations such as *Iddir* can be viewed in the above general

framework. Hence, the history of urban *Iddirs* is inseparable from history of urban areas in Ethiopia.

As far as the origin of urban *Iddir* is concerned, on the one hand, Fecadu (1974 in Ottaway, 1976) Seifu (in Ottaway, 1976), Koehn and Koehn (1975), Hailu (1987), Dejene (2001A) and many others have argued that *Iddir* originated in rural areas and were transplanted to urban areas with due modifications and adjustments. On the other hand, Alemayehu (1968) Mekuria (1973), Ottaway (1976) and Pankhurst (2001) have argued that *Iddirs* were formed in urban areas and diffused to rural areas.

Some of my informants indicated their experience with *Iddir*-like association in their rural villages. For instance, *Ato Yimer*, *Ato Wolde*, *Ato Nigussie* and *Girazmach Gugsa*, *Ato Mekasha* indicated the cases of *Qirie* in *Wollo*, *Sera* in *Sebatbet Gurage*, *Subugnet* in *Mareko* and *Sodo Gurage*, and *Gefefa* in *Kechema Mikael* (a place around *Nazreth*) respectively. These are *Iddir*-like rural associations in which members help each other in times of sorrow and happiness. These rural associations are basically similar to *Iddirs* as far as mutual support of members are concerned. But their difference in relation to some developed urban *Iddirs* lies in their formality and degree of organization. Other informants such as *Ato Haile*, *Ato Shewaliul*, *Ato Legesse* have stated that though people do not know the word *Iddir*, they were accustomed to mutual support in times of sorrow and happiness.

From the above discussion one can simply observe that some have different names for *Iddir* or *Iddir*-like organizations, and in some areas though people are accustomed to mutual support in similar manner to *Iddirs* they have not designated the name. In this connection, as far as different names are concerned, though names are different they designate and signify similar practices or activities like that of *Iddirs* in the case of urban areas. Also, as some informants have asserted though distinct names are absent the practice of *Iddir* has been exercised among some

communities. In both categories of cases, similar practices to that of urban *Iddirs* are embedded or built-in the culture of communities under consideration.

Since names do not have sole inherent relationship with the named entity, it is natural for different cultures and languages to have different names for the same thing/entity. The fundamental thing is the practice not the name per se. Hence, we find similar practices to that of *Iddir* in other cultures with different names. Only difference in practice may entail fundamental difference not the difference in terms or names.

Though evidences in this paper may not be sufficient and conclusive, it is possible and essential to throw light on the on-going debate regarding the origin of *Iddir* and its transplantation or diffusion.

To begin with, it seems essential to examine the issue in the overall context. Let alone at the earlier times, even today Ethiopia is little urbanized and is predominantly rural country. The rural way of life is based on associational life. In considering a rural way of social life and organization, some people may tend to argue that it is based on kinship not on association as in urban areas. But some evidences indicate contrary to this assertion. One of my informants, Ato Wolde Haile Mariam, told me that though Gurages are different in tribe (Gossa) and blood, they all participate in Sera Gene, i.e., the surrounding *Iddir*. This means that Sera or *Iddir* in Gurage is not based on descent or kinship.

Lewis (1975: 193-205) on the basis of comparative case studies has shown that, among the Konso, Dassanetch, the Iraqw, and Oromo groups of Mecha, Jimma and Boran, principles of social organizations include neighbors and friends. In this connection Lewis has argued that

. . . the Radcliffe-Brown/Fortes paradigm, whatever its usefulness elsewhere in the continent of Africa, is particularly ill-suited to the study of many peoples of Ethiopia, among whom agnatic kinship (or cognatic kinship, for that matter) does not seem to be a significant basis for group organization or activity. In addition, not only should the Nuer-Tallensi model be set aside, but also perhaps a new model may be delineated which will

have some general applicability in future studies in Ethiopian social anthropology (Lewis, 1975:194).

This is one of the arguments on the basis of six case studies which indicates rural social organizations in Ethiopia are based on associations not on mere kinship. Hence, urban life and urban associations tend to resemble rural ones. Urban dwellers were and still are dominantly rural migrants with rural cultural backgrounds. As a result, migrants ruralize the urban way of life to a large extent. In this kind of context a complete western type of urban life and organization is unthinkable. As evidences in this paper suggest, the culture of rural associations were brought with rural migrants, (such as *Sodo Gurage* to *Addis Ababa* and *Nazreth*), to the new urban setting. This is the first instance of transplantation or diffusion of culture of rural association from rural to urban areas. In turn, the urban setting was not a passive receiver. It required modification and adaptation of rural based association to its own nature. Hence, the urban setting injected relatively modern elements through modern education and enlightenment. Hence, forms of organization, bylaws, utilization of money, modern way of administration and leadership were gradually infused into *Iddir* association. This was diffused to some rural areas in turn. In other words, there was diffusion both ways, i.e., there was bilateral and reciprocal diffusion both ways. Both ways interactions were possible due to various reasons. Urban and rural cultures and systems are not closed entities of their own. Due to spread of formal and informal education, *Iddir* was in a position to incorporate modern elements. As stated earlier, urban areas receive rural migrants with their rural culture. Hence, associational life is not alien in urban areas and modern associations are not unique to urban areas.

As stated earlier, on the basis of modern features of urban *Iddirs*, Alemayehu (1968), Ottaway (1976), Pankhurst (2001) argued that *Iddirs* were formed in urban areas and diffused to rural areas. In this connection, the incorporation of elements modern features of association in

urban areas is evident. Indeed, at this stage *Iddir* has acquired qualitatively higher level of organization and formalization. In this regard, even today all urban *Iddirs* are not on equal status let alone rural or rural town *Iddirs*. But whatever the degree or level of organization and formalization, members enjoy all functions of *Iddirs* and call their association or organization as *Iddir* (often in different languages). Besides, there is no definition of *Iddir* which designates modern features of association as a defining characteristic features of *Iddirs*. Rather *Iddirs* have been defined in terms of their role, function, goal, typology, composition of members and so on. It would be appropriate to say that modern features of urban *Iddirs* were diffused to rural areas not the *Iddir* per se. Regarding the difference on the nature and purpose of rural and urban *Iddirs*, a brief discussion can suffice. The difference between urban and rural *Iddirs* is not of kind but of degree. This means that both rural and urban *Iddirs* are basically similar. In that they are associations of mutual support (reciprocity) formed through social contract. In some cases urban *Iddirs* may be more formalized and organized due to favourable urban context. But in a rural context, it may not be possible or necessary for the rural associations to be as highly formalized and organized as urban ones. Hence, their difference is that of organizational form not content or kind or function.

In both urban and rural *Iddirs*, the principle and the goal which brings people together is mutual support on the basis of reciprocity. Both *Iddirs* are formed on the basis of social contract but the difference lies in that most urban *Iddirs* have written bylaws while rural and even for that matter some urban *Iddirs* have unwritten bylaws. Urban *Iddirs'* payment is made mostly in cash while rural *Iddirs'* payment is mostly in kind. It is not necessary and possible for rural *Iddir* to make contributions in cash and hoard their common money. Contribution in kind is sufficient for them. Permanent contribution, list of members, formal election of many leaders for different

posts etc were relatively recent phenomena in urban areas, i.e. after 1950 E.C. in the case of *Akaki* and *Kolfe*.

7.3 Analysis of Diversification of Functions, Roles and Features of *Iddirs*

Evidences in this study have shown that functions, roles and features of *Iddirs* are dynamically diversifying. In line with their felt-needs minor *Iddirs* with specialized functions have been formed. *Yebuna (Coffee) Iddir*, *Yetirature Ina Yemagedo* (cereals and fuel) *Iddir*, *Yemamsha*, *Yekolo Ina Yetella*, etc are cases in point. In one case of a womens *Iddir*, two *Iddirs* have been formed for specialized and different purposes as entities in their own right. *Iddirs* with multi-typological feature has been observed. On the other hand, multi purpose *Iddirs* as hybrid forms of organization are emerging. *Abo Tsebel Meredaja Ina Limat Iddir* is a case in point. Furthermore, once disappeared *Iddirs* are re-emerging with their distinctive features. Also, citizens are joining up to seven *Iddirs*. Citizens form and join *Iddirs* as a coping mechanism. Joining more than one *Iddir* expands opportunities of members, and in their service *Iddirs* complement and supplement each other and provide, at least relatively, complete satisfaction for their members. In forming *Iddirs* or in diversifying the functions and roles of their *Iddirs*, citizens have in-built or institutionalized alternatives in their cultural setting. This is because to satisfy the felt-needs the alternatives are two. These are either to form a new *Iddir* for the newly felt-need or to diversify the role and function of already formed and existing *Iddir*. The formation of new minor *Iddirs* is in line with the former alternative. In addition, splitting from one *Iddir* is a possibility. The diversified role of *Abo Tsebel Iddir* is in line with the second alternative.

Indeed, with conventional definitions and typological classifications in mind one may ask, are these really *Iddirs*? Particularly is *Abo Tsebel Iddir* an *Iddir* or an enterprise? To begin with, according to the leaders and members of these *Iddirs*, their reaction is affirmative and others also

consider them as *Iddirs*. For academics it could be a puzzling challenge. In fact, the extent of diversification is a puzzling one.

Abo Tsebel Sefere Selam Meredaja Ina Limat Iddir is not an umbrella organization of *Iddirs* but it has reorganized all women *Iddirs* in its vicinity under one of its sub-committees. It has a savings and credit service and a sub-committee for it. In this respect, it is more than successful compared to ACORD's saving and credit schemes. Its members increased from 36 at the starting point to 139, while in the case of ACORD's scheme drastic decline has been observed. While I was conducting the fieldwork for my research the *Iddir* was about to form its consumers' shop and consumers' cooperative as its sub-committee. A kindergarten was established earlier and the plan is to open classes to teach children up to grade six. It has a development committee, which deals with development issues. Indeed, it goes without saying that the *Iddir* has a burial service sub-committee. The *Iddir* claims 75% of its function and role is community development oriented. Considering all conditions stated above, one may tend to conclude that *Abo Tseble Meredaja Ina Limat Iddir* is a newly formed hybrid organization, which can be named an "*Iddir Enterprise*". This kind of organization is beyond the capacity of legal provisions in Ethiopia. The complication is of manifold. The sustainability of the momentum is doubtful from both internal and external factors. As it is discussed in detail in chapter five, the whole effort is master-minded by its leader. Hence, the sustainability and continuity of the *Iddir* projects will be tested in the absence of the current leader.

In this connection, some Ethiopian and foreign scholars are fascinated by multi- purpose, multi-function, and complex typology of *Iddirs* in Ethiopia. The underlying logic and reason is that in Ethiopia people assign newly emerging additional roles, purposes and functions to their already existing association rather than forming new associations for every emerging function, purpose and need. Hence, diversification of role, function, purpose of *Iddirs* has been inevitable.

This means that there are two institutionalized alternatives, namely, forming of new institutions for every newly felt-need or diversifying the existing ones by assigning additional roles for the emerging felt-needs. Hence, the difference is that of choice of approach. It has worked both ways even here in *Akaki* in the formation of new minor *Iddirs* for different recently felt purposes. This has been how people organize themselves around satisfying their needs. One may subjectively judge that one approach is better than the other. But societies are comfortable with their organizations in both cases.

On the other hand, evidences in this paper have exhibited new additional features. There was a widely held assumption that *Iddir* leaders in general serve their *Iddirs* without remuneration. But this assumption has been countered by evidences obtained from *Nazreth* and *Kolfe* which have shown that *Iddirs* have started to pay their leaders. This may have diverse implications in the future. The other assumption asserts that *Iddir* leaders can mobilize their members but in *Akaki* many leaders of *Iddir* failed to mobilize *Iddir* members to join saving and credit scheme of ACORD in 1997 and 1998 in *Akaki*.

Regarding the static and dynamic natures of *Iddirs*, evidences in this paper has shown that some *Iddirs* that were static and failed to employ coping mechanisms have died out. On the contrary, *Iddirs* that were dynamic, changing and adjusting themselves by employing appropriate coping mechanisms are surviving and will continue to survive. The later kinds of *Iddirs* have been continuously improving their bylaws, which have been used as governing principles and code of conduct for members and leaders. Also financial contributions of *Iddirs* have been made permanent and increased from time to time. In this connection, appropriate systems of recording and organizational management have been developing. Not only permanent and continuously increasing monthly contribution but also high membership fees, and penalties for non-compliance to the code of conduct has been observed. Indeed penalties could be in terms of both fines and

sanctions. Modern methods of electing the leadership and the quality of leadership is in the process of improvement due to modern education.

In the 1960s as reported by Alemayehu (1968) and as depicted by original data in this paper, *Iddir* members were helping each other at incidents of fire damage, severe illness, unemployment, and imprisonment of members. Also during happiness events such as birth, weddings, *Iddirs* members were helping each other. These functions were abandoned among some older *Iddirs*, while newly emerging and women *Iddirs* still persists to help each other on these occasions.

Evidences in this paper suggest that by employing adaptive modification strategy *Iddirs* have been used for efficient satisfaction of felt-needs of members by economizing efforts. In this respect, *Iddir* has been used as incipient labour unions, non-profit making social insurance, instrument for social, cultural, and political change, and as development and poverty reduction entry points and agents by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

7.4 Analysis of problems and limitations of *Iddirs* in poverty alleviation, change and Development

During the imperial regime, in 1963 G.C. the Emperor himself had declared that his government could not satisfy the demands of the people. Hence, he urged the people to undertake self-help activities (Alemayehu, 1968). Also in the consecutive regimes, the demands of the people were not satisfied and evidences have shown that poverty has been on the increase.

Regarding the market (private) sector, it has been weak and its efforts are not being promising. In a discussion on poverty reduction strategy formulation in Ethiopia held in Gion Hotel, residents of *Akaki Woreda 26* have asserted that in the last one decade in the context of free market economy the number of investors in the *Woreda* are limited. They could not create sufficient employment opportunity and reduce poverty. In the face of failures of the state and

market approach, people started to address their problems using their own associations, such as *Iddirs*. Unfortunately some efforts were frustrated by the regimes. This has been discussed in the preceding chapters.

But it goes without saying that *Iddirs* have their own problems and limitations in their efforts towards poverty alleviation, change and development. To begin with, the monthly contribution of *Iddirs* is aimed at mutual support at the incident of death of members and their relatives, not for other purposes. In relation to its purpose contribution of members of *Iddirs* can be considered as small. Besides, in some *Iddirs* embezzlement by leaders and illegally acquired money by some members further deplete *Iddirs'* money. Evidences indicated in this paper suggest that *Iddirs* are found in lower financial status. Furthermore, as a result of large family size and relatives of members at the incident of death *Iddirs'* incur higher payments for members. Besides, *Iddirs* have been obliged to contribute to national sovereignty, government development projects and various purposes time and again. As a result of the afore-mentioned reasons some *Iddirs* have reported at least at one time they could not pay for their members at the incident of death. Also, recently due to the killer disease HIV-AIDS some leaders of *Iddirs* have the fear that it may deplete their financial resources.

Even in some cases where some money is left over that can be used for poverty alleviation and development purpose, a number of problems hinder *Iddir* to undertake poverty allivation and development activities. These include absence of favourable government policy and legal framework, lack of awareness and agreement among members and leaders, or resistance of members and leaders to undertake any activity other than burial related activities, unfavourable environment to undertake business activities, lack of time of leaders to undertake additional activities, and so on. In this kind of situations the viable alternative is to undertake joint activities by joining resources of *Iddirs* through their own independent umbrella organizations. This has

also complicated problems. In this regard, also absence of legal and policy framework, absence of independent umbrella organizations of *Iddirs*, absence of capacity and system of work have been cited by my informants. Regarding the capacity of *Iddirs* to undertake poverty alleviation, change and development projects, the challenging and debatable question is whether *Iddirs* have the capacity or can undertake such projects, or is it feasible or viable to undertake such activities on the basis of the organizational and financial capacity of *Iddirs*?

In reaction to these questions, my informants responded both negatively and positively, indeed, sometimes with qualifications. Ato Firdawek has argued that *Iddirs* do not have surplus money that can be left over beyond funeral expenses to be used for development projects. Even if a small amount of money might be available for development, it may be embezzled and misused or abused. Ato Taddesse Tena also argues that *Iddirs* cannot engage in business and development activities, because they do not have resources to compete with powerful traders in the free market. There is no policy which supports *Iddirs* and their efforts. They have no access to land. They cannot undertake construction projects. Hence, their capacity is doomed to be limited to performing burial services for members. In fact, Ato Taddesse concluded that the burial function itself is very crucial in the Ethiopian society. Ato Haile Habtemariam has a similar opinion but he is optimistic that if necessary supports and favourable conditions are made available, they may play a crucial role. He and many others argue that after all *Iddirs* have the capacity to mobilize the people. This is considered as an important factor for development.

Ato Yeshewa Liul Bekele is more optimistic on the role and capacity of *Iddirs* provided they join hands and resources under their own independent umbrella organization. But he believes that individually or separately *Iddirs* are powerless to bring about meaningful outcomes. Besides, he suggested that capacity building and organizational structure should be improved. Likewise, Leaders of *Nazreth Iddirs'* overall committee, particularly Ato Sia Seboka, argued that

since the separate capacity of individual *Iddir* is limited, *Iddirs* should undertake collective business under well studied and systematized manner. Joining of hands and resources would enable *Iddirs* to be effective competitors in large scale business activities. The share of benefit should reach the individual members of *Iddirs*. This kind arrangement integrates and strengthens *Iddirs* and their survival as viable community organizations. Common property and common benefit unites people and hence *Iddirs* will remain credible associations if they are empowered economically. In this respect capacity building of the leadership, the organization and the members is curial. In this connection, regarding the status of my informants, Ato Sia Seboka is a teacher by profession and has been chairperson and vice chairperson of *Nazreth Iddirs* overall committee. Ato Yeshewa Liul has been one of leaders of *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee and currently he is a leader of two older *Iddirs* in *Akaki* and also he has been a worker of *Akaki* Textile factory. Currently he is pensioned. Ato Tadesse Tena is a trader and earlier he was one of the leaders of *Akaki Iddirs'* overall committee and has been a founder and leader of *Talaku Iddirs* for about 21 years. Ato Haile Habtemariam was one of the earlier leaders of *Akaki Iddirs* overall committee and a member of the first *Iddir* in *Akaki*. Ato Haile has been government employee, trader, municipality councilor during the imperial regime and he is a pensioner.

Another question to be entertained is, should *Iddirs* participate in poverty alleviation and development activities? In reaction to this question, some *Iddir* leaders, members, scholars and one official of *Akaki* administration argued that *Iddirs* should be limited to burial services and avoid development and poverty alleviation role. In this line, they insist that *Iddirs* are better off if they stick to burial services rather than being involved in other political and development activities. Incorporating other roles eventually creates confusion and social problems, which may lead to the disintegration of *Iddirs* in the final analysis. Hence, proper organizations which can undertake development and poverty alleviation should be created.

On the contrary, others argue that *Iddirs* can be effectively used, without jeopardizing their conventional role and function, by injecting modern concepts and systems. *Iddir* is a form of social capital that can be used in development efforts effectively. *Iddirs* have already shown their capacity in effecting development which is beneficial to their members and the community at large. The afore-said arguments can be further discussed and analyzed in detail on the basis of the findings of this research. Both forming new organizations for development purpose or using existing organizations have been possibilities employed here in Ethiopia and elsewhere. The issue that requires verification is which approach or strategy is more viable in line with the practices and realities in Ethiopia. The second issue to be treated is whether the inclusion of additional roles and functions entails disintegration or integration of *Iddir* members? In reaction to this question one needs to observe realities on the ground. To begin with, we need to note the coping mechanisms of *Iddirs* in incorporating new roles and functions into their organizations. To perform additional roles and functions *Iddirs* have been establishing new organizations side by side with *Iddir* on equal status or establishing new sub-entity or sub-committee under the auspices of the *Iddir*. In both cases the mainstream function of the *Iddir* cannot be affected. Both mechanisms can be considered as defense mechanisms to stay unaffected by additional sideline activities. In this respect, further analysis of some conditions can be made. ACORD started its saving and credit scheme with *Iddirs* in *Akaki*. A distinct committee was established for this purpose. As discussed in chapter five, in some cases saving and credit schemes faced serious problems. But the *Iddir* as an entity was not affected. Indeed, in the final analysis, ACORD created formal organizations out of informal *Iddir* organizations by using the *Iddir* structure as an entry point without affecting it. In this connection, it can be argued that, even if economic activities with proper management and efficiency are performed directly by mainstream *Iddir* to benefit members, in the final analysis, it integrates members and strengthens the viability,

credibility and sustainability of the *Iddir*. Hence, the inclusion of economic or development agendas in *Iddirs'* activities which directly benefit members, empower and build their capacity, eventually, integrate *Iddirs* and members rather than disintegrating them. On the other side, if development is taken as construction of costly infrastructure and social services, which are often beyond the meager resource of *Iddir* members or the community, eventually, in the final analysis, it weakens citizens' initiatives and capacity. Hence, it dis-empowers them. Any activity that dis-empowers people cannot be considered as development.

Therefore, though *Iddirs* may disintegrate due to their internal problems and government intervention, introducing economic agendas cannot cause disintegration of *Iddirs*. On the contrary, it is likely to have an integrating impact. In this relation, one of my informants, Ato Sia Seboka, has argued that *Iddirs* may disintegrate due to lack of integrating economic agenda. Similarly leaders of *Abo Tsebel Meredaja Ina Limat Iddir* argued that "an *Iddir* that relies merely on members contribution will remain weak, vulnerable and liable to dissolve."

7.5 The purpose and extent of participation and empowerment

Both secondary and primary data presented in the preceding chapters have squarely shown that structures of the three regimes were not favourable for meaningful participation of *Iddirs* in poverty alleviation, change, and sustainable development of the society. The interest of all regimes was to tap financial resources of the community through *Iddirs*, and manipulate *Iddirs* and the community in line with their interests. Participation of *Iddirs* was limited to mere contribution of resources. The dominant role in development has been reserved for the regimes themselves. The inherent limitation of the extended traditional political pattern, which is common to all the three regimes, is the failure to realize all rounded participation of the people in order to tap the dormant potential energy for their own development. In this direction, Levine (1972:276) has stated, a long time ago, that,

Insofar as the mass of the people remain passive, involved in the development process only as objects of manipulation, their own creative energies will go unused. Only when their personal aspirations can be linked with cooperative endeavours or collective projects will their aspiration be sufficiently motivated to draw forth new sources of energy.

Indeed, participation of the people in development should not be viewed merely from resource tapping and utilization point of view, since it has much wider perspective. As human beings citizens have human rights to participate in matters that affect their lives. Also, the right to development has been recognized as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights (Segupta, 2000:553-577).

Ideally a successful and effective development project starts from the felt-needs of the community. This means that people should be given the opportunity to freely express their needs and aspirations. This is to be followed by designing strategies and plans of action and resource identification. Implementation and evaluation of the outcome should be done freely by the people. At all stages people should be entitled to decide, and the project should finally benefit the people. In this line, development emanates from real needs and free will of the people. It is performed by the people and then finally the outcome of development is for the benefit of the people. Briefly, this means that development is of the people, by the people, and for the people.

In order to realize effective participation people are required to be empowered politically and economically. Both participation and empowerment are the key elements for legally, sustainable development, which eventually requires decentralization of decision making power and financial resources to the community and civil society organizations. Also genuine participation and empowerment requires human and organizational capacity building. Besides, in the final analysis it should be noted that in order to get rid of poverty and attain sustainable development people through their own independent organizations should be able and be empowered to manipulate government structures and officials not vice versa, as it has been the

case upto now, because people have acquired sovereign political and economic rights and power. As L.Diamond argues true sovereignty resides not with the regime in control of the country, but with its people (Clark, 1994:31). Finally, people should be empowered and enabled to meaningfully participate in tackling the fundamental structural causes and sources of their problems but not merely symptoms and effects of their poverty and underdevelopment.

7.6 Social Capital in Crisis

Although *Iddirs* are believed to have rich stock of social capital to alleviate poverty and to promote sustainable development, evidences show that we should not idealize, exaggerate and consider it as a magic power to solve all problems of Ethiopian communities. But we should build on their strong actual and potential capacities, and complement what they lack through appropriate strategic measures by incorporating modern inputs into it.

In the absence of extensive research on the status of social capital in the different settings of both urban and rural *Iddirs*, generalizations on the basis of mere theoretical assumptions could be misleading. As evidences in this paper have suggested, there are indications of crisis of social capital among some *Iddirs*. Leaders of *Iddirs* have embezzled the *Iddirs'* money at their disposal and as a result some *Iddirs* were about to collapse and it has been reported that at least two *Iddirs* were dissolved as the result of leaders' embezzlement of the *Iddirs'* money. Hence members of *Iddir* felt shock and became wary of trusting their leaders. Once a leader with trustworthy quality seizes a leadership position, members elected him time and again for decades. On the other hand, many members have acquired their *Iddirs'* money illegally by cheating. In this regard a number of cases were reported by my informants.

When we consider components of social capital, three of my informants have commented on the state of social capital with emphasis on social norms and trust or mutual trust. In this respect, Ato Firdawek has said that, "There is no mutual trust in the family, in *Iddir* and between

government and the people". Ato Yeshewaliul argues that, "if the people are mobilized on the basis of trust, development can be accomplished. On the other hand, Ato Sia Seboka remarked that "mutual trust has been eroded and we are found in the state of crisis. Economic, cultural and political crises are evident currently. Those who lack public trust cannot bring about development in this country." Also, Ato Haile commented that "people do not trust *Kebele* officials." There seems to be urgent need to rehabilitate the eroded social capital in Ethiopia, because voluntary cooperation for common benefit such as engagement in collective poverty alleviation and development efforts require a substantial amount of social capital. In that people must trust each other and their government, and believe that they would all be better off if only everyone would cooperate for the common good. Since social capital is the key in this respect, it is essential to nurture and build social capital, on the one hand, and design reliable and transparent methods of work and leadership, on the other. These kinds of effort would help to build confidence, trust and social capital in general for healthy social life and common development of the community.

7.7 *Iddir* as an Arena for Conflicting Interest of Stakeholders

Iddir is an arena for diverse conflicting interests. To begin with members, some members would like their *Iddir* to perform merely burial function. This category of members are not comfortable with any additional role and function of their *Iddir*. Another group or category of members may be divided in two groups. Some members in this group would like their *Iddir* to engage in additional activities, i.e. in addition to burial services, such as poverty alleviation and development. The other group also would like their *Iddir* to participate in additional activities but are not sure about the outcome. Hence, they vacillate between supporting or not supporting the engagement of their *Iddir* in additional activities. The above kind of conflicting interest was observed in *Akaki* when ACORD had started its programme in 1997 E.C.. Most of members of

older *Iddirs* missed the opportunity while most or all newly formed *Iddirs* (after 1983 E.C. or 1991 G.C.) decided to join and benefit from the ACORD programme. This group of members have strategized to make the best use of their *Iddir's* organizational facilities, resources and power to solve their problems. These are risk takers and the members of the former group may be considered as "conservative".

Another kind of conflict could be the one that might arise between leaders and members of *Iddirs*. Members would like their leaders to serve only their interest. But leaders are sometimes forced or co-opted to serve the interests of another group such as the interest of government structures. Another type of conflict in this category is that the leaders may tend to implement the bylaws of the *Iddir* while some members may demand leaders to perform something in their favour or the other way round, also members may require the leaders to conform with the expectations of their bylaws, which the leader may be reluctant to perform.

With respect to *Iddirs'* umbrella organization, eventually, conflicts of interest and power among *Iddir* leaders and leaders of umbrella organization can emerge. The presence of umbrella organizations necessarily entails and forces *Iddir* leaders to give up or limit part of their power in favour of the leaders of their umbrella organization in order to enable them to perform some activities. Due to the power given to them, leaders of umbrella organization may sometimes exercise their power on or against *Iddir* leaders. This kind of incident can create conflicts between leaders of *Iddirs* and their umbrella organizations. In this kind of situation, *Iddir* leaders may decide to withdraw their membership from the umbrella organization. This is reported to be one of the reasons why some *Nazreth Iddirs'* leaders decided to withdraw from *Nazreth Iddirs'* umbrella organization.

In connection to *Iddirs* and their umbrella organization, other stakeholders such government and nongovernmental organization may have their own conflicting interests. To

begin with, in Ethiopia governments have been trying to obtain financial and political support from *Iddirs*. To secure their interest governments have attempted to infiltrate and control *Iddir* structures. On the other hand, members of *Iddirs* have established their *Iddirs* to serve their own interest. They do not want the government to abuse their *Iddirs* and umbrella organization for its interest. As a result, *Akaki Iddirs* and their members decided not to accept the formation of an umbrella organization of their *Iddirs*.

On the other hand, ACORD as an NGO envisaged the formation of *Akaki Iddirs'* umbrella organization to ensure the sustainability of its programme after it phases out its programme. But, ACORD did not take into consideration conflicting interests that could arise between *Iddirs* and the government after the formation of the *Iddir's* umbrella organization. In line with its objective, ACORD would like or desires to ensure sustainability of its activities through reliable and sustainable community based organizations upon the phasing out of its programmes. As a result, it was engaged in facilitating the formation of linkages and networks of *Iddirs*. This was in the assumption that this will facilitate the getting together of *Iddirs* to join their minds to discuss their problems and remedial solutions, share information and experience, and finally join hands for common activities towards common goals (Getinet, 2000). To this extent, the effort and involvement of ACORD is correct. However, the problem of ACORD lies in its failure to understand the conflicting interest of at least two major groups in the arena of its effort, in the formation of *Iddirs'* umbrella organization.

On the part of *Iddir* leaders and members, they would like to join their hands and minds under their *Iddirs'* umbrella organization in order to solve their problems. But as they have experienced earlier under the former two regimes, they would not like to be exploited and be victims of their own organization. Hence, it would not be surprising if they become wary of any

effort directed towards their organization. They would, eventually, be adamant not to involve risks under uncertain situations in the formation of umbrella organization of *Akaki Iddirs*.

On the other hand, administrative officials also would like the formation of umbrella organization of *Iddirs*, because it facilitates the mobilization of the community via this structure of *Iddirs*. But to be sure of it, they strategized to infiltrate agents into the would be formed umbrella organization of *Akaki Iddirs*. Hence, they decided and requested ACORD and its committee to re-invent the wheel of forming the organization by incorporating the hands of the administration. Due to this inherent conflict of interest things fall apart.

7.8 *Iddirs* and civil society organizations' relations with the political regimes

Since the imperial regime, Ethiopian governments tended to use *Iddirs* as instruments to reach the masses of the people for their own interest. In this respect, attempts have been made to co-opt leaders of *Iddirs* or to use legal mechanisms to manipulate *Iddirs*. Earlier *Iddirs* were forced to include articles in their statute which declare non-interference of *Iddirs* in political and administrative affairs of the governments and their cooperation with the government structures.

In the current government, *Iddir* - government structure relations have been observed in development projects, during national sovereignty crisis, local security crisis, and during political elections. All these relations are based on the interest of the government and people were required to contribute their share through their *Iddirs*. *Iddirs* have been called upon only when the government requires them to perform definite task. But it is essential to note some differences in state-*Iddir* relations among the three regimes. The Imperial regime has provided the legal ground for the formation of associations such as *Iddirs* for the first time in the history of the country. Also it has organized *Iddirs* under their own umbrella organizations. Indeed, *Iddirs'* leaders were coopted to participate in the provision of social facilities and services to their communities. But administrative structures such as Addis Ababa Municipality deny the

provision of matching funds and full participation of *Iddirs* in development projects. Since early 1960s, the Imperial regime forced *Iddirs* to change their ethnic and regional names into religious ones. On its turn the *Derg* regime has aggressively curbed out development role of *Iddirs* and introduced *kebele* administration and the notion of *Kebele* Development Committee. Also, *Derg* has attempted to dismantle older *Iddirs* and to establish its own appendage *Iddirs*. Besides, *Derg* attempted to change ethnic, regional and religious names of *Iddirs* into *kebele*, *ketena* and numerical names. In addition, properties of some *Iddirs* were expropriated, and forced *Iddirs* to donate their materials and use their properties such as halls without payments. Also, *Iddir* leaders were pressurized to join ruling party of the *Derg* regime and *Iddir* structures were infiltrated by that party. Unlike the two former regimes, EPRDF has no problem with ethnic, regional and religious names and compositions of *Iddirs*. There are some efforts to reorganize umbrella organizations of *Iddirs*. Unlike the Imperial regime, EPRDF provided matching fund for community development projects. But it is criticized for the absence of meaningful participation of *Iddirs*. Besides, EPRDF adopted the notion of *Kebele* and *Woreda* development committee. In some localities negative official attitude towards *Iddirs* has been reported. Nevertheless, independent umbrella organization of *Iddirs* began to emerge for the first time in the history of political regimes of Ethiopia. On its side, some government structures of EPRDF began to reorganize umbrella organizations of *Iddirs* in the absence of overall policy and legal framework in this respect, i.e., similar to former regimes.

There is no promulgated favourable legal frameworks and policy environment in which *Iddirs* can participate in poverty alleviation and community development. At the local level government structures such as *kebele* and *woreda* enjoy monopoly of political power. Decision-making on community affairs or interests, allocation of resources, and participation in all respects are affected by absence of fair power distribution and relationship. On the other hand, my

informants complained about unfair practices of administrative officials. In this connection, it is evident that good governance and fair power relation are *sin qua non* for effective joint poverty alleviation and sustainable development efforts of the government and the people. In the Ethiopian political culture since the imperial regime independent civil society organizations are not accepted by the ruling elites in power due to political reasons. Hence, the tradition has been to manipulate and link these organizations to government structures and use them for their interest. Independent popular self-help efforts have been frustrated by intervention of government structures and officials in all three regimes. This is the fundamental hindrance towards positive role and contribution, of *Iddirs* in particular and civil society organizations in general, towards poverty alleviation, sustainable development and change in this country.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

In this paper *Iddir* as a civil association is considered as one of civil society organizations in Ethiopia. Various earlier definitions of *Iddirs* were briefly reviewed and critically analysed. In this respect it has been found out that earlier definitions are not in a position to capture its all

features and correctly define the currently existing diverse nature of *Iddirs*, dynamically changing, newly emerging, and re-emerging *Iddirs* with their distinct features. Hence, *Iddir* is redefined as an association established to deal with mutual support of its members for all kinds of their felt-needs which basically incorporate burial services and mourning ceremonies at the incident of death among members, their families or relatives.

Regarding the origin and history of urban *Iddirs*, on the basis of primary and secondary data, and overall situational analysis, it has been suggested that rudimentary forms of *Iddir* might have been transplanted from rural to urban areas through migrants. In turn the urban setting has infused modern features of the association and up-graded it to a qualitatively higher degree of organization and formalization through time. These include features such as bylaws, utilization of money, permanent contribution, periodic elections and meetings, and the like, which have been eventually, in some cases diffused back to rural towns and areas. This means that there has been reciprocal and bilateral diffusion both directions. Except those features and degree of organization, the function, purpose, role and goal of both urban and rural *Iddirs* are basically the same. Hence, it seems more appropriate to say that modern features of urban *Iddirs* were diffused to rural areas not the *Iddir* per se. In this connection, even in the absence of all these modern features both in urban and rural areas people claim to have burial association similar to *Iddir* which they call by different names in different languages. Besides, this kind of association is in-built in the culture of the Ethiopian peoples and their way of life. Generally speaking it has been asserted that the history of urban *Iddirs* is inseparable from the history of urban areas in Ethiopia, while the history of modern features of *Iddirs* may be about four decades.

Research findings in this paper have shown internal dynamisms of *Iddirs* through evolutionary process in the development of bylaws, change of non-permanent contribution to a permanent ones, membership fees and penalties for non-compliance with the norms of conduct

and the like to the objective realities and requirements. These evidences suggest that *Iddirs* are flexible and dynamically adjusting themselves. In addition to burial and mourning services, the role and function of *Iddirs* have been expanded to include the role of political party, community representation, incipient labour union, social change and development agent and the like. This shows that people have employed role diversification and adaptive modification strategies in order to accomplish their ends with economy of efforts efficiently. Prior to this study only ten types of *Iddirs* were identified. This research has identified newly emerging *Iddirs*, such as transport *Iddir*, specialized minor *Iddirs* for different specific purposes, re-emerging *Iddirs* with their distinct features. These efforts show that people are using *Iddirs* as a coping strategy in order to satisfy their needs. Besides, concerning earlier typological classification, evidences depict that clear-cut categorization does not conform with the entire reality. It could be distortion and misleading at times. Hence, extensive research may further enrich our knowledge about *Iddirs*. At this stage any kind of generalization is liable to be challenged, premature and distortion of the complex reality on the ground.

In the face of failures of state and market approaches, the emerging civil society approach or paradigm of development in poverty alleviation, development and change seems to be a viable alternative for the masses of impoverished people. In this respect, there are significant signs that through self-initiated independent efforts people are determined to address their problems through their own organizations such as *Iddirs*. In this line, the role of the state structures and other actors should be to support, encourage, facilitate and enable self-help initiatives of the people, but not to obstruct and frustrate it. This is because the real makers of development and solvers of their problems are the people themselves, not the state or other actors on behalf of the people. Individually and collectively citizens can take charge of their own destinies and realize their full potential through their own initiatives and organizations in favourable policy and legal

frameworks. Evidences in this paper are in line with this general assertion. But this is not to undermine problems and limitations of civil society organizations such as *Iddirs*. In this connection, it has to be noted that, there is no evidence or reliable ground to conclude that all *Iddirs* can effectively undertake poverty alleviation and sustainable development activities. In the face of high death rate, low economic capacity of members and other related problems some *Iddirs* may fail to provide mere burial services for their deceased members, their families or relatives. In this kind situations, government and other actors may be needed to support and enable vulnerable *Iddirs* to undertake socially valued burial service and ceremony, because if the community fails to undertake burial services, eventually, local government structures may be required to do so. If this is not affordable for them and it may entail social and political crisis and disappointment among the people. On the other hand, even *Iddirs* that may have potential and actual capacity may have difficulty in undertaking poverty alleviation and development activities to benefit their members and the community at large.

Indeed, problems and limitations can be redressed through appropriate capacity building measures and supportive policy which has been lacking in Ethiopia since the imperial regime. Analysis of the so called cooperation and collaboration of efforts between *Iddirs* and governments, and *Iddirs* and NGOs seems to be cooptation. Also, partnership of these actors seems to be partnership of unequals. To engage in meaningful partnership and participation, it require partners be on equal footing. Hence, capacity building measures become essential prior to engagement in partnership and meaningful participation. To strengthen *Iddirs*, they should be able to function independently. Also they should be empowered legally, economically and politically. Besides, organizational and human capacity building measures are essential, because as *Iddirs* acquire inherent limitations and rudimentary organizational capacity to undertake complicated and challenging poverty alleviation and sustainable development activities,

extensive capacity building measures are highly essential in order to build upon their existing potential capacity. In this respect, Eade (1997) has concluded that, capacity building is an integral part of development theory and practice. Eade added that agencies that ignore people's existing strengths may create dependency, and so make people more vulnerable. On the other hand, in the final analysis sovereignty of the people should be ensured or should not be compromised. Government structures and officials should be servants of the people not vice versa. Hence, in terms of political power people should be empowered while government structures and officials should be disempowered. In effect government structures and officials should be accountable to the people and people should acquire power and mechanisms to control them, but not vice versa.

Since the capacity of each *Iddir* in isolation is limited, *Iddirs* should be able to form joint organization of their own independently in which they can join hands, minds and resources for the common benefit of their members and the community at large. Regarding the efforts that has been undergoing by government structures, such as *Zone 3, 5, and 6* of Addis Ababa City Administration to form top down imposed umbrella organization of *Iddirs*, as it has been observed, have been seriously challenged and caught in profound impasse. This kind of delicate effort may entail complicated damage to the formed umbrella organization for it will not be accepted by *Iddirs*. The amicable strategy is to facilitate the formation of independent umbrella organization by free consent of the leaders of *Iddirs* with full consultation and willingness of their members. In this direction, *Getinet* (2000:15) has suggested that,

When the process flows from out to inside and is initiated by the government, there would be no point of talking about a coordinating committee of Iddirs. What is there would only be a coordinating committee of the government. A clear suggestion is, therefore, that if the Iddirs and their members are to feel that such a coordinating organ is there for their sake, then they should be given the chance to initiate its formation and control the leadership to determine its form and content. Not only will this provide the opportunity to create the feeling of ownership but also the chance for community members to air their

concerns and priorities. This will in turn help to uncover their rich experiences, on the basis of which sustainable institutional set-up can be created.

Community members expect the formation of genuine umbrella organization will, among other things, envisage the following tasks,

- Coordinate *Iddirs'* efforts in order to be able to provide better and diversified services to their members;
- Work to improve the internal methods and operating systems of *Iddirs*;
- Represent member *Iddirs* in their common relationships with external bodies such as government and non-government organizations.
- Play a mediating and arbitration role between and among *Iddirs* and their members and with non-members;
- Advocate and work for the protection of the right of *Iddirs* and their different members;
- Initiate and coordinate efforts of *Iddirs* for community development;
- Seek support and assistance for *Iddirs* from external agencies.

Akaki people are strongly opposed and firmly decided not to accept the former type of umbrella organization and its formation procedure. In this respect *Getinet* has stated that,

In future undertakings it is necessary that the approach be based on open dialogue and that the process is transparent, democratic and free of partisan influence. It is the conviction of Iddir representatives and other community members that a bottom-up flow of understanding and decision should be achieved in the process so that the umbrella organization to be formed anew is more identified with the people than with other external bodies (Getinet, 2000: 13).

Regarding *Iddir* - state relation since the imperial regime, both common and distinct features were observed. On the one hand, the goal of the regimes has been to tap resources and manipulate *Iddirs* in line with their political interest. All three regimes have been attempting to infiltrate, manipulate, control and finally link *Iddirs* to their government structures. But civil society organizations should remain independent and should not be linked to government structures. On the other hand, there are notable differences among regimes in their relations with *Iddirs* and civil society organizations in general. The Derg regime was more aggressive than the

two regimes. Despite some serious problems, independent *Iddir* and civil society organizations began to emerge during the current EPRDF regimes, but very far from being ideal.

As far as social capital is concerned, it is essential to build social capital for it is a key factor in nation building, poverty alleviation, change and development. Nurturing social capital should go hand in hand with whole lot of measures and methods of work such as designing reliable systems, check and balance of power and transparent mode of operation. In this respect one interesting and unique aspect of *Akaki Iddirs'* organizational structure has to be noted. This newly emerging feature of *Akaki Iddirs* consist a body which is known as "the *Iddir* council" (*Ye-Iddir Mikir Bet*). Like *Iddirs'* control (*Kutitir*) committee, the *Iddirs'* council is accountable to the General Assembly of *Iddirs*. The control committee is entitled to Audit and examine the status of finance and property of the *Iddir*. but the *Iddir* council serves as appellant body in the *Iddir*. Besides, it interpretes controversial articles of bylaws and also approves non-ordinary expenditures of more than certain amount, ETB 100 in the case of *Gishen Mariam Iddir*. In some cases the council has rejected *kebele* officials' orders or requests. The *Iddirs'* control committee and the council seemingly resemble General Auditor and the Judiciary respectively in the state structure. Hence, organizational function and structure of *Akaki Iddirs* can be a good model to teach democratic governance, check and balance of power, accountability and the like. Finally, though *Iddir* is the most widespread indigenous voluntary organization, research is seriously lacking on all its aspects. Hence, it is essential to undertake extensive research on a national scale.

Furthermore, civil society organizations and approach cannot be considered as a panacea or as a magic formula or solution for promotion of poverty alleviation, sustainable development and change processes required in Ethiopia. In addition to mobilizing resources available through civil society organizations and individual citizens, resources of state and market or private sectors

should be mobilized more effectively and efficiently both separately and jointly towards the national goal of poverty alleviation, sustainable development and change in this country. Indeed, it is a well known fact that the state and the private sectors in Ethiopia have serious limitations of resources and capacity. But under favourable policy and through streamlined and joint partnership efforts of all stakeholders significant results can be attained in poverty alleviation sustainable change and development. Without relentless efforts and dedication the goal of poverty alleviation, sustainable development and change cannot be attained. Not only organizational aspects and resources but also other factors should be considered and proper measures should be taken timely.

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List of Informants

1. Akaki Iddirs'

Leaders and Members

1. Ato Hile Habte - Mariam
2. Ato Yeshewa Liul Bekele
3. Ato Girma Bezawagaw
4. Ato Yirga Tiruneh
5. Ato Mekasha Lemma
6. Ato Nigussie Gebre
7. Ato Yimer Mario
8. W/o Israel Alemu
9. Ato Fird-Awek Hay
10. Ato Negash Wordofa
11. Ato Tadesse Tesema
12. Ato Teka Tafesse
13. Ato Tadesse Tena
14. Ato Birhanu Haqo
15. Ato Wolde H.Mariam
16. Ato Nasir
17. Ato Tamrat G.Mariam
18. Ato Alemayehu Jimma
19. Ato Alemayehu Degefa
20. Ato Assefa Asegidew
21. Ato Zewdie G.Tsadiq
22. W/o Abebech Jimma
23. W/o Makida W/Kidan
24. Ato Ali Ahmed
25. Ato Assefa Wodajo
26. Ato Yeshitila Ashenafi
27. Ato Girma Bekele
28. Ato Beyene
29. Ato Sisay

2. Nazreth Iddirs'

Leaders and Members

1. Ato Girazmach Gugsu Tufer
2. Ato Melese Ayano
3. Ato ketsela Kidane
4. Ato Sia Seboka
5. Ato Teka H. mariam and all members of Nazreth Iddirs' overall committee
6. Ato Wubneh

3. Kolfe Iddirs'

Members and Leaders

1. Ato Nigussie Desta
 2. Ato Birhanu Abeba
 3. Ato Ayele
 4. Ato Legesse Anore
- ### 4. Abo Tsebel Sefere Selam meredajana Limat Iddir Leaders
1. Ato Tilahun Tamiru
 2. Ato Geremew
 3. Ato Seid
 4. Ato Sisay
- ### 5. ACORD Staff
1. Ato Asfaw Mekonen
 2. W/t Kasech Abegaz
 3. W/o Abaynesh Biru
 4. Ato Abdi Adem
 5. Ato Fikre Estifanos
 6. W/t Workie Mekonen
 7. W/t Solome Teshome
 8. W/t Zufan G/E
 9. W/t Hibret Tesfaye
- ### 6. Akaki Zone and Woreda Officials
1. Ato Tesfaye Zerihun
 2. Ato Mulugeta Litibelu
 3. Ato Tsegaye
 4. W/o Anley, and
 5. all others
- ### 7. Zone 5 Officials
1. Ato Belete Mekonnen
- ### 8. Akaki Cooperative Department Branch Office
1. Ato Gasaye Shiferaw
- ### 9. AACA - OSDA
1. Markos Bizuneh

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for this thesis have duly acknowledged.

Name : _____

Signature : _____

Date : _____

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as university advisor

Name : _____

Signature : _____

Date : _____