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Begging in a Fast-Growing City: Impacts and Measures in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Dessalegn Mekuriaw Hailu

Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Debremarkos University, Ethiopia

Abstract:

Despite tremendous developments the world has been witnessing, begging has become global phenomena and more pervasive in developing countries like Ethiopia. To contribute its part in understanding and dealing with it, this study examined impacts and measures of begging in Bahir Dar city by collecting data from 98 participants drawn, using convenience, and purposive sampling and census, from governmental, non-governmental, and community based and religious organizations; the public, beggars, tourists and a tour guide. It employed mixed research methods, cross sectional and approximating cross sectional with longitudinal designs and an integrated vulnerability model. Descriptive survey and thematic analysis were employed to analyze the collected data.

The study found that beggars live in degrading social life; marginal levels of economic activities and poor access to many of basic services of the urban life. By obstructing traffic flow and the flow of tourists in particular; and participating in deviant and criminal acts, beggars in the city also presented pressing negative health impacts for residents; impeded city government's plan to create defecation free city of Bahir Dar. However, dealing with begging in the city is at a nascent stage with the involvement of only one non-governmental organization and continual shift of responsibility to different bodies; poor coordination among many and lack of it with some on top of the application of sporadic, inconsistent and incomprehensive measures taken by the government. As human labor and land resources are officially recognized as the two key development sources of Ethiopia, multifaceted impacts of begging needs to be adequately and timely responded pursuant to individual and national needs.

Keywords: Almsgiving, begging, human resource development, vulnerability, Bahir Dar city, Ethiopia

1. Background of the Study

Despite tremendous developments and innovations, the world has been witnessing, recurring local and global changes and transformations have brought immense poverty and income inequality that pushed many to the edges of life and development. The rate and impacts of these changes for developing countries has been immense.

Being developing country, Ethiopia has suffered from recurring droughts, floods and extreme poverty; population growth that surpassed from 53.1 million in 1994 to 73.9 million in 2007(CSA, 2007; MoFED, 2012); high and continuing growth of orphans and only 13.89% (500, 000 out of 3.6 million) of elderly having regular public sector pension (MOLSA, 2012). Inter alia, this has contributed begging to be ubiquitous feature of the Ethiopian society. However, the only accessible national estimate on begging population was made by Elshadi Relief and Development Association (ERDA, 2007) which suggested their figure to range from 180,000 - 200,000 and concentrated in major centers of tourist destinations such as Addis Ababa, Axum, Bahir Dar, Gondar, Harar, Langano and Sodore (ERDA, 2007).

Amhara National Regional State (ANRS) experiences declining agricultural productivity and has been affected for a long period by natural and man- made disasters which create fertile grounds for mass rural- urban migration (MOLSA, 1992) that potentially contributed for growing number of beggars. Partly because of this, it accommodates the largest number (44, 843) of beggars in the country (ERDA, 2007) though it is suggested to be 11,900 (ANRS BoLSA2014). Along with increasing population trend that jumped from 54,766 in 1984, to 96,140 in 1994, and 221,991 in 2007 (CSA, 2007) Bahir Dar city, its capital, is one of the top centers of tourist attraction in the country at large and hosts one of the highest number of beggars in the region.

2. Statement of the Problem

Studies have been conducted on begging as a survival strategy (Woubishet, 2003; Tatek, 2008), prevalence, causes and socioeconomic conditions of beggars (MOLSA, 1992; ERDA, 2007; Teweldebrhan, 2011); beggars experiences (Fireyihun, 2011) and measures of begging and responsibilities of different stakeholders (Demelash, 2010) in general. Dejectedly, however, many failed to include other diverse group of beggars and non-beggars as research participants; to analyze the interactional effects of failure in system and individual character and to be comprehensive by employing diverse methods and adequate respondents. All these studies have also basically focused to study beggars of Addis Ababa and have not covered impacts and measures of begging. Methodologically, most of the studies have only employed qualitative methods, hence lacked triangulation.

The only studies conducted on the subject in the city by Dube (2014) and Kerebih, Tizita and Alemtsehay (2014), while the most recent, too, failed to comprehensively address impacts and measures of begging in light of tourism development, the situations of diverse groups of beggars and the beauty and safety of the city; hence unable to comprehensively capture current realities and developmental impacts of begging in the city in which this study had focused on.

3. Materials and Methods

To collect data pertinent to the objectives, this study employed cross-sectional and approximating longitudinal design with cross sectional designs as well as quantitative method (survey) and qualitative methods (focus group discussion, in-depth and key informant interviews and observation).

Out of 98 research participants of this study, 50 beggars were participated in survey, of which. Out of these, 6, 2 and 42, were respectively sampled using purposive and convenience sampling and census from beggars who reside along road sides, verandas and religious centers; those who were provided houses in the eve of the celebration of the seventh Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and People's Day (ENNPD) in Bahir Dar in December 2012; and those who were evacuated to the city's periphery during *Dergue*¹ regime but who are now resident of their built houses in *kebele 14*.

Survey data were collected using pre-tested closed and open ended questionnaire items which were prepared in English and translated into Amharic (national and regional working language) in order to make it easy for communication during data collection. The researcher and one trained female facilitator (4th year computer science student of Bahir Dar University) have collected survey data from all respondents owing to failure to get respondents who provide self-administered survey.

The remaining 48 samples were employed to collect qualitative data. A total of 33 participants were recruited for an in-depth interview from beggars (6), residents (6), tourists (6), a tour guide, community policing officers (4) and health extension workers (3); officers from ANRS Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (BoLSA) (1), Bahir Dar city Culture, Tourism and Parks Development Bureau (CTPDB) (1) and Public Sphere Charity and Development Organization(PSCDO) (1), the only non-governmental organization working on begging in Bahir Dar city; and three religious institutions (Mosque (1), Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC) (2) and Protestant church(1)). Two FGDs, one with officers from different organizations (BoLSA, PSCDO, regional CTPDB and Bahir Dar city association of the elderly), and the other with members of the public, each consisting of six discussants, were also conducted. Furthermore, the study involved key-informant interviews with three individuals recruited from regional BoLSA, Bahir Dar city CTPDB, and PSCDO.

Participants of survey were sampled with due consideration of their age, sex, and residential categories. Accordingly, beggars aged 18 years and above were sampled along their residential categories (rural or urban) with due consideration of their sex. Based on the consent of research participants, qualitative data were also collected through video and audio recording as well as having field notes without any recording. Accordingly, data from both FGDs; interviews with a tour guide, 4 community policing officers, 3 health extension workers, two religious leaders from EOTC and one from Muslim, an officer of regional BoLSA, director of PSCDO, 5 beggars and two residents were video-recorded, transcribed and translated. Three interviews with tourists were audio recorded while interview with the remaining three; a pastor and five residents were collected by taking field notes. Secondary data has also been collected on the subject from books, journal articles, theses and statistical abstracts and reports of national and international governmental and non- governmental organizations from libraries and websites.

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate methods of data analysis. The research used triangulation where data collected through survey, interviews and FGDs were used to complement one another. Generally, non-sequential mixed approach was used in the discussion of the analyzed data collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Furthermore, the results of survey were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 20. More specifically, descriptive survey, thematic and content analysis were employed by complementing one another.

4. Theoretical Frameworks and Models

Though there are no specific theories/models developed to explain begging, in an attempt to guide this research, the following theories and a model were discussed.

4.1. Structural Functionalism

By comparing the structure and function of the society with the structure and functioning of parts of a living organism, this theory posited social institutions as collective means instituted for meeting individual biological and social needs thereby maintain society's internal stability and continuity over time (Ritzer 2008). Its theoreticians also argued that social institutions are functionally integrated to form a stable system and that a change in one institution precipitates a change in others. However, unending processes of industrialization and urbanization that create broader opportunities for migratory life and a sense of individualization have been and will continually undermine the traditional supportive functions of institutions.

The proliferation of begging in a given society, according to this theory, informs defects in the interplay of the structures and functions of the society. In other words, it indicates the inability of corresponding changes in measures of begging to occur comparably with its growing incidence resulting in failure of society to effectively maintain its equilibrium over time. This informs the need to assess society's system and how it operates as a whole.

¹*Dergue* is another name given for military regime which ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991.

4.2. Rational Choice Theory

Individual decision-making where actors are seen as purposive or rational beings that have ends or goals and preferences for their actions is the focus of this theory (Ritzer 2008). Viewed from this theory, beggars make rational calculations as to when, where and from whom to beg and which techniques to employ so as to endlessly obtain support from others. However, it ignores the role of plethora of factors beyond free decision of individuals to beg. It also accords human beings the status of greedy money seekers who sell themselves for money.

4.3. Exchange Theory

Developed by George Homans, exchange theory relies on social relationships as a unit of analysis. He developed a set of fundamental propositions about the behavior of individual human beings which have strong bearing to explain begging from its essence to solutions as discussed below.

The Success Proposition states that “for all actions taken by persons, the more often a particular action of a person is rewarded, the more likely the person is to perform that action” (Homans 1974 in Ritzer 2008:422). According to this proposition, beggars who were rewarded with financial and food items are motivated to beg more, and continue to design and use other strategies and stay long period on begging to further obtain more reward. It indicates the role of almsgiving in maintaining and giving hope for beggars. From this, it is possible to infer that measures targeted to solve the problem of begging should also address the effects of almsgiving.

The Stimulus Proposition states that “if in the past, the occurrence of a particular stimulus, or set of stimuli, has been the occasion on which a person’s action has been rewarded, then the more similar the present stimuli are to the past ones, the more likely the person is to perform the action, or some similar action” (Homans 1974 in Ritzer 2008:423). Hence, the concentration of many beggars near religious institutions; calling the names of saints and showing themselves as crippled (pretending to be so) can be explained by there being stimulated by rewards obtained by similar actions they made. This proposition can also implicitly help to explain growing number of beggars as the pre-existing ones will continue because of the stimuli they obtain. Moreover, the continuity of pre-existing beggars has its own potential to further attract others.

The Value Proposition states that “the more valuable to a person is the result of his action, the more likely he is to perform the action” (Homans 1974 in Ritzer 2008:424). This proposition informs that some people who have received alms from others, even without (or with minor) health problems and/or have assets for survival, can join begging life. It also helps to reveal why beggars persist on begging for much of the time and for many years.

Homan’s Aggression-Approval Proposition states that “when a person’s action receives the reward he expected, especially a greater reward than he expected, or does not receive punishment he expected, he will be pleased; he becomes more likely to perform approving behavior, and the results of such behavior become more valuable to him” (Homans 1974 in Ritzer 2008:424). This proposition helps to explain the importance of absence, or leniency, of measures on begging to make it more valuable and to attract potential beggars.

The Rationality Proposition states that “in choosing between alternative actions, a person will choose that one for which, as perceived by him/her at the time, the value, V, of the result, multiplied by the probability, p, of getting the result, is the greater” (Homans 1974 in Ritzer 2008:425). This proposition is useful to answer why people with minor economic or health problems engage in begging. People, according to this proposition, resort to begging because they obtain more benefit than other sources of income. The engagement of some mothers in begging having one or more of infants whose origins may not be clearly known and the involvement of some others in street working activities or daily labour or others on other criminal acts emanates partly from their rationality to obtain better benefit. However, this proposition fails to explain some of the beggars with complete destitution and who use begging as the last resort.

4.4. The Culture of Poverty Theory

As one variant of the theory of poverty, the culture of poverty theory was developed from anthropological arguments of Oscar Lewis in 1961. By elucidating the low levels of participation of the poor in the wider society’s social organizations, values, norms and belief systems, the theory suggests that the poor live in self-perpetuating cycle of poverty and share similarities in family structure, interpersonal relationships, time orientation, spending patterns, value systems, and adaptation to certain common problems (Lewis 1961). This vicious circle of poverty, according to this theory, is created by the transmission over generations of a set of beliefs, values, and skills that are socially generated but individually held (Lewis 1961).

Lewis’s statement that ‘poverty is caused by self-perpetuating deficient value systems’ is applicable to a range of actions and activities the poor undertake; hence, this theory is suitable to understand and explain triggering factors to, and impacts of begging embedded in the culture of society. However, it fails to interactively explain the roles of global and local processes and structures by blaming the poor and has single sided view of poverty as a sole cause.

4.5. Integrated Vulnerability Model (IVM)

Health benefit, AIDS risk reduction, and crime prevention are some of the models that can be employed to study vulnerable groups in general. However, all of them examine why vulnerable populations experience poorer access to their needs focusing on how individual’s characteristics, behaviors and socioeconomic circumstances contribute to vulnerability. As a result, they are criticized for offering a single individual focused explanation which has little role for providing comprehensive explanation for multifaceted problem of begging (Murugan, 2014).

IVM is advanced variant of the general vulnerability model developed by piers Blaikie and his associates as an explanation of famine. As it deals with cross-cutting combination of socially produced vulnerability and natural hazards leading to vulnerability, this model is conceptually and practically compatible for the discussion of root causes, processes, impacts and possible solutions for many of the social problems people may face. Similarly, with minor modifications, it is found to be better applicable for the discussion of the problem of begging to indicate it through its inception to trends, impacts and measures.

IVM shown in figure 1.1 below depicts that an explanation of begging requires to trace the connections that link its impacts on people with a series of social, economic, political and natural factors and processes that generate vulnerability, and what then happens as begging unfolds. It details how conditions need to change to reduce vulnerability and thereby improve protection and the capacity for recovery (Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon and Davis 2003).

Furthermore, it also indicates the link between the impacts of begging with the conditions which create vulnerability and how the impacts of begging themselves change the set of resources available to and alter the patterns of recoverability of different groups of beggars. These impacts sometimes intensify some people's vulnerability, and the incorporation of this insight improves upon those interpretations that see begging simply as the result of poverty. There are three interrelated concepts underlying IVM shown above: root causes, dynamic pressures and unsafe conditions.

Root causes are "an interrelated set of widespread and general processes within a society and the world economy" (Wisner *et al.* 2003:52). They are a function of economic, social, and political structures; legal definitions and enforcement of rights; gender relations; the function (or dysfunction) of the state, and ultimately the nature of good governance; the rule of law; the exercise and distribution of power in a society and the capabilities of the administration (Wisner *et al.* 2003). The most important root causes that give rise to vulnerability (or reproduce vulnerability over time) are economic, demographic and political processes that affect the allocation and distribution of resources, among different groups of people (Wisner *et al.* 2003).

"Dynamic pressures are processes and activities that temporally and spatially 'translate' the effects of root causes into unsafe conditions" (Wisner *et al.* 2003:52). They are more contemporary or immediate, conjunctural manifestations of general underlying economic, social and political patterns that channel the root causes into particular forms of unsafe conditions that then have to be considered in relation to the various impacts of begging faced by people (Wisner *et al.* 2003). They include epidemic disease, rapid urbanization, rural-urban export promotion, wars and other violent conflicts. Unsafe conditions are the specific forms in which the vulnerability of a population is expressed in time and space in conjunction with begging (Wisner *et al.* 2003). Examples include people having to live in begging with socially, economically, and epidemiologically poor and unsafe locations.

Therefore, reducing vulnerability thereby begging, to a large extent, is beyond dealing with the awkward issue of poverty in society. That is why there needs to be a clear link between sources of vulnerability, triggering factors and the process of development itself. This is illustrated in Figure 1, where the vulnerability that arises from unsafe conditions intersects with begging (trigger event) to create various impacts, but is itself only explained by an analysis of the dynamic processes and root causes which generate the unsafe conditions. Because of this, discussions of subsequent sections were made more effective by employing this comprehensive, general and inclusive model of vulnerability adopted for this study.

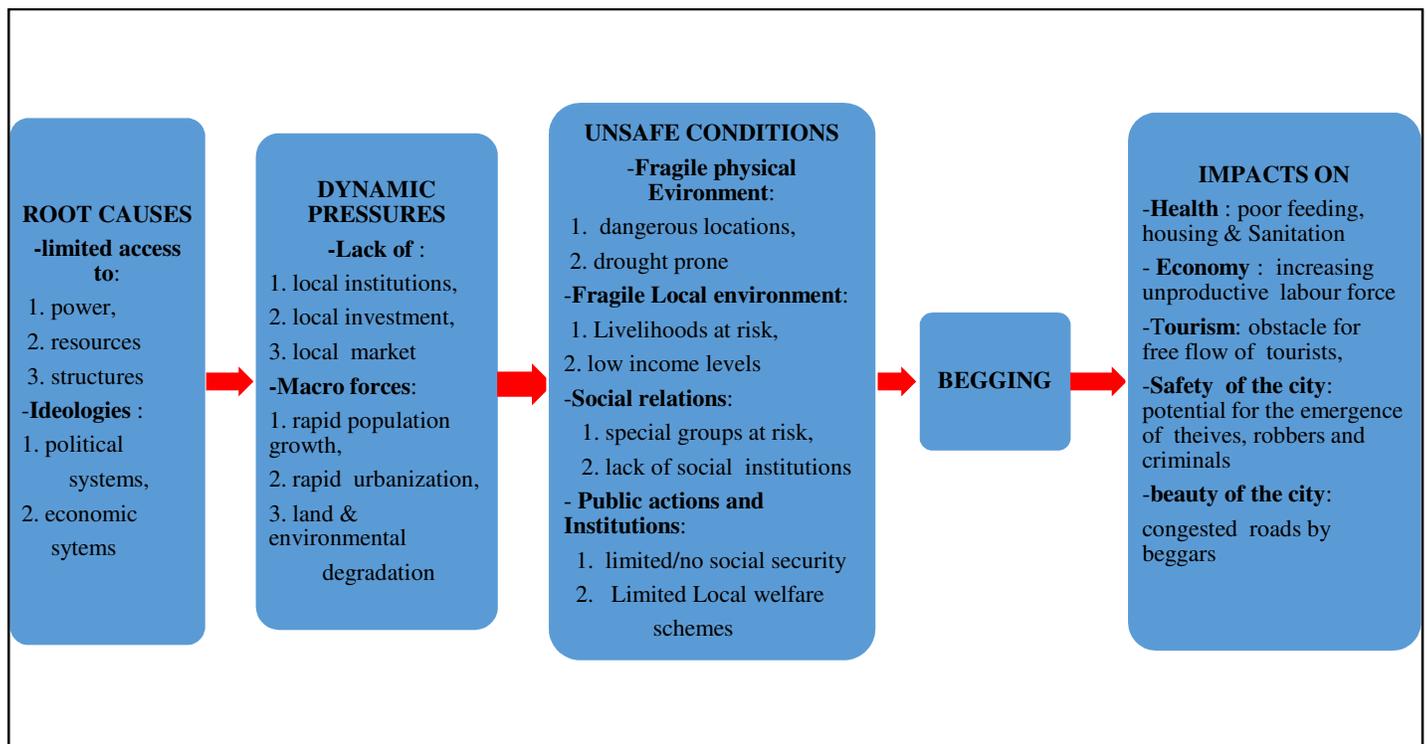


Figure 1: Integrated vulnerability model

Source: Adopted and modified from Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon and Davis Model of Famine (2003)

5. Results

5.1. Impacts of Begging

As indicated in IVM, people start begging as a result of the interplay of root causes, dynamic pressures and unsafe conditions. The existence of many beggars not only implies the existence of more dependent people but it also presents its own impacts on overall development in general. Review of related literature indicates that the larger the size of begging population, the greater is its impact on economy, beggars themselves, the public, safety and tourism development in particular. The specific details of these are described as follows.

5.1.1. Economic Impacts

Begging has dual economic impacts. On the one side, productive members of the society become less/no productive as they join begging and that beggars cannot easily join opportunistic jobs. In the first place, begging reduces rural agricultural productivity as many of beggars in Ethiopia are rural agriculturalists. In this regard, it is found that while 64% of beggars who participated in this study were involved in different activities in addition to begging; 98% of them have had worked prior to they started of begging.

From economic point of view, therefore, begging primarily creates unfavorable conditions that holds beggars down from participating in different opportunistic economic activities. In the short run, the combined effects of the rising cost of living for both beggars and the host community and continual increase of their size over time has partly devalued (if not reduced) the amount of offer and partitioned alms giving practice of the public. This potentially creates conflicting interests which may contribute for their involvement in other deviant and criminal activities and offenses which complicate the whole life of beggars and the host communities. The incidence of such situations is heightened by continual increase of beggars over time in general and those of physically able bodied and young beggars in particular.

In the long run, beggars' long lasting life in urban areas gradually leads them to lose their rural agricultural lands which increase their vulnerability. Nationally, the increasing size of begging population (especially able bodied ones) who left agricultural activities negatively contributes for aggregate growth and development as it creates many dependent populations. It also increases the size of the unemployed. Data from some beggar interviewees and community policing officers also indicate strong evidences of extravagancy for drinking alcohol leading to low remittance to their poor families and creating conflicting situations upon their theft of money from others.

5.1.2. Health Impacts

It is difficult to take for granted that the Ethiopia's Health Extension Program (HEP) address health issues of all Ethiopians. The study found that there is generally low emphasis given by HEP to address health impacts of begging and health problems of beggars in the country. More specifically, the program has no specific targets aimed to solve health issues specific to begging and beggars. Furthermore, urban health extension package goals have neither stipulated special emphasis for mobile people such as beggars nor have developed health extension packages pertinent to them. These have strong bearing on the health impacts of begging. Data collected from beggars (through survey and in-depth interviews) and residents and health extension workers' using in-depth interviews are in congruence to the literature.

Health extension workers are generally worry of health impacts of begging from two angles: unhealthy lifestyles of beggars and weaknesses in health policy. With respect to health policy, all of them are doubtful of whether HEP can address beggar's health issues. They have also expressed none of their experiences in providing any of health services to beggars. These clearly reflects that addressing health issues of beggars is one of the neglected areas of urban health extension program. As a result, three of health extension workers have the view that open defecation free city of Bahir Dar cannot be created, as planned by city health bureau, without designing and working health extension packages specific to beggars and other mobile people.

All of them have also explained negative impacts of beggars' unhealthy lifestyles for themselves and residents. One of them has suggested that since beggars cannot easily get water for drinking and washing, and live with dirty clothes and in unclean environments, they can easily be contracted by different water and air borne diseases. Their social interaction with residents while begging and living, she added, presents high potential for the spread of their diseases. All of them have also suggested that beggars unclean begging places, dirty clothes they wear, and congested sleeping places contributes for the birth and proliferation of bed bugs, fleas and lice which in turn result their contraction for typhoid and typhus. And these are communicable diseases which can be left over to the public. All of health extension workers have also reported of open defecation by most beggars. This was also mentioned by many of surveyed beggars who revealed their preference to go for open defecation rather than using their toilets which demand to wait much time. This has pernicious impact on the health of residents and the beauty of the city as well.

Health extension workers have also added that beggars' poor eating habits even if they have money has serious health impacts. This was also revealed by one of the interviewees from EOTC who explained that beggars do not use their money for treating their health even becoming at the verge of death despite they have money sewed in all parts of their clothes. His direct elaboration was quoted as follows:

- I went one of the health centers and found one man at critical sickness. He cannot even communicate people. When I ask others, who have stayed when I reach there, they said he is beggar and no one has accompanied him. Some of us communicated health professionals to treat him. When we want to pay the expense after he was treated, he tears down some of the sewed clothes and paid. Much of other parts of his cloth was also sewed with money.

It was also found that Ethiopia's HEP primarily targets to address health problems of households. In this respect, too, it is found that even for beggars for whom the government has provided houses, implementation of HEP was ignored despite their adjacent residence to the health center. One of the evidences of this is the low access (38%) of beggars to health training as indicated in chapter five under health situations of beggars. Beggar interviewees have also revealed lack of cooperation of health extension workers to provide insecticides despite beggars repeated request to sprinkle to bed bugs, lice and fleas they are living with.

Residents, too, have reported of the potential health impacts of beggars' children for their children in schools. Community policing officer has also suggested the death of one of the beggars by car accident and the potential difficulty many others (especially children) brought to traffic flows having health impacts on themselves. A tour guide has also mentioned begging to have serious health consequences as beggars not only use children for begging but they also deliberately withdraw their eyes and use them for begging permanently. He also added, his knowledge of many children being sold with direct or indirect involvement of some of the beggars.

Considering sleeping places is also vital to understand health impacts of begging. For beggars, sleeping places are the most dilapidated and unhealthy by any standards. Visual observation revealed that many beggars aged more than sixty, who would have been cared for, live in poor sleeping situations and with poor eating habits which exacerbate their illness and death. Significant majority of them are found sleeping in verandas, along the roads and religious centers both in the extreme coldness and hotness of the air and over open land with all kinds of adversity. Partly because of these, 4% of beggars have experienced abuse cases.

By considering BoLSA's data on the size of begging population (511) in Bahir Dar, and data from this research on the size of begging population who have houses (72+64=136), it is plausible to say that 73.39% (375 (511-136)) beggars live in such situations. Having beggars without fixed settlements also impedes to create defecation free city which has a significant bearing on human health in general. Furthermore, among beggars who live in temporary houses, survey results showed HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 4 (16.67%) out of 24 beggars who took HIV/AIDS status test (or 9.5 % from a total of 42 beggars surveyed) or 8 (12.5%) out of 64 residents as results from in-depth interview suggest. This has large and worrisome potential to contaminate others who have poor access to health training and awareness. This becomes particularly critical if HIV positive beggars have frequent visit and risky interaction with their rural families who may not know their status and adequate preventive mechanisms.

Some of the beggars have reported their difficulty to return back to their family members because of stigma both by their own relatives and neighbors. Many others still do not want to disclose their begging to their relatives. These can result stressful situations on beggars. Interviewees from the public and religious institutions have described that while some beggars paint their body parts with different chemicals others deliberately wound their body parts for the purpose of begging. Interviewee from PSCDO has also mentioned that some beggars do not want their illnesses to be cured for this reduces their competitiveness in begging.

Beggars have been giving birth to significant size of children with poor eating habits and low financial capacity to meet expenses for food, clothes and education. Children grown under such conditions not only have economic impacts but also contribute for high infant mortality rate.

5.1.3. Social Impacts

Begging in Ethiopia is not socially accepted practice. As a result, it has dual social impacts on beggars both geographically and generationally. With respect to the former, beggars face strong challenges from the society they have grown up. The challenge becomes severe for some whose families have strong critique of the practice and view it as failure of their renowned lineage in the society. They also face critical challenges for social integration with the host community. Many beggars have reported of their embarrassment whenever all kinds of almsgivers stared at them. It was found that virtually all beggars hate begging and express this in different ways such as "it is the activity of the vulnerable; of people with no option. More specifically, one of the beggars stated:

- "Don't say me return back to your homeland for I have once started begging because of being victim of drought. Since that time, whenever I went there (Wollo), not only every neighbor stares and laughs at me but my relatives ridicule me for being involved in begging being a member of renown lineage. In addition to the poverty we actually face, public disparage is shocking. As a result, I prefer to go to unknown place and live (by begging) there than go back to my homeland".

More importantly, begging pollutes the social norms and values of the society. This is reflected when some of the beggars suddenly hag passer-byes to ask money; some others insult those who refuse to offer something.

Seen generationally, begging has strong social impacts not only on beggars but also for their children. In the first place, the opportunity of beggars' children to dwell most of the time with other beggars' children is high. This has strong impact for personality development. It is also too difficult to manage psychological impacts of being from begging family when friends or classmates insult or stigmatize.

5.1.4. Impacts on Residents, the City and its Tourism Development

The impacts of begging for residents cannot be separately seen from its impacts on the city and its tourism development and vice versa. Furthermore, begging has also negative impacts for the respective communities they came from. To reveal the impacts of begging on residents, the city and its tourism development, data were collected from regional and town level CTPDB; the public; tourists; a tour guide and religious institutions using in-depth interviews and FGD.

5.1.4.1. Impacts on Residents and the Beauty of the City

This study has discovered a number of impacts begging/beggars can bring on residents. In the first place, resident interviewees explained that no resident is psychologically and morally satisfied or happy to see people begging in different corners of the city. Beyond social and psychological dissatisfaction brought by begging, beggars disturb passer byes along the roads, in café's, hotels,

taxi/bus stops and near religious institutions by using different strategies that range from soliciting and accidentally hugging to insulting. This is particularly destructive when applied to foreign tourists who want to freely enjoy our country's cultural, social, religious ceremonies and festivities and natural beauties. It also impedes upon national image. This is not only the outlook of all interviewed residents but also their portrayal of the views of others.

Beggars also present pressure on urban employment. Traffic congestion, pressure on resources and other basic services are among the impacts many interviewees have mentioned. Health extension workers have also described difficulty to create open defecation free city because of beggars. They also added that because of their unhealthy lifestyles, beggars present communicable diseases to residents. Focus group discussants, for example, have indicated the proliferation of daily laborers and other residents as beggars which will have negative impact on the social fabric of the society. In addition, the existence of beggars having multiple health problems and shortage of basic services like toilet means that there is high potential of residents to contract with communicable diseases which linger to the wider community.

The presence of beggars begging along all corners of the city not only demand additional services they also participate in different illegal tasks. Specifically, two of the community policing officers have expressed impacts of begging for on traffic flow; perpetuation of deviants and criminals; for safety of beggars, city residents and the general weakening of people's social norms. They stated that beggars conflict, cheat and steal one another and with members of the host community. They have also expressed their resentment to endlessly deal with deviant and criminal acts perpetrated by beggars or gangsters who use beggars as places of concealment. These impacts are consistent with the study conducted by Jelili, (2006, cited in Fawole *et al.* 2011) in Nigeria who stated that beggars have environmental implications by availing themselves in different public places; obstructing free flow of human and vehicular traffic as well as by generating dirty materials either as waste or as parts of their belongings to their regular routes and stations.

5.1.4.2. Impacts on Tourism Development and Tourists

The presence of beggars begging along all corners of the city not only impact upon its beauty but also on tourist flows. Specifically, interviewed community policing officers have expressed negative impacts of begging both for the beauty of city and safety of tourists. Tourists have also express their insights to the situation and practice of begging in Ethiopia in various ways. One of the female tourists from Germany who explained of her stay for three weeks in Ethiopia visiting Addis Ababa, Hawassa, Bale mountains, and Bahir Dar for the first time expressed her insight as follows:

- “When you come out of a bus, beggars come and beg; they even enter to the buses for begging. Many are disabled people and mothers with children. Begging in Bahir Dar is quite similar to its practice in Addis Ababa in the style of begging and the size of begging population. However, they beg not only from (a) tourist(s) but from everybody. I don't know how the social welfare system works in Ethiopia. “

Interview with an American national who indicated a number of issues on begging has provided the following insights with respect to the impacts of begging on tourism:

- ... Begging has 100% negative impact for tourism but tourism is the way for economic development which everybody wants. As a foreigner, I felt that many beggars think as if we have more money; that is why they ask money even without greeting us. Primarily, this is great annoyance. Ethiopian people should understand that a foreigner is just a person like an Ethiopian. They have to treat a person equally. They should not just come and say money, money, money, pen, pen, pen.... If they live with the mentality of getting money by begging all of the time, they cannot develop; hence harmful to them as well. They should be taught to work hard as working for one's income is hundred times better than begging on the streets. Of course, foreigners should provide some assistance but Ethiopians must be respectful to work hard than beg further. Secondly, foreigners want to freely observe indigenous, cultural and historical sites of the country. But if there is always somebody begging behind them, it is emotional annoyance. And foreigners do not want to be disturbed.

Much of the above quotes were reflected during data collection where, for much of the attempts the researcher made to interview different foreigners who walk along the roads, many were ignorant to talk. Even if the researcher well extended oral greetings and explained of his having support letters, many of the foreigners feel uncomfortable to talk to an Ethiopian, whom they do not know, along the roads. This is tantamount to consider that all Ethiopians who want to talk with them are beggars. The good side, however, is that all the interviewed tourists have generally indicated that they are not afraid of beggars in Ethiopia.

5.2. Measures Taken to Deal with Begging

Begging impactson residents, the beauty and safety of the city and tourism development. This makes discussion on measures of begging to be of paramount significance. To this end, discussion on the subject was made in four subsections to indicate measures that have been taken by the government, religious and non-governmental organizations and the public and this was triangulated with responses from beggars.

Generally, results from survey, FGDs, and in-depth interviews with beggars, city residents, tourists, community policing officers and religious leaders revealed the overall weakness, low concern and little attempts made by the GOs, NGOs, religious organizations and the public to deal with the problem in the city of Bahir Dar. More specifically, one of the American tourists who visited Ethiopia since 2009 expressed the weaknesses of responsible bodies to deal with begging as follows:

- Many foreigners I know raise many questions on why many people are begging. What the government is doing? And why are not some charity organizations to help such people?

5.2.1. Measures Taken by the Government

Scholarly arguments to take appropriate measures on begging in Ethiopia have started with the writings of Tiume Lisan in 1911 (ገጽ ፩ & 2002). However, taking measures in general and appropriate measures in particular was not yet implemented comparable to the breadth and width of the problem. The practice of taking measures was late; it was only during the eve of the celebration of Millennium year in 2008 that the current Ethiopian government- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE)- officially took measures that exclusively focus on forced evacuation of beggars from Addis Ababa to their respective regions and the specific *kebeles*. As it was clearly indicated in the review of the related literature under “begging in Ethiopian experience”, the action has never reduced the size of begging population both in the city and at national levels. Following these, sporadic measures have been taken primarily in the capital city- Addis Ababa. Undeniably, however, recently fragmented attempts have been made by city government of Addis Ababa and other regional cities to recruit, organize and train some of the beggars to be involved in different income generating businesses.

Measures that have been employed to deal with begging in the city of Bahir Dar has also strong similarity to those employed in Addis Ababa. In the city of Bahir Dar, surveyed beggars revealed that taking measures on begging was started during *Dergue* regime when 72 beggars from verandas and road sides have forcibly transported to outskirts of the city. This measure has a number of flaws. On the one side, despite they are currently engulfed by the expansion of the city, one of the respondents stated, evacuation of beggars to dense forest outskirts of the city full of wild animals by the government during the *Dergue* regime was unethical. He also added that attempts to rehabilitate them were totally absent. Interviewee from regional BoLSA indicated that measures on begging in the city have not been taken; nor have preparations been made to deal with the problem for a long time after attempts made by the *Dergue* government. This has partly contributed for the proliferation of begging in the city.

One of the community policing officers revealed that under FDRE, the first official measure in Bahir Dar was commenced in December, 2012 when city government has provided houses for 64 beggars to make them off the streets in the eve of celebration of the seventh nations, nationalities and people’s day. Furthermore, he added, after recruiting and training of youth, capable, and healthy beggars, attempts have been made to organize some of them, in mobile and dish maintenance for instance, and placed others in different organizations such as Ethiopian Metal Engineering Corporation despite some have returned back to begging. He described three rounds of trainings for beggars of which two were made in 2012 for 165 beggars while one was conducted at the begging of 2013 though he was unable to remember the number of trainees. This was followed by collection of data on the size, age, educational levels, and prior places of residence of beggars at regional levels which culminated with official publication in 2015 (አብክመ ወራተኛና ማህበራዊ ጉዳይ ቢሮ፡፡ 2006).

While encouraging, these measures taken by the current government, FDRE, have also a number of pitfalls; they were late, incomprehensive, short lived and unethical. Interviewed beggars indicated absence of standards to recruit, train, organize and provide houses for beggars. Generally, provision of houses to some of the beggars as well as training and deployment of them was reported to lack clarity, comprehensiveness and continuity.

Content analysis revealed that training, and organizing and placement of beggars to jobs has disproportionately affected beggars who were elderly, have health problems and children. In addition, measures such as provision of houses have remained to be one time practice since there are no attempts either to settle the problem of congestion of beggars in the houses or to extend continual effort of providing houses for others in the last three years since the first attempt. Furthermore, the provision of houses irrespective of sexual and age categories and physical and health situations of beggars has created plethora of health problems as indicated above in the “health situations of beggars” section.

Detaining beggars in their homelands, if any, was given little attention. To do so, there should have been a chain of government structure responsible for handling data pertinent not only to begging and beggars but also all vulnerable people at the grass root levels. This is not yet in practice resulting in sharing of incomprehensive and inadequate data among concerned bodies and between beggars and other concerned bodies. It is also difficult to validate the reliability of data obtained from beggars in the absence of grass root information. This was evidenced from interview with one of the officers of regional BoLSA who indicated the existence of only 33 branch offices of BoLSA which are incomparable with the number of districts (140) in the region. By extension, there is only 23.57% coverage of BoLSA to districts in the region. The staffing of these offices, he added, with unrelated or weakly related backgrounds in their studies has also impacted in the efficiency of data collected.

On top of this, focus group discussants and interviewees have indicated continual shift of responsible bodies (between women, children and youth affairs, and BoLSA) in the recent past (in 2012 and 2013). This has resulted in loss of data and confusion with viable organization in charge with the issue. Official data on beggars in the region is late as it was first published in March 2014. They have also indicated the existence of poor coordination among different responsible government bodies and its absence with some others (for example, CTPDB). All in all, responsible bodies hold low concern and, concerted and independent efforts to deal with the problem which was emanated from the general low concern by the government.

5.2.2. Measures Taken by Religious and non-governmental Organizations

Data were also collected from four religious leaders to uncover measures that have been taken so far and planned for future by their respective institutions. Generally, all religious institutions have made little efforts, both in coordination and independently, to deal with the problem. On the one hand, interviewees from three of the religious institutions have confirmed that begging has never been raised as an issue in any of inter-religious forums. Nor did it been discussed in each of religious institutions with concern.

As indicated in almsgiving practices of the population, all interviewees three of religious institutions revealed many justifications from Quran and Bible as evidences of the order of the God to anyone in a better situation to offer for the destitute. These are apparent

evidences for the role of religious institutions for the persistence of begging. All of them have, however, mentioned numerous ways in which their respective religious institutions discourage begging both in the Bible and Quran.

A pastor, for example, quoted “no bible encourages begging and laziness (James 1:27) though he mentioned Deuteronomy (15:11) which states that *since the poor live amongst beggars and cannot be eliminated, I order you to give alms*. A deacon also quoted Thessalonians 3:11, which reads as “those who do not want to work should not eat”. He also mentioned Act 3:3 which the bible allows begging by religious students and physically challenged people to ask alms while critiquing the views of many people as if EOTC, which teaches its followers about hard and Heavenly work, is the cause of begging. Undeniably however, he added, the church has done far below what is expected on the issue both from humanitarian and religious aspects. A Shaikh has also indicated anti-begging teachings of Quran by mentioning one of its statements, *if healthy people beg, their faces will be fleshless during Easter*.

Interviewees from both protestant religion and EOTC have also revealed that provision of feasts for beggars during different holidays was common method of assistance. Apart from being humanistic and provide pleasure for the moment, these measures neither contributed for its reduction nor for beggars’ long lasting improvement. Interviewee from EOTC, Ghiorgis denomination, has also indicated that the church started preparation of identity cards to its religious students in order to solve the expanding problem of mimicking beggars in the name of its religious students in the city. He further explained that income generating activities were being undertaken in different denominations of the churches in charge of teaching religious students so as to support them with incomes and end the culture of begging. The strategy employed by Islamic religion was found more impressive. Interview results with a Shaikh showed that Mosques have data on vulnerable Muslim populations in their respective vicinities of each *Kebeles* so as to provide assistance within their homes.

5.2.3. Measures Taken by the Public

The grave nature of the problem on the one hand and long lived traditional, religious and cultural values of helping others obligate alms giving practices by the public to the needy. However, all the key informant and in-depth interviewees and focus group discussants are critical of indiscriminate alms giving by the public. Similarly, an American national suggested on who and what measures be taken to deal with the problem of begging as follows:

- ... Government should be primarily responsible. Secondly, it is the responsibility of charity organizations to provide assistance though there are always good and bad beneficiaries of the assistance. Thirdly, religious institutions should be included to heighten their concerted efforts. The public must also stop giving to the beggars. This is a big problem from the public. If the public continue to give for the beggars, the beggars continue to beg but if they stop giving alms to beggars, beggars will stop begging and go to find alternative work; so very big responsibility from the public. Serving something is not helping them as it cannot sustain them off the streets. And pure religion is to take care of orphans and the elderly. “

A tour guide has also provided heart breaking and instructive insights that should have been implemented first as measures of begging. His explanations were quoted as follows:

- We ourselves (Ethiopians) are responsible for the expansion of begging. Take Sekota people, for example. They are geographically vulnerable and have long been supported by safety net program. But they have a family of 10 members. If you go now, you will find 3 or 4 Sekota women with at least 3 or 4 children begging with their respective mothers. Similarly, around Lalibela, people who are unable to feed for themselves give birth to up to 10 children.
- Let’s understand each other; it is not politics. Can posting of the expression “በመመከራሰመረኑሮዩ” (conferring haslightened my walk of life) practically change this? Copying best experience is an important slogan government relentlessly uses. Why China has been practicing infanticide and later adopted one child policy? Why our society is allowed to endlessly give birth? Why they should not be responsible for their own children? Why can’t we make them to sign for their responsiveness and duplicate this to the whole country instead of duplicating the above expression?
- Why not we copy from china and Europe on family planning? Why we run here and there in beggar’s destinations without solving their problem in its source? I can tell the development of Bahir Dar; sky rocketing buildings that we see now were built in my age. While the government and investors did this, many others, including you and me, are found giving birth to five and six children to whom we are incapable of taking care of. Strict and appropriate family planning policy should have been instituted for all of us. The public should also understand that people who start begging as a result of such kind of vulnerabilities should not be encouraged by indiscriminate alms giving practice.

Another interviewee from the public described that since beggars have once entered as a way of life, it is the efforts of other bodies, primarily the public, who should deal with and protect the problem. According to him,

- All people who provide alms privately should stop. They should understand that they are hurting them than helping them; this should be changed to offer in cooperation a large sum of money if we really want to change at least some of them. This is what God says, those who gave should give in charities- large sum of money.

As members of the public, understanding the level of knowledge and the views of beggars’ relatives (family members) has its own implications for intervention. To this effect, retrospective data were also collected from beggars on the subject. With respect to the knowledge, the result showed that while 31 (62%) of respondents have replied of the knowledge of family members on their begging, the rest 19 (38%) expressed absence of knowledge of their begging by their respective family members.

It is also found that family members who know begging practice by their relatives reflect three feelings: showing neutral position on the practice, guiding and advising to stop it or re-enforcing the practice. In line to this, the study found that out of 31 (62%) beggars whose family members know their begging, family members of 16 (32%) beggars have no position (neutral); those of 5 (10 %) beggars attempted to advise and guide to stop begging while 8 (16%) re-enforced (supported) it (Table1).

		Knowledge of family members on begging		Total
		Yes	No	
The position of family members on begging	Neutral	16	0	16
	Against	5	0	5
	Support	8	1	9
	Do not know whether their family members are begging	2	18	20
Total		31	19	50

Table 1: cross tabulation- position of family members on begging * Knowledge of family members on begging

This indicates that the role of family members to influence their relatives to stop begging is lowest as only 5 (10%) of them have attempted to advise them or have at least negative attitude on begging. It is also worth to mention here that some of these may have such position not from their negative view on begging but from the perspective of protecting their lineage not to be polluted by nick name that degrade the status of its descendants. Therefore, it requires not only publicizing continual discussion, training and debate on the issue but also a long way to teach the public to have concerted stance to deal with the issue.

5.2.4. Responses from Beggars on Measures of Begging

Before interviewing a tour, guide discussed above, the researcher has interviewed one of the beggars who came from Sekota. She reported of having six children, three of whom are begging with her. Surprisingly, for the question the researcher has raised on family planning, she responded of no knowledge on it by the general public. The whole people residing there, she added, have arrived to Bahir Dar because of procrastination of government support. She also bitterly expressed her lack of interest to go there hereafter. Similarly, one of the interviewee from Gondar has explained his begging as a result of partition of land for his children. For the question the researcher has raised stating: being elderly, why you give assets to your capable siblings who should have been helping you instead? He explained the culture of the society to do this; adding the ones who can escape from begging to be only those who have extra assets. As indicated by both of the interviewees, no measures were taken in both of the cases to detain potential beggars in their homelands.

Survey data were also collected to understand whether respondents have experienced measures directed at making them stop begging. The data indicates that while 12 (24%) of beggars have reported of being told to stop begging, at least once in their begging life, a significant majority of them (38 or 76%) have never been told by anyone to stop begging or to engage in other activities. A close view of responses for open ended questions revealed that those who have been told to stop begging are those who obtained financial support for her deaf child (1); those who remember that while the government provided houses, they have told to stop begging (2); those who have provided with few loans (2000 birr) to educate their children but without working place (1); those who heard of public advise to stop begging (1); those who are forced to leave begging place by guards of EOTC (1); those who reported of having trained to stop begging by GOs and NGOs (4) and those forcedly chased to leave the city at the eve of ENNPD (2). This was briefly indicated as follows:

Measures on begging	Measures taken by	No of people	Percent
Financial Support	Government	2	16.67
Guidance	Government and public	3	25
Warning to leave begging place	Government and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church	3	25
Provision of Training	GOs and NGOs	4	33.33
	Total	12	100

Table 2: percentage of beggars who experienced measures to stop begging

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

This study was conducted to impacts and measures of begging in the city of Bahir Dar to gain insights from beggars, the public, religious institutions; and officers from community based, governmental and non- governmental organizations. Accordingly, in line to the set objectives, the following conclusions were made.

Begging in Bahir Dar city has been increasingly normalized as a kind of “profession”, as survival strategy and additional source of income for participants. Though all beggar participants of this study possess strong desire to work than to beg and express many instances in which they hate begging, sizable number of them are with serious problems, vulnerabilities and out of option that really deserve help though there are also sizable number of others who engage in begging as a business and/or have assets that can help for survival.

Let alone beggars in every corner of the city, those who were provided with houses face multiple vulnerabilities related to social segregation, and economic and health situations which transcend to the city residents. Indeed, Ethiopia’s HEP has no formalized health service provision mechanisms even for those who are provided with houses. Along with the interplay of root causes, dynamic pressures and unsafe conditions indicated in IVM, undifferentiated almsgiving practice by the public and poorly systematized

coordination among all concerned governmental and non-governmental organizations are at the epicenter of re-enforcing it and holding back to deal with the problem.

Begging is not yet recognized as a problem to be dealt rigorously by responsible governmental and non-governmental bodies. An indication of this is a continual shift thereby loss of data, from temporarily responsible government bodies on the issue of which two years have been passed without the issue being dealt by anyone. In addition, though the government has made some attempts to train and help beggars in generating their own income, it lacks regularity, continuity, and comprehensiveness. There is also poor interlink among all concerned government bodies in planning, information sharing, and reporting issues related to begging. There is only one NGO working on the issue. Religious institutions, too, did little with the exception of preparing feasts, during holidays, of their respective religions.

6.2. Recommendations

Adequate human labour and land resources are officially recognized as the two key development sources Ethiopia is endowed with. To contribute in achieving this end by avoiding begging, the following recommendations were forwarded.

Adequate and continuous media coverage should be allotted to show the depth and breadth of begging and create public consciousness on the ways of dealing with it. Moreover, the fruits of various pro-poor and pro-rural policies, programs and strategies the current Ethiopian government has been implementing needs to be critically evaluated for beggars and other vulnerable people and appropriate measures be taken since rural urban migrants constitute the largest share of beggars in the city. Indeed, despite the existence of large number of elderly beggars and potential others, ANRS has been disproportionately focusing on rehabilitating existing beggars targeting on the youth and physically well off; rehabilitation of elderly and physically weak beggars and protection of the potential ones should also be given top priority.

Practical effectiveness of family planning program for beggars and other street people needs to be revisited and appropriate ameliorations be put in place to reduce the potential ones and the vulnerability of current beggars. The city government of Bahir Dar should also work to rectify taking measures such as provision of houses for beggars without helping them engage in some kind of work and improve their health statuses that were found to contribute to attract other potential beggars. Moreover, the existing poor concerted efforts by all concerned stakeholders (governmental, non-governmental, community based and religious institutions) should be practically scaled up to jointly develop appropriate measures for actual and potential beggars both in rural and urban areas.

Though BoLSA is currently in charge of dealing with begging, there are only 33 branch offices as compared to 140 districts (23.57% coverage) in the region. Establishment of its branch offices and well staffing it at least at all district levels of the region and the country at large is of paramount importance to effectively identify and provide appropriate support to actual beggars and the potential ones at the grass root levels.

Virtually all beggars participate in diverse income generating activities in addition to begging and have showed strong zeal to withdraw from it. Using this opportunity to organize and involve them to end their begging is timely work to be ensued. Currently, existing universities in Ethiopia's regional cities (such as Bahir Dar University) and major towns should take due attention in solving problems of beggars and other vulnerable people in general.

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