

Assessment of extent of Government interference in Cooperative autonomy: A study in Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT: *Internationally, cooperatives are accepted as autonomous and democratic organizations. The current controversy is about how the government approaches the cooperative movement. The objective of the study was to assess the extent of Government intervention in Cooperative autonomy in Oromia regional state, and its influence on cooperative autonomy. The methodology adopted for this study was mixed methods. The research paradigm chosen for this mixed method research was both pragmatism and transformative paradigms by believing that when cooperatives are empowered and liberalized social and economic justice can be reached. Multi-stage random and purposive sampling was used for this study. The study was conducted in six districts of Oromia regional state and different types of 31 primary cooperatives were selected. Data was collected from 432 respondents by using structured and semi-structured interviews. The study employs convergent research design to combine the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Data was analyzed by SPSS version 26, and the descriptivism statistics such as cross tabulation, mean and standard deviation was used. And narrative analysis was used for qualitative data. The study found that there was high government intervention in cooperative autonomy in study areas which challenges the cooperative organizational autonomy. The study recommended that the state had to withdraw its traditional supportive role to cooperatives in order to remain in partnership with the spirit of liberalization. Support services like registration, audit, supervision, inspection and management training were the first to be withdrawn by the state. These supportive services should be replaced by cooperatives themselves or other non-governmental and neutral organizations. The government should focus on making a conducive environment for cooperative movement than intervening in cooperative movement.*

Keywords: *Cooperative autonomy, Cooperative movement, Government intervention, mixed method*

I. INTRODUCTION

Cooperatives in Ethiopia are the brainchild of the government, and their long-term growth and development are dependent on the government's policies and plans. As international cooperative alliance defines, cooperation is autonomy, which means that cooperatives are not subject to the control of other entities for their duties (ICA, 1995; MacPherson, 1995; 2007). Nonetheless, it is the government's job to regularize cooperatives in accordance with the concept, principles, and values of cooperation. The Ethiopian government recognizes the value of cooperatives in improving the socioeconomic situations of the rural poor. Since 1994, the government has implemented a variety of initiatives to promote the formation and operation of cooperatives (Bernard et al. 2010). In 2002, the Federal Cooperative commission (FCC) was founded to promote cooperatives across the country. It is vital in the registration, legalization, auditing, certifying, and monitoring of cooperatives (a proclamation to establish the cooperatives' commission ([proc.No.274/2002]; Karthikeyan & Nakkiran, 2011). The government of Ethiopia has encouraged the development of several cooperatives (Bernard et al. 2013). Ethiopia is one of the developing nations where cooperatives considerably boost GDP, as well as reducing poverty, creating jobs, and ensuring food security. The government's interference in the day-to-day operations of cooperatives, particularly those in developing nations, is criticized by many academics and researchers in the subject of cooperatives as undermining their functional autonomy.

Strong and viable autonomous cooperatives play an important role in promoting economic and social development of members and communities. The usefulness of a support system for cooperatives including audit, which protects members against fraud, embezzlement and exploitation and enhances their capacity to control their organization is obvious. However, such a support system can also be used as a strait jacket, if it is combined with government control carried out by cooperative officers who beyond audit and advice tend to interfere with matters of indoor management (Develtere, 1992; Munkner, 1986; 2013).

In case cooperatives are seen as private business organizations for the promotion of the economic and social needs of their members and not as semi-public or public institutions serving as development tools in the

hands of government, this means that the decision to form or join a cooperative society, goal-setting for and management of cooperatives, choice of leadership and control, should be left to the members of such organizations. For many decades, state-sponsored and state-controlled cooperatives have created the image of the cooperative society as an inefficient, stagnant, often corrupt institution with largely nominal membership, minimizing active participation and resource commitment, as branches of government distributing certain goods and offering certain services and subsidies on behalf of government but without taking roots among the people. Ambitious (and often unrealistic) goals set for cooperatives by development planners have led to overregulation, over promotion and over intervention, thus bringing the cooperatives even further away from the people whom they should serve (Munkner, 1986).

Government assistance and government control have turned cooperative societies from private business organizations into semi-public or public institutions. Even though in the concept of cooperation and in the original cooperative laws cooperatives are seen as organizations under private law, this theoretical concept has been abandoned gradually first in practice, later in the law. As a result, the current cooperative legislation in developing countries is in many respects no longer in conformity with the concept of cooperation (Galera, 2004; Munkner, 1986). There was also devaluation of cooperative principles in many countries (Henry, 2017). This brings causes for failure of cooperative societies because of that cooperatives created on a large scale without much preparation, administrative and political pressure was used to impose a model of cooperation when the intention of the promoters of cooperatives focused on priorities of national development rather than on the interests of the individual members. Cooperatives were conceived primarily as instruments of government for carrying out plans made by Government officials, financed with government funds and accordingly government controlled and the models of organization were (and still are) predetermined in almost every detail (e.g. model by-laws are prescribed from which people are not supposed to deviate), government intervention and government control left (and still leaves) no room and no incentive for active participation by cooperative members (Munkner, 2015; Karthikeyan & Nakkiran, 2011).

The objective of the study was to assess the extent of Government intervention in Cooperative movement in Ethiopia, particularly in Oromia regional state, and its influence on cooperative autonomy. Based on this objective the study answers the question, to what extent the government intervenes in cooperative movement in Ethiopia, particularly in Oromia regional state? And how government intervention influences cooperative autonomy in study area? To show previous studies concerning this issue, some literature was reviewed as the following.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cooperative is an autonomous and democratic organization. Cooperative societies are self-help organizations, with members in charge of setting goals for joint action, determining the rules to be applied and controlling the elected leaders democratically (Henry, 2012; ICA, 1995; ILO, 2002; Munkner, 1995). However, the state approach to cooperative society influences the cooperative movement and the cooperative character of autonomy and democracy. Government approaches to cooperative society are based on the law and policy of the country. The government approaches to cooperative society can be hostile, neutral, top-down and benevolent approaches (Adeler, 2014; Cox & Le, 2014; Karthikeyan & Nakkiran, 2011; Levesque, 1990).

Governments and NGOs in developing countries often promote cooperatives as organizations to enhance the development (Chibanda et al, 2009; Spielman et al, 2008). Government promotion has mostly a negative effect on co-operative societies that government uses cooperative as their instrument or for their own interest (Woldie, 2015; Onyeze et al, 2018). In the context of poverty alleviation in poor areas of the Global South, the first UN Sustainable Development Goal, a puzzle facing the international community is to understand the role of government intervention in cooperative development, which may conflict with the cooperative principles taken by the International Cooperative Alliance (Zhang et al, 2023).

According to Levesque (1990), government initiatives that promote cooperative growth have always had instrumentalist goals. In other words, laws favoring cooperatives have enabled the state to achieve its own goals. These have nothing to do with the aims of the co-ops or the creation of a more socialized, democratized economy. In their relationship the government can influence the character of cooperatives (Fregidou-malama, 1999). The effect of excessive government control and political interference in cooperatives has had a devastating outcome on members' morale and their faith in cooperatives. Cooperatives and local governance systems are closely linked by interactions at multiple levels. These interactions also run risks associated with the historically weak levels of trust between government and Cooperatives in Ethiopia (Spielman et al, 2008). Strong and viable autonomous cooperatives that adapt successfully play an important role in promoting economic and social development of members and communities. The usefulness of a support system for cooperatives including audit, which protects members against fraud, embezzlement and exploitation and enhances their capacity to control their organization is obvious. However, such a support system can also be used as a strait jacket, if it is

combined with government control carried out by cooperative officers who beyond audit and advice tend to interfere with matters of indoor management (Munkner, 1986). But one of the revisions of cooperative principles and values in 1995 was to give cooperative leaders more autonomy to manage the cooperative enterprise without too much interference from the membership in the general meeting or their elected representatives (ICA, 1995, ICA Guidance Note, 2015; ILO, 2002; Munkner, 1995).

In case cooperatives are seen as private business organizations for the promotion of the economic and social needs of their members and not as semi-public or public institutions serving as development tools in the hands of government, this means that the decision to form or join a cooperative society, goal-setting for and management of cooperatives, choice of leadership and control, should be left to the members of such organizations. For many decades, state-sponsored and state-controlled cooperatives have created the image of the cooperative society as an inefficient, stagnant, often corrupt institution with largely nominal membership, minimizing active participation and resource commitment, as branches of government distributing certain goods and offering certain services and subsidies on behalf of government but without taking roots among the people. Ambitious (and often unrealistic) goals set for cooperatives by development planners have led to overregulation, over promotion and over intervention, thus bringing the cooperatives even further away from the people whom they should serve (Munkner, 1986; Stahl, 1989; Teka, 1988).

Government assistance and government control have turned cooperative societies from private business organizations into semi-public or public institutions (Emana, 2008). Even though in the concept of cooperation and in the original cooperative laws cooperatives are seen as organizations under private law, this theoretical concept has been abandoned gradually first in practice, later in the law. As a result, the current cooperative legislation in developing countries is in many respects no longer in conformity with the concept of cooperation (Henry, 2017; Munkner, 1986). There was an intensification and extension of government involvement in cooperative development. Under the wing of the government, the power holders had full confidence in the cooperative sector and gave it a prominent place in their development rhetoric and strategies. In many countries governments shifted their initial policies of cooperative development from inducement to, more or less, coercion. Cooperatives were used as social control instruments and attempted to diversify the cooperative sector. It is argued that though cooperatives are essentially elements of the social and solidarity economy, state control over the cooperative movement eroded the solidarity of cooperatives (Mojo et al, 2015; Wanyama, 2013).

The Cooperatives movement in Ethiopia was initiated by the government (Decree No 44/1960; Develtere, 2008). Government uses cooperatives as a development instrument. To implement the planned development agenda, the government interferes in the activities of the cooperative. The interferences exist in different ways such as interfering in the decision making, managerial affairs of cooperatives, in by-law making and amendment, registering, auditing, etc. (Debisa & Nakkiran, 2023; Dorgi, 2017; Derese, 2014). High government interference in the decisions and managerial affairs of the cooperatives will discourage members from participating in their cooperatives that cause the cooperatives to fail (Beyene & Abebe, 2013; Debisa & Nakkiran, 2023; Dorgi, 2017).

The emphasis on cooperative values and principles reflects a reaction to an approach that saw cooperatives in developing and command economies regarded as accountable primarily to the state rather than their membership (Clarity, 2006: 1). In this approach cooperatives were often utilized as instruments of government policy, and cooperative autonomy was severely compromised (Develtere, 2008; Henry, 2012; Munkner & Shah, 1993; Wanyama, 2009). However, the principle of autonomy cannot be considered in isolation from other cooperative principles. It is self-evident that without democratic member control cooperatives cannot be autonomous or independent. By the same token, cooperatives cannot be genuinely autonomous or independent if they are not economically self-sufficient (Theron, 2010; Birchall, 2011). The study by Tafesse et al (2019) show that NGO- and government-initiated cooperatives are less efficient than community initiated ones, implying that governments and NGOs should not interfere too strongly in cooperative formation. Cooperatives suffer image problems because of the abuse they have undergone over the years beginning with the colonial times, to socialism and autocratic times in some cases, to times of co-operatives disenchantment because of the introduction of the structural adjustment programs by international donors who wanted to accelerate development on their terms which were unfavorable to the very ones that needed the development. The rigidity of the cooperatives movement structure creates ambiguity in membership and overlapping functions of the members (Mojo et al, 2017; Nkandu, 2010).

Extent of government intervention in cooperative movement is different from country to country. In developed countries there is less or moderate intervention and in developing countries like Ethiopia there is high intervention. Government intervention in cooperative development has become debatable for scholars who study the relationship between state and cooperatives (Adeler, 2014; Develter 1992; Munkner, 2014; Zhany, 2023;

Karthikeyan&Nakkiran, 2011). Cooperative may lost its identity due to legislation which has deviated over the past decades from the cooperative principles (Henry, 2017). Cooperatives in Ethiopia were initiated by the government. Modern cooperative in Ethiopia was established by the government in 1960 to solve the then economic problems such as to solve unemployment, to get exchange, and to modernize Ethiopia by making modern law for Ethiopia to bring development in the country (Develtere, 1992; Stahl, 1989; Teka, 1988). Modern cooperative enterprises in Ethiopia have always been the project of the government and have never been the result of a social movement that was initiated and developed by the community and as a result they are sadly kept separate from indigenous institutions (Abdula,2019, as Cited by Yimer 2020).The idea of cooperative formation was hijacked in Ethiopia by state. Cooperative was neglected by the own government in Ethiopia (Rao&Temesgen, 2014)

The extent of the government intervention in cooperative movement is up to supporting and flourishing the cooperative society. On the contrary it's up to abolishing cooperatives and bringing identity crises on cooperatives societies by policy, law and strategies. For instance cooperatives movement in Ethiopia in Derge regimes which cooperative society was aimed and established, promoted by government agency to fulfill political objectives such as shifting cooperative to socialism which totally abolish cooperative identity. In Ethiopia, the study by Dorgi (2017) and Derese (2014) found that there was government intervention in the decisions and managerial affairs of cooperatives society. High government interference in the decisions and managerial affairs of the cooperatives will discourage members from participating in their cooperatives that cause the cooperatives to fail (Debisa,2023; Dorgi, 2017; Karthikeyan&Nakkiran, 2011; Lemma, 2008; Millor, 2009).Auditing is a key element of good financial management. Due to the wide scope of potentially improper behavior, governments regulate auditors and the process, which is integral to their success (Mellor, 2009).Cooperatives fail when they are taken over by government bureaucrats, political operatives, or a small "insider" group of members. In these situations, inefficiency is likely, and the lack of an active membership causes the cooperative to lose not only inclusiveness and democratization, but also member input into efficient operation (Mellor, 2009).

The literature reviews show that there was no study which focuses on the extent of government intervention in cooperative movement and its influence on cooperative autonomy which is the pillar for cooperative sustainability. This study tries to fill these gaps and contributes to literature dearth and theoretical knowledge. To contribute the expected knowledge and to answer the research objective, the methodology of the study was explained as the following.

III. METHODOLOGY

As a methodology, this study involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data as well as the mixing of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of this research process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The methodology adopted for this study was mixed methods. The research paradigm chosen for this mixed method research was both pragmatism and transformative paradigms by believing that when cooperatives are empowered and liberalized social and economic justice can be reached.

Multi-stage random and purposive sampling was used for this study. This study was carried out in Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. Oromia Regional state is the largest and populous state in Ethiopia. It is located in the central part of the country and lies between 340 8E1 to 430 11E longitudes and 3040 N to 100 311N latitudes'. Based on data obtained from Oromia Regional office, the region has an estimated of area about 359,619.8 square km, which constitutes about one third of the total area of the country. In addition to its large size, the region has great physiographic diversity. It is subdivided into three agro-ecological zones, highlands, mid highland & lowlands.

This was because Oromia Regional Government has a large population of primary and Cooperative Unions compared to other Regions (FCC, 2019). First stage, Oromia Regional State Government was selected purposely. This was because Oromia Regional Government has large population primary cooperatives compared to other regions (FCC, 2022). It is justified that Oromia Regional state Government was one of the cooperatively developed Regions wherein a significant proportion of population have been brought under the fold of cooperatives of different types. It is because of the researcher's familiarity with the zones and availability of data. From the west show zone three districts Ejere, Ambo district and Ambo town were purposely selected. From Oromia Special zone Surrounding Finfinne(Currently Shegger City) burayu, walmara and Holota was purposively selected. The area was selected purposely since no adequate studies had been conducted earlier on the extent of government intervention in cooperative autonomy.

The study was conducted in six districts of Oromia regional state and different types of 31 primary cooperatives were selected. Data was collected from 432 respondents by using structured and semi-structured interviews.

This study employed a mixed Methods research approach. The rationale for the choice of mixed methods as an approach for this study is that it is chosen because of its strength of drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research and minimizing the limitations of both approaches. It provides more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone. Researchers are able to use all of the tools of data collection available rather than being restricted to those types typically associated with quantitative research or qualitative research. It helps answer questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative approaches alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017:4). Mixed methods research encourages the use of multiple worldviews, or paradigms (i.e., beliefs and values), rather than the typical association of certain paradigms with quantitative research and others with qualitative research. It also encourages us to think about paradigms that might encompass all of quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The study employs convergent research design to combine the results of the quantitative and qualitative data. The basic idea is to compare the two results with the intent of obtaining a more complete understanding of a problem, to validate one set of findings with the other. The two databases are essentially combined (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative data was analyzed by using SPSS version 26, and the descriptivism statistics such as cross tabulation, mean and standard deviation was used. In addition, narrative analysis was used for qualitative data.

Sampling procedure for Quantitative Data

Multistage random and purposive sampling procedure was followed for the selection of area and the sample units for this study. As the study intended to analyze a cross section of various types of cooperatives, the need for the identification and selection of different types of cooperatives was an essential prerequisite. Multi stage random sampling and purposive sampling procedure was adopted for this study. 1st stage, from the 21 Zones of Oromia Regional state two Zones, namely West shoa Zone and Oromia Special Zone of Surrounding Finfinne was selected purposely based on the concentration of different types of cooperatives. Also in the study area, there are many cooperatives with similar problems mentioned in the problem statement. 2nd, 3 districts from Oromia Special Zone and 3 districts from west shoa zone were selected by simple random selections.

At the first stage, sample cooperatives were selected by stratified random sampling based on types of primary cooperatives. There are 294 primary cooperatives in selected six districts. Among 294 cooperatives 31 are used as sample due to limited resources and time, selection of number in each stratum was proportionate to the population. These 31 primary cooperatives were randomly selected mainly based on some practical reasons like access to transport, seniority and size of membership and availability of data. As to sampling of member respondents was concerned, a proportionate simple random sampling technique was employed using each selected primary cooperative's registry as a sampling frame.

To determine the sample respondents Yamane formula
$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Wherein:

N=population which is 8900

n=sample

e=0.05(sampling error)

1=constant

Based on this formula the sample size of the study is:
$$= \frac{8900}{1+8900(0.05)^2} = 382.79 \approx 383$$

Based on this the sample cooperative and sample size of the respondents determines as the following table:-

Table 3.1 Sample cooperative and sample size of the respondents

No.	Name of cooperatives	Types of Cooperatives	Number of members	Sample of Respondents	District	Zone
1	Nano Technology	Consumer	284	12	Burayu	ShagerBurayusubcity
2	MalkaGarba	Consumer	130	6		
3	Burka Gafarsa	Consumer	97	4		
4	Bars.fi Hojje M/B/Sad. Iffaa	SACCO	463	20	Holota city	
5	Bar.fi Hoje. NaannoMagalaHool	SACCO	895	39		

	otaa					
6	Rabbirra	Consumer	203	9		
7	Horii Gabbisu fi kafteriyaaSingitan	Non.Agri culture	425	18		
8	walmara	Agri.Multi purpose	285	12	Walmara	
9	Subba	Agri.Multi purpose	730	31		
10	H/Gaba	Agri.Multi purpose	754	32		
11	Hoj/mmd/a/Walmara	SACCO	57	2		
12	Loon Wayyaa	Other Agri	59	3		
13	Lalisa	Other Agri	41	2		
14	Kimmoyyee	Agri.Multi purpose	273	12	Ejere	West showa
15	Indoodee	Agri.Multi purpose	570	25		
16	Dhamottu	Agri.Multi purpose	350	15		
17	DandiGuddina	Dairy	74	3		
18	DaldalaMidhaniBayisa	Crop marketing	130	6		
19	HojjattootaWaj.Qonnaa A/Ejeree	SACCO	95	4		
20	Barsiisota fi Hojj A/Ejeree	SACCO	289	12		
21	ho/bar/sad/2ffa	SACCO	20	1	Ambo City	
22	EgumsaaQorannoo QonnaabiqiltuAmbo	SACCO	97	4		
23	Hoj. Yun. Amboo	Consumer	311	13		
24	Biiftujalala	Consumer	197	8		
25	Walqixxee	Other.Agriculture	230	10	Ambo District	
26	Altufa	Agri.Multy	536	23		
27	Meti	Agri.Multy	1023	44		
28	GuddinaDikii	Agri.Multy	46	2		
29	Ifa Bari	SACCO	62	3		
30	Jabanya	SACCO	104	5		
31	Gammachuu	SACCO	70	3		
	Total		8,900	383		

Source: Compiled data from Sheger city and West Showa Zone, 2022

Location Map

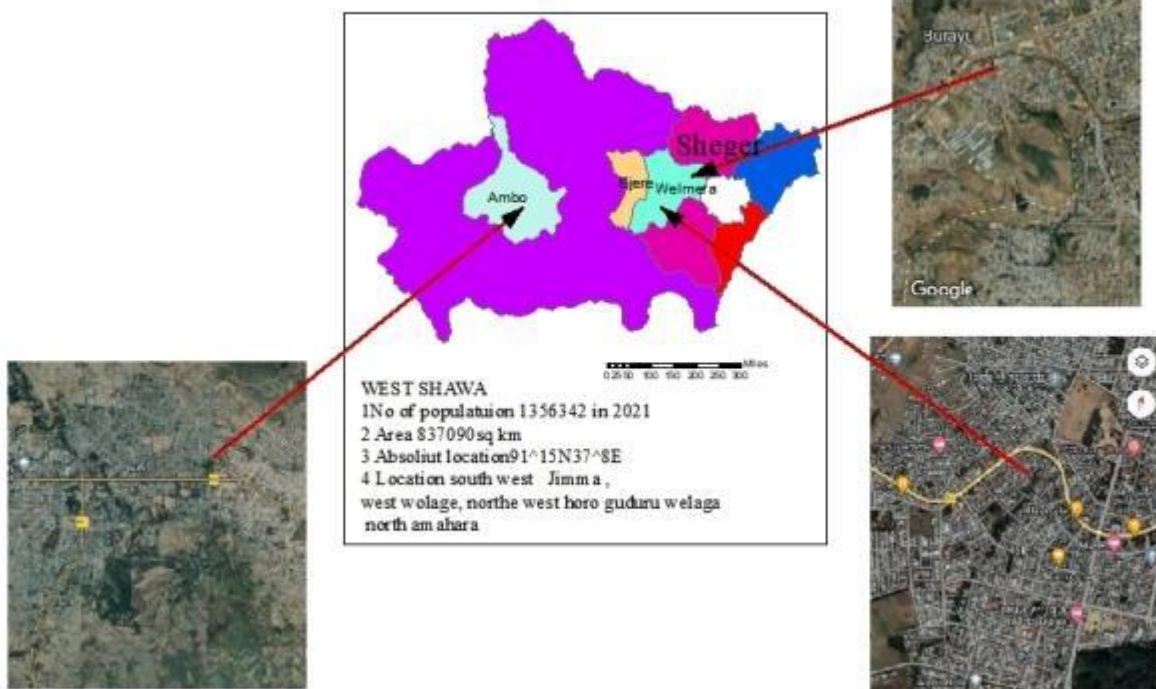
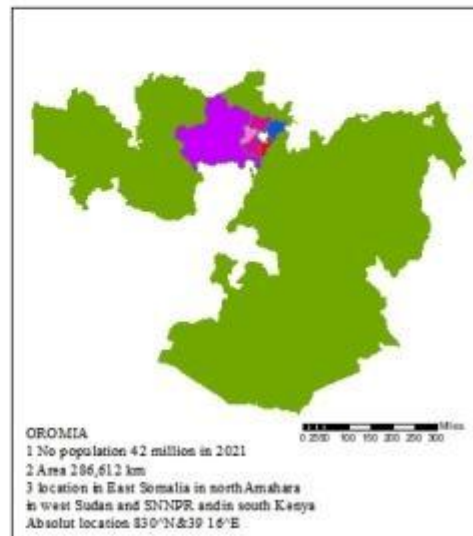
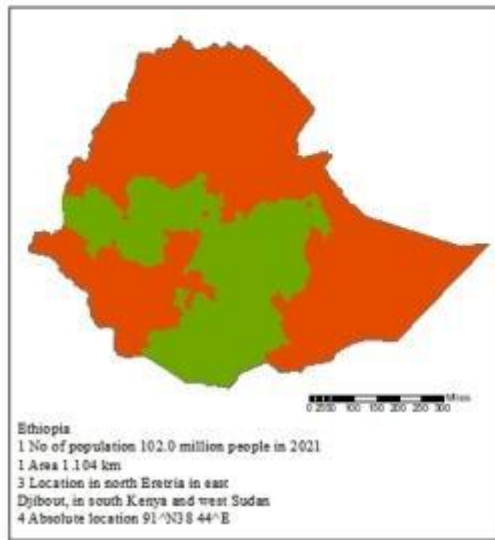


Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia, OromiaReginal state showing the study area, Burayu/shegger, Walmara, Holota, Ejere, Ambo city and Ambo district

Sample Frame for Qualitative Data

For this study 31 managers/ members of management committee/ of the selected primary cooperatives in Burayu, Holota, Ejere, Ambo and Ambo Districted were purposely selected. This is because managers or members of the management committee were expected to know more about the problems of the primary

cooperatives from the formation of the cooperatives and daily activity of the cooperatives. In addition to these key informants was done with four(4) employees of cooperative promotion agency at zonal level (West show, 2 and Sheger city 2) and two (2) employees of cooperative promotion agency at Oromia Regional state, and two(2) employees of cooperative promotion office at each selected districts(2*6=12). Totally 49 respondents were selected for interview. The informants' selection was carried out by considering their roles, duties, and responsibilities in developing the primary Cooperatives. This was because the diversity of informants was essential to obtain different experiences about the phenomenon being studied.

For this study, data collection was used by direct observation, interviews and analysis of documents. In the qualitative stage, the semi-structured interview form was used. The researcher uses the semi-structured interview form to be able to ask additional probe questions to analyze the issue in depth and to understand the reasons behind participants' answers. Semi-structured interview was used to gather in-depth qualitative data from selected different types of primary cooperatives' manager/ member management committees. In addition, secondary information from different institutions and offices, Government reports and policies, materials by ICA concerning cooperative identity, different journals, books and researches to gather general ideas Government impact on cooperative autonomy was used. The researcher also used published and unpublished reports, proclamations, regulations, websites, periodicals, and assessment reports to get relevant information on cooperatives in Ethiopia.

Data analysis for Quantitative Data

According to Cresswell and Plano Clark (2018), one of the procedures for mixed-methods data analysis is related to "concurrent data analysis" in which both qualitative and quantitative data are merged because they are analyzed separately. Triangulation design is one of the approaches used for concurrent data analysis, and it was used for the data analysis in this study. The intent of the triangulation design was to gather both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time and to integrate the two forms of data in order to have a better understanding of the research questions being asked. This design typically gives equal priority to quantitative and qualitative data and analysis (**QUAL+QUANT**), involves concurrent or simultaneous collection of data, and integrates both quantitative and qualitative data in the results, interpretation, and conclusion phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

In so doing, in Stage 1, the researcher conducted separate initial data analysis for each of the qualitative and quantitative databases (Cresswell& Plano Clark, 2018), which included coding, theme development, and the interrelationship of analysis of qualitative data and descriptive analysis of quantitative data. In Stage 2, the researcher merged the two sets of data and used triangulation design in order to allow for a complete picture of the study.

In this study, multiple data analysis was performed. The analysis was performed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation to know what kind of intervention by the Government on Cooperative autonomy and the effect of Government intervention on cooperative autonomy. According to Mansingh (2016) the use of descriptive data analysis for answering questions about how participants view issues within a given reality helps readers to have an idea of the typical values in the data and how these vary. In order to do this, the researcher summarizes the data, so that readers can construct a mental picture of the relationship between the data and the phenomena under study.

The central tendency of a distribution is an estimate of the center of a distribution of value used to determine and describe the median of sets of values of the data that require this approach. Ranges which are measures of dispersion in a frequency distribution were also used to describe the variability of data values.

Based on the objectives of the research, analysis was made on different approaches, quantitative data was coded and entered into statistical software known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26, and the results were carried out using cross tabulation, frequency and percentages and means, in related to descriptive statistics as per needed and moreover, to test the statistical significance of the dummy variables logistic regression model was applied for objective five factors affecting cooperative autonomy practices.

Method of Data Analysis of Qualitative Data

The goal of this study is to assess the extent of government intervention in cooperative autonomy. The multiple perspectives from the participants were imperative in understanding the stated problem. In this study, the researcher used inductive analysis for both semi-structured interview questions and close-ended questions. In this regard, the researcher read the data looking for trends and patterns in order to identify themes to better understand the data within the confines of a thematic analysis. Following the coding, descriptions, and categorizing, the researcher was represented by way of a narrative. A narrative analysis of the data collected painted a portrait of the perceptions and knowledge of primary cooperatives employees, members of the management committee and members of autonomy cooperatives. This included direct citations from participants and a comparison of results from the study, literature review, and theories on this topic. Finally, the researcher derives thematic categories that emerged from the qualitative data, which are consistent with the literature review in order to describe the topic under study.

Under this study, Priority of analytical Components of the qualitative and quantitative strands had equal priority (i.e., equal status) with respect to addressing the research questions under study. The analysis applied for inquiry conclusions.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are some ambiguities in line with cooperative identity with the scope of government intervention in cooperative movement. The extent of government intervention in cooperative autonomy might be based on the government approaches to cooperative movement.

4.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Sample Respondents

The effective survey responses rate was 100%. Therefore, the responses were adequate for further analysis. Upon the rates of the responses demographic characteristics are presented as; majority of the respondents (72.8%) were male and (27.2 %) were females. Regarding the respondents age group about (41.3%) were between 37- 55 age groups and (27.2%) of them were between 28- 36 years followed by (19.3%) of them were between 18- 27 years. Regarding educational status of the respondents, the majority of them (45.2%) were grade 9 to 12th while (28.2%) were grade 1 to 8th level of education. The others (18%) of the respondents were diploma level and (8.6%) were degree and above. Regarding duration of membership, 7.8% of them were between 1 -5 years and 21.9% were between 6-13 years. And also the majority 44.9% of them were 14 -30 years and 25.3% were more than thirty years membership (cooperative experiences). Regarding the average monthly income of respondents, the larger group 39.7% and 26.9% of them consist of individuals in the income group 2001-3000 birr and less than 2000 birr respectively. This was followed by 21.9% of the respondents whose income is between the range 3001-4500 birr. The remaining respondents were 7.6% and 3.9% had income between the range of above 4501 birr to 6000 and more than 6000 birr respectively. Based on this more than 88.5% of the respondents had income less than 4501 birr monthly.

4.2 Extent of Government Intervention in Cooperative Autonomy

Quantitative Analysis Group

Under this section the researcher assessed the extent of government intervention in cooperative autonomy at different stages such as formation, function and exit stages. To know the extent of government intervention at different stages of the cooperative life cycle, Linkert scale of 1 – 5 were used: 5 Excessive interventions, 4 High interventions, 3 Moderate interventions, 2. Low interventions, and 1 No interventions. To simplify the data analysis, the researcher used excessive intervention for mean >4, High intervention for mean $3 \leq 4$, moderate for mean $2 \leq 3$, low for mean $1 \leq 2$ and no government intervention for mean <1(less than one mean). The result of the study was described as the following.

4.2.1 Extent of Government intervention in Cooperative autonomy at Formation stage

Table 4.1 Extent of Government Intervention at Formation Stage

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mobilizing society to form cooperative	383	4.14	.784
Determination of minimum number of members	383	4.51	.856
Deciding product/services	383	3.63	.804
Developing business plan	383	4.37	.876
Finding members	383	3.55	.810
Location determination	383	3.36	.981
Finding member leader/management committee	383	4.04	1.011
Developing cooperative by-law	383	4.30	.725
Determining members of management committee	383	4.38	.659
Determining the criteria to be elected in management committee	383	3.65	.715
Developing marketing plan	383	3.40	.766
Developing feasibility study	383	3.19	.699
Facilitating Credit access	383	2.41	.698

Subsidies	383	2.38	.640
Registration process	383	4.61	.681
Valid N (list wise)	383		

Source: Survey 2022

The above table 4.1 result shows the extent of government intervention in the formation of cooperative society. Result reveals that there was excessive government intervention in mobilizing society to form a cooperative, determination of minimum number of members, developing business plan, finding member leader/management committee, developing cooperative by-law, determining members of management committee and in cooperative registration process. The result also indicates that there was high government intervention in deciding product/services, finding members to form cooperative societies, determining the criteria to be elected in the management committee, developing marketing plans and developing feasibility studies for new established cooperative societies. Moreover, the result reveals that there was moderate government intervention concerning facilitating credit access and subsidizing the cooperative societies at formation stage.

4.2.2 Extent of Government intervention in Cooperative autonomy at Function stage

Table 4.2 Extent of Government Intervention at Function Stage

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Auditing services	383	4.63	.715
Inspecting	383	4.66	.609
Loan facility	383	2.54	.820
Facilitating market access	383	2.24	.535
Members Practising cooperative principles	383	3.65	.650
Members Practicing cooperative values	383	3.67	.685
Bylaw amendment	383	4.32	.669
Election of management committees	383	3.58	.761
Capital development	383	2.43	.871
Member coverage's	383	4.18	.921
Evaluating work performance report	383	3.98	.784
Valid N (list wise)	383		

Source: Survey 2022

The above table 4.2 results shows that the extent of government intervention in the function of cooperative society. The result reveals that there was excessive government intervention in auditing services, inspecting, by-law amendment and member coverage. The same table also indicates that there was high government intervention in members practicing cooperative principles, members practicing cooperative values, election of management committees and evaluating work performance report. In addition, the table also explains moderate government intervention in loan facility, facilitating market access and capital development for cooperative society at study area.

4.2.3 Extent of Government intervention in Cooperative autonomy at Exit stage

Table 4.3 Extent of Government Intervention at Exit Stage

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Decision of General Assembly	383	4.41	.757
Merging with other Cooperative societies	383	4.03	.795
Division of property	383	3.91	.908
Finance investigating	383	3.36	.759
Cancellation of cooperative societies from accounts	383	3.20	.741
Valid N (list wise)	383		

Source: 2022

The above table 4.3 result shows the extent of government intervention in the exit of cooperative society. The result reveals that there was excessive government intervention in decision making of the general assembly and merging with other Cooperative societies. The same table also indicates that there was high

government intervention in division of property, finance investigating and Cancellation of cooperative societies from accounts.

Table 4.4 Summary of Extent of Government Intervention in Cooperative Autonomy

Stages	Excessive	High	Moderate
Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mobilizing society to form cooperatives ➤ Determination of minimum number of members ➤ Developing business plan ➤ Finding members/management committee ➤ Developing cooperative by law ➤ Determining members of management committee ➤ Cooperative registration process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deciding product/services ➤ Finding members to form cooperative ➤ Determining the criteria to be elected in management committee ➤ Developing marketing plan ➤ Developing feasibility study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Facilitating credit access ➤ Subsidizing the cooperative society
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ in auditing services, inspecting ➤ by-law amendment and member coverage's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ members practicing cooperative principles ➤ members practicing cooperative values ➤ election of management committees and evaluating work performance report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ loan facility ➤ facilitating market access ➤ capital development
Exit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Decision making of general assembly ➤ Merging with other Cooperative societies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Division of property ➤ Finance investigating ➤ Cancellation of cooperative societies from accounts 	

4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis on Extent of Government Intervention in Cooperative Autonomy

This study assesses the government intervention at three stages i.e life cycle of the cooperative societies. That was at formation, function and exit stages.

Cooperatives are autonomous societies having legal personality established and democratically controlled and administered with common ownership by persons united voluntarily to solve their common economic and social problems and governed in accordance with the principles of cooperative societies[proc.No.218/2019,art 2(1)]. Autonomous society means that cooperative societies have the freedom to act independently to govern themselves, control their own affairs and set their own rules of operation (Guidance Note, 2015; ICA, 1995). The cooperative society was formed by persons united voluntarily to solve their common economic and social problems. However, many cooperative societies were initiated and formed by the government. The participants express that most of the primary cooperatives were initiated and formed by the government. The cooperative agency at district level was initiating the formation of cooperative societies. In an agricultural cooperative it seems compulsory formation of cooperative society because of government schemes for cooperative society and development agenda for community.

Getting a legal personality was considered the birth of cooperative society. Responsibility of cooperative formation and registration in Ethiopia was entrusted to officials of specialized government agencies or the commission headed by Federal Cooperative Commission (FCC) which register, assist, promote and regulate cooperative society established at federal level (Proc, No.274/2002). Cooperative promotion office which organizes and register cooperatives society was established at regional level based on this proclamation and regional states own cooperatives proclamations. In the Oromia regional state, the Oromia agricultural cooperative promotion bureau was already established in 1997(Proc.No.15/1997).

Based on this in Oromia regional state proclamation No.218/2019 was promulgated. The function and powers of regional cooperative promotion offices approximate the power of life and death over cooperative societies. Cooperative societies are based on the member support and require some measure of autonomy in decision making and self-responsibility in order to work on their own, rather than to be administrative units under a government agency. Munkner (1995) described the triple crisis of cooperative movement that was identified by the crises of identity, performance and environment at international levels. In Oromia also the extent of government intervention was up to changing the characteristic of cooperative society which was base for cooperative identity crises. The cooperative society which was formed by force failed to fulfill the criteria of true cooperatives.

The agency may determine in the directive the minimum number of members of a cooperative society based on the nature of the work and economic feasibility to be identified by research; provided however, that the minimum number of members shall not be less than ten[Proc.No.218, 9(3)]. This is based on the will of the agency. If they want to establish cooperative societies for their own benefit, they use these gaps and established cooperative societies to benefit their families and friends.

Cooperative agencies (the government organ) have dictionary power to register or to refuse the registration of cooperative societies during their formation stage. And after registration the cooperative agency has dictionary power to order registered cooperative societies to amend their by-laws. To decide whether the cooperative should be registered or not is in the hands of the cooperative agency. To be registered the minimum number of members is fifty. But the cooperative agency can permit the minimum number of members to be registered up to ten members. This permission has no clear criteria but based on the will of the cooperative agency.

The government has a ten year plan (2021-2030) to promote and use cooperatives for nation development. Interview with participant (p) p1, p7, p9, p25 and p29 indicates that the extent of government intervention in their cooperative is high. They raised the issue that the government intervenes in their cooperative by auditing and inspecting the cooperatives. P7 raised the issue that auditing is no for the sake of cooperative members but to attack the management committee who opposes the local cadres.

In Oromia auditing cooperatives society was assigned to a special government agent (Cooperative agency). The auditor should have the right to receive all notices and communication relating to the annual general meeting and to attend such meetings where his report is being discussed (Proc. No. 218/2019). Registering a cooperative that is not viable does no service to the cooperative concerned, or the cooperative movement. Rather it contributes to poor public perceptions of cooperatives. Some laws require a cooperative being registered to submit a feasibility study or business plan. If such a requirement is more than a formality, plans will need to be evaluated. It is difficult to see how a proper evaluation is possible if there is a statutory period of time for doing so that is as strict as this.

The audit of the cooperative was focused on financial audit; management audit in relation to achieving the objective of member promotion was lost.

The same problem applies to the approval of a constitution or by-laws. In keeping with the new consensus on cooperatives and a greater emphasis on cooperative autonomy, the provisions of the constitution or by-laws have become increasingly important. Different kinds of cooperatives require different provisions, and it is not always possible to apply a standard template or model constitution.

The drafting of an appropriate constitution has thus become an increasingly complex and burdensome task. The danger of expediting the process is that a cooperative ends up with a constitution or by-laws that do not correspond with its objectives or adequately protect members' interests. There is, in other words, a need to strike a balance between an expeditious process and one that has regard to longer-term sustainability. This relates to a balance between the developmental or support role of government and its role as a regulator. This in turn relates to the need to separate these two roles, and the degree of discretion that the registrar has to register a cooperative or not(Theron,2010).

It is not clear whether the cooperative promotion agency responsible for cooperatives in Oromia is legally obliged to provide support to cooperatives in drafting a constitution that complies with the law. Arguably it is, as part of its developmental role. However there is no indication from this provision as to what form such support should take. But as in practice some cooperative promotion agency at woreda level has model cooperative bylaws to support cooperative while establishing cooperative societies. The key informant with (walmera) shows that their office has model bylaws to support cooperative societies.

It is important that the list of registered cooperatives maintained by the government is reliable and accurate. This is both for the benefit of third parties wishing to verify whether a cooperative is registered or not, and for the purposes of gathering data. In this regard it is also important that there is a mechanism for removing from the registry cooperatives that are no longer functional, or are not operating according to cooperative principles. There is no difficulty in removing a cooperative that is liquidated from the register, since it no longer exists legally. However because liquidation generally entails formal legal proceedings,

it often happens that cooperatives simply cease operating, and are not liquidated. Consequently the register may be swamped with the names of cooperatives that are no longer functional or operating (Theron, 2010).

There are some ambiguities in line with cooperative organizational autonomy with the scope of government intervention in cooperative by-law formation and amendments. In Oromia regional state, the power to register cooperative societies was given to Oromia cooperative societies promotion agency and its hierarchical structures at zonal and district levels (Proc.No.218/2019, art.2 (16). The agency is the special government agency established to organize and register cooperative societies at regional level. The Agency shall organize and register the cooperative societies found at regional level (9(5)). This provision gives great power for cooperative promotion agencies. Any cooperative societies shall, in order to get registered as cooperative societies, submit its application for registration authority with documents of work plan of the societies from three years up to five years, the economic research revealing the effectiveness of the cooperative societies (Art15).

Cooperative agencies (the government organ) have dictionary power to register or to refuse the registration of cooperative societies during their formation stage. And after registration the cooperative agency has dictionary power to order registered cooperative societies to amend their by-laws. To decide whether the cooperative should be registered or not is in the hands of the cooperative agency. To be registered the minimum number of members is fifty. But the cooperative agency can permit the minimum number of members to be registered up to ten members. This permission has no clear criteria but based on the will of the cooperative agency.

In Ethiopia there was heavy government involvement in cooperative formation and management (Nkandu, 2010). The unique nature of cooperative societies has been determined by the government (Regu.No.106/2004, arti.12 (3)). The unique nature of the cooperative society is as a composite of the unique structure, organization, governance, equity financing, operations of cooperatives, market performance of cooperatives, the relation of cooperatives with others stakeholder (Ling, 2012).

In Ethiopia, state-dominated agricultural cooperatives diversify their organizational form to provide service to the general community (Emana, 2009).

Cooperatives are autonomous and democratic organizations. Autonomous means that cooperatives have freedom to act independently in governing themselves, controlling their own affairs, and setting their own rules of function, in line with the 2nd principles of democratic member control[proc. No. 218/2019, art.6(2)]. When compared to the cooperative principles it can be seen that the function of (operation) of the selected primary cooperatives does not follow the principle due to many legal restrictions. This can be observed from cooperative pro. No.218/2019, which granted a registrar authority to intervene in many internal operations of cooperatives, contravening the cooperative principle of autonomy. For example, the registrar may order a committee selected by the members through a democratic process to stop any action, resign, suspend, restrain, or withdraw any resolution reached in a co-operative members' general meeting; if members reach a consensus to modify the co-operative by-law, this decision must involve the co-operative registrar as well. This practice is not only out of line with the independence and autonomy of the 4th principle but also damages the trust in the democratic member control of the 2nd principle.

The participants [p1.p3...p7, p9] raised the issue that the special government agency (cooperative promotion office) interferes in cooperative managerial affairs and decision making. This notion was also supported by Dorgi(2017) and Derese (2014). Cooperatives suffer image problems because of the abuse they have undergone from the government. The discussion indicates that there was high government intervention in cooperative society even up to fading cooperative identity.

The founding from quantitative discussion shows that there was excessive government intervention in cooperative organizational autonomy at formation, functions and exit stages of the cooperative societies. There was also similar founding under qualitative data. The founding shows that the government intervenes in cooperative activities by framing cooperative legislation which facilitates government intervention. That means giving dictionary power to cooperative promotion agencies (government organs) to register, audit, inspect, and supervise and others on cooperative societies. The study shows there was high government intervention which stagnated cooperative sustainability by violating cooperative principles and values.

4.4 Quantitative and Qualitative data analysis on Extent of Government intervention in Cooperative autonomy

The study found that government intervention in cooperative organization autonomy at formation, function and dissolution. Under formation stages there was excessive government intervention in mobilizing society to form a cooperative, determination of minimum number of members, developing business plan, finding member leader/management committee, developing cooperative by-law, determining members of management committee and in cooperative registration process. The result also indicates that there was high government intervention in deciding product/services, finding members to form cooperative societies,

determining the criteria to be elected in the management committee, developing marketing plans and developing feasibility study for new established cooperative societies. Moreover, the result reveals that there was moderate government intervention concerning facilitating Credit access and subsidizing the cooperative societies at formation stage.

At the functional stage government intervention was high. The study found that there was excessive government intervention in auditing services, inspecting, by-law amendment and member coverage's and high government intervention in high members practicing cooperative principles, members practicing cooperative values, election of management committees and evaluating work performance report. In addition, the study found also moderate government intervention in loan facility, facilitating market access and capital development for cooperative society at study area. Furthermore, study found that there was excessive government intervention in decision making of general assembly and merging with other Cooperative societies.

The quantitative finding shows that there was excessive government intervention in mobilizing community to form cooperatives, determining minimum number of members, developing business plan, finding members/management committee, developing cooperative by law, determining members of management committee Cooperative registration process, auditing services, inspecting, by-law amendment, decision making of general assembly, merging Cooperative societies and etc. The qualitative finding also reveals that there was immoderate government intervention in cooperative autonomy while establishment, operation and exits of cooperative societies. This study confirms with the study by Nkandu (2010) which founds that there was heavy government involvement in cooperative formation and management in Ethiopia.

The results confirm that the extravagant intervention of government erodes cooperative autonomy and inactivates cooperative development by fading the identity of cooperative enterprise. The effect of excessive government interference in cooperatives has had a devastating outcome on members' morale and their faith in cooperatives. Some studies also verify that excessive government intervention in cooperative affairs discourages members from participating in their cooperatives that cause the cooperatives to fail (Dorgi, 2015, 2017; Desere,2014).The study found that the government abstains from the need of high intervention concerning loan facility, facilitating market access and capacity building of cooperative societies. The study reveals that the government omits the action which needs its intervention to promote the development of cooperative societies.

V. CONCLUSION

The government intervenes in cooperative autonomy in study areas. The study concludes that the soul of the cooperative societies in Ethiopia, especially in the Oromia regional state, is in the hands of the government. The government has a ten year strategic plan to assist and promote cooperative societies. The study concludes that there was uncertainty of government programs for cooperative organizational autonomy. The cooperative proclamation was inappropriate to regulate and protect cooperative organizational autonomy. There was inequitable treatment for cooperative societies compared to corporate form. The study concludes that there was excessive government intervention in establishment, operation and exit of cooperative societies which has great influences on cooperative organizational autonomy. The recommendation is that the state had to withdraw its traditional supportive role to cooperatives in order to remain in partnership with the spirit of liberalization. Support services like audit, supervision and management training were the first to be withdrawn by the state. These supportive services should be replaced by cooperatives themselves or other non-governmental and neutral organizations. The cooperatives should organize themselves for the provision of these services or seek the same from the market. The registration authority, which was dictionary power given to the agency, should be reduced or replaced by other neutral organ. To have seriously committed government, this has sincere intentions of promoting cooperatives without controlling them. Limiting the function of the cooperative promotion agency and withdrawing totally from interfering in the management affairs of the cooperatives at all levels. Further, cooperative development policies need to be integrated at all levels of development planning. This implies that cooperatives must be given a voice in planning national development programs, including measures for the promotion of cooperative development in sectorial programs. Cooperatives should be represented in the policy making and program reviewing organs of the government. Training should be given for cooperative management committees and cooperative members to enhance practice of cooperative autonomy.

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