By Muluken Tariku

The five years GTP is the most ambitious plan as most people contend it. But "attainable" like the late PM Meles Zenawi labeled it during the launch. The mega plan is intended to transform the socio-economic setting of the country through integrated agricultural and industrial activities. More significantly, the plan is being utilized with the goal of ending rampant poverty and sparkling renaissance for the fossil civilization of the country.

In countries like Ethiopia, where arable land, labor force and ideal ecology are found harmoniously, the agricultural sector plays the most transformational role in the life spans of the nation. The GTP prioritizes, among others; agriculture and agro processing, for the two are pillars by which self-sufficient economy is built in a largely agrarian communities like Ethiopia.

In predominantly agrarian economies, Socio-economic transformation is attainable only through improving the productivity and out put of the agricultural sector. The two pillars of the GTP, more significantly, are pre conceived to be the basic foundations of social transformation, for they can easily advance Ethiopia`s semi processing and complex industries. Such advancement of the sector will at the end excavate Ethiopia`s hidden potential with the ultimate end of withering away poverty.

Among the mega projects of the GTP are the 10 new sugar factories and the expansion of the old ones. The sugar project is primarily intended to meet the national demand and upon produsing surplus, the sector is geared to generate crude currency.
''There is an ever increasing demand for sugar in the South Asian and the Middle Eastern countries", says Abay Tsehaye, Director General of the FDRE Sugar Corporation while explaining why the GTP prioritized the sugar development. "The country`s ideal ecology, job creation and an increase in the global demand for sugar are among the rationales," said Abay.

According to the Director General, Ethiopia is currently working on the sugar industry with all concerted effort. He stated that, in the five GTP years, the Corporation is constructing ten new sugar factories along with the expansion of the old ones.

As to the ecological advantages of the country, the sugar development largely covers all the regions of Ethiopia. Such extensive coverage and wide range destination makes the nation-wide social transformation "attainable ".Among the ten new factories are the Welkait and Tana Belles Sugar Projects. This part of the article specifically details the over all benefit the projects have in the socio economic transformation of the country.
Infrastructure, Job Opportunity and Urbanization
Abay Weldu, President of Tigray regional state, said that "Tigray benefits from the Welkait Sugar Project as do the other regions where the sugar projects are currently undertaken." He said that the region in general and the Welkait area in particular, benefits from the infrastructural, job opportunity, settlement, introduction to modern irrigation and urbanization.

More significantly, as the president puts it, "The project facilitates re-settlement of the scattered

residents of the areas in to one or two village there by creating good opportunity for agrarian transformation by integrating the farming community in to modern agricultural practices."

He stated that the construction has already created a number of permanent and temporary jobs for the youth of the area; he added that small towns around the project site are benefitted from trade activities that are intensified in line with the construction works.

Abay said that up on completion, the project brings multi dimensional benefits. The president underscored that the project ultimately brings social transformation by changing the rudimentary agrarian economies of the area for it introduces modern irrigation to the farming community of the area.

Residents of the Maicha ,Atano, May Hirgets and May Dima Kebeles are among the primary beneficiaries of the project. Assefa Tsehay, chair man of Maicha Kebele in Welkait, said that the project is good opportunity for residents, for it creates a number of jobs. Similarly, the chair person stated that the relocation of his kebele residents is undertaken based on mutual understanding reached following several discussion with the region and the sugar corporation, he says the relocation introduces the residents neighborhood and modern irrigational works.

Amenay Mesfin, Project manager of the Welkait Sugar project stated that the project creates a number of villages and main town around the factory and the sugar plantation. He says the urbanization benefits the residents for it provides them adequate infrastructural developments that transform their social set up from which it was rudimentary and less condusive.

The infrastructural development the project brings along with it includes schools, hospital, road, clean water and a lot more. As the project manager stated it most of the facilities are non-existent in the area prior to the launch of the project.

Due to its ecological advantage, Welkait was chosen as to build one of the ten factories. The factory`s sugar plantation will be utilized using Zarema River. Currently the May Day dam on the river is completed to ten percent. Welkait Sugar project consumes a budget of more than 8 billion birr.

The artificial lake the May Day Dam creates covers more than 9,650 hectares of land. The 143 meters height dam collects 3.5 billion cubic meters of water up on completion.

In addition to the May Day Dam, a medium sized dam is being built on Kalema River. The 15 meters height Kalema dam collects 12 million cubic meters of water. Currently the dam is collecting water for sugar nursery plantation on 3,300 hectares of land. In the future, according to the project manager, Amenay Mesfin, the dam provides drinking water for the future main town and villages around the project.

The sugar project in general is intended to bring about all rounded social transformation for the people of Ethiopia. In such transformational ways, the project profoundly benefits the regions of the country in several ways. Among the main uses are the infrastructural development, urbanization, modern irrigational facility, and job opportunity.

The five years` sugar development project, more significantly, has a nation wide benefit, for the sugar factories are built in almost all regional states. Such wide range distribution will ultimately benefit the people at large and there by making the national transformation “attainable’’