

Since its official establishment in 2020 through Proclamation No. 226/2020 by the Caffee (Council) of the Oromia National Regional State, Gada Special Economic Zone (GSEZ) has expanded across an extensive 24,000 hectares with the ambitious vision of positioning itself as *“The Economic Hub of Africa and the World.”* Within a short span of time, the GSEZ has recorded an impressive array of achievements, reflecting a bold commitment to regional transformation and economic dynamism. This strategic initiative not only underscores Oromia’s proactive stance in industrial development but also marks a significant milestone in Ethiopia’s broader quest for structural transformation and global competitiveness.

As a pioneering endeavor initiated by the Oromia National Regional State, GSEZ stands as a landmark model of sub-national economic innovation and industrial advancement. It symbolizes a transformative shift in regional economic governance, setting a new benchmark for integrated development planning and visionary investment promotion within Ethiopia. As the first regionally-driven economic zone in the country, GSEZ represents an institutional leap forward—catalyzing industrial modernization, facilitating technology transfer, and enhancing Oromia’s visibility within the global economic landscape. Its establishment signifies a deliberate and strategic departure from conventional development approaches, rooted in an aspiration to redefine the region’s developmental trajectory.

From its inception, GSEZ has been meticulously conceptualized to leverage Oromia’s multifaceted advantages—its strategic geographic location, abundant natural resources, youthful workforce, and growing consumer base. These inherent assets have been operationalized through pragmatic interventions. Approximately 725 hectares of land have been acquired and made ready for investor deployment, with 87.35 hectares already transferred to 19 domestic and international investors. These investors have committed an aggregate capital investment of approximately USD 258.5 million. GSEZ’s success in laying down critical infrastructure such as over 5 kilometers of modern asphalt road networks equipped with integrated utilities, 10 high-capacity deep wells yielding 740 liters per second, and a 21 km industrial-grade water pipeline has substantially enhanced the zone’s capacity to support high-value industrial activities and investment operations. These foundational interventions have elevated GSEZ’s status as a credible, investor-ready destination.

The Gada Special Economic Zone has rapidly emerged as a strategic destination for both local and international investment, owing to its robust institutional frameworks, transparent regulatory environment, and targeted investment facilitation mechanisms. It has prioritized key industrial clusters including agro-processing, advanced manufacturing, logistics, innovation and technology parks, renewable energy, and residential/real estate development each of which aligns closely with Ethiopia’s national industrial policy and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The zone’s ability to strategically attract investment across these critical sectors has not only diversified its economic base but also strengthened its capacity to serve as a transformative platform for regional economic integration, job creation, and technological upgrading.

Human capital development has been an indispensable pillar of GSEZ’s operational success. Through well-structured capacity-building programs, including technical trainings, digital literacy workshops, and periodic performance review forums, the Zone has nurtured a highly

competent and adaptive workforce. These efforts have specifically targeted skills development in emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), and cloud computing thereby ensuring that the human resource base within GSEZ remains globally competitive and future-oriented. This strategic focus on workforce readiness enhances the Zone's attractiveness to high-tech industries and knowledge-based enterprises, reinforcing its position as a forward-looking economic enclave.

Furthermore, GSEZ's unwavering commitment to digital transformation, environmental sustainability, and inclusive development has positioned it as a model of best practice in economic zone development. Its collaborative approach marked by proactive engagement with local communities, public institutions, and international development partners has fostered a culture of shared ownership and mutual benefit. The integration of green infrastructure and eco-friendly technologies within the zone's development blueprint underscores its alignment with global climate resilience and sustainable industrialization goals. This convergence of innovation, inclusivity, and ecological responsibility reinforces GSEZ's reputation as a trailblazer in Ethiopia's journey toward resilient and equitable growth.

In less than half a decade, the Gada Special Economic Zone has transformed from a bold vision into a high-performing engine of industrial growth, employment generation, and investment attraction. It now stands as a powerful symbol of Oromia's developmental ambition and institutional capability. As a replicable and scalable model for other regional states, GSEZ not only accelerates Ethiopia's industrial transition but also embodies the transformative potential of well-conceived, strategically executed, and inclusively governed economic zones across the African continent.