

B A S I S



■ Broadening Access and Strengthening
Input Market Systems

**BASIS/IDR
Community Assessments**

Kebele Profiles, Parts I, II, III and IV

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

December 1999

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Introduction

This report presents brief descriptive profiles of key socioeconomic aspects of 19 communities in South Wello Zone and 2 communities in Oromiya Zones of Amhara Region, Ethiopia. The information was collected by a multidisciplinary team using rapid appraisal methodology as part of a joint research project of the BASIS-CRSP¹ Horn of Africa Program and the Institute for Development Research (IDR) of Addis Ababa University. The research team conducted the 21 rapid community assessments from April to July 1999, in the midst of a widespread and severe food crisis throughout many parts of the country, including the study area. Thus, this report is valuable not only for its “snapshot” qualitative inventory of data on agriculture, landholding, labor, marketing, food security, and relate topics, but also for its depiction of local perceptions and coping strategies during a very troubled time.

The introduction presents a brief overview of the community profiles, including their origin and role in the BASIS/IDR project on “Factor Market Constraints to Income and Food Security in a Highly Diverse Environment.” It also describes the methodology used in the rapid assessments, and it discusses the style of presentation for the profiles in this report. Finally, the introduction briefly considers the profiles in relationship to the 1999 food crisis. A thorough analysis of the data from these community profiles will be issued separately by the BASIS-IDR research team.²

From Household to Region

These community profiles are part of a multi-year project entitled “From Household to Region: Factor Market Constraints to Income and Food Security in a Highly Diverse Environment, South Wello, Ethiopia.” The project is a collaborative effort between the Institute for Development Research at Addis Ababa University and the BASIS Horn of Africa Program. It is directed by Peter Little and Tegegne Gebre-Egziabher. The project addresses theoretical and policy debates about the causes and consequences of food insecurity in rural economies, evaluating the role of such key variables as income availability or entitlement, commodity and input market linkages over different agro-ecological zones, agricultural productivity, and drought (Little and Tegegne 1998). It intends to do so by providing an integrated analysis of the social and economic causes and consequences of food insecurity at the intrahousehold, household, community, and regional levels. The project has three main research components: a macro-level survey of regional market towns and rural-urban linkages by Tegegne and Gary Gaile; community-based assessments of food security and market access; and a micro-level household and intrahousehold survey to be

¹ Broadening Access and Strengthening Input Market Systems—Collaborative Research Support Program, which is operated by the Consortium for Applied Research on Market Access and supported by the United States Agency for International Development.

² A preview of the finding is contained in Yared Amare et al. 1999

carried out shortly (see Roth *et al.* 1999).³ Therefore, these assessments – their purpose, goals, methods, and findings – need to be understood within the context of the broader research project.

The project proposal by Little and Tegegne (1998: 1) set forth in clear terms South Wello's central importance in debate on food security and the justification for the study:

The South Wello area of Ethiopia has assumed an important – if not infamous – role in many of the theoretical debates about the causes of food insecurity and famine in agrarian economies. Sen's classic work on entitlement and famines, for example, utilized market data from Dessie, South Wello to show that while grain supplies and price variability were within normal ranges during the 1972-1973 famine, food insecurity at the household level was the result of inadequate incomes (economic entitlement) to purchase grain (Sen 1981). Others have questioned Sen's interpretation of the Wello data, showing that if his theory holds, then why did the 1983-1984 famine correlate with wide fluctuations in food availability ('supply'), price hikes, and strong distortions in the regional grain market (through policy and transport constraints), resulting in food insecurity across a range of wealth classes rather than just the poor (see Baluch 1987; Cutler 1984; and de Waal 1990). More recent, 'middle ground' appraisals acknowledge the importance both of the 'entitlement' argument and of market/supply constraints, showing that in areas like South Wello poor integration between regional and local market centers led to zones of localized shortages even when food supplies at the regional level were generally adequate.⁴

In light of these debates what currently is needed is a more integrated study of the social and economic causes of food insecurity at intrahousehold, household, community, and regional levels, that examines both questions of commodity and input market linkages and agricultural productivity (the 'supply' side), on the one hand, and the dynamics of household (intrahousehold) access to farm and non-farm incomes ('entitlement'), on the other. Land, labor, and financial market constraints to resource access and income (entitlement) opportunities of resource poor households will be a central focus in explaining individual and household differences. By taking such an approach, it is possible to examine local issues of low income, labor shortages, and credit constraints within a larger regional context that recognizes the role of market centers, policy, regional and local institutions, and infrastructure in determining food security and income growth (see Little 1987; 1992).

A later project memorandum specified the relationship of the community assessments to the South Wello Research Program (it also identified the methodology to be employed):

³ Other components identified in the original research proposal include a case study of livestock and grain traders, a case study of common property resources, and a data collection exercise using geographical information systems technology.

⁴ Other relevant works include Alemneh Dejene 1990; Webb et al. 1992; de Waal 1997; also see Montgomery-Rinehart and Horowitz 1998, and numerous publications issued by IDR, including its *Ethiopian Journal of Development Research*.

The community assessments are seen as a valuable, intermediate source of information that will complement both the regional market research and the household and intrahousehold-level investigations, and serve as a data set to be analyzed in itself. They will use formal and informal group and key informant interviews, as well as existing secondary information and participant observation. The community assessments are meant to generate institutional and qualitative information (and limited quantitative data), and will use a form of rapid rural appraisal (Little no date: 1)..

Thus, the rapid community assessments are part of a larger research design that spans the regional to the intrahousehold levels. They are intended to provide institutional and socio-economic data of both a qualitative and quantitative nature about rural communities to supplement the macro- and micro surveys, as well as serve as an information base for analysis on their own. Given the nature of data collection – rapid rural appraisal – the “inventory” information on population, farming systems, marketing, and so on given in this report is not intended to present a comprehensive nor statistically precise picture of each community. Rather, the intent is to furnish a general overview of local conditions and perceptions, as well as trends within the community.

Research Procedures and Methodology

The social science methods employed in the community assessments combined survey, ethnographic, and rapid rural appraisal techniques, involving key informant and focus group interviews conducted during one-day visits to each community. The research team carried out a field test in two rural communities near Dessie in March 1999 (Castro 1999). The assessment themselves were conducted in April, May, June, and July 1999, mainly in South Wello zone (for nine weredas), but also in adjacent Oromiya zone (two weredas). These took place during a time of widespread and increasing hunger due to the failure of the belg rains in early 1999.

The term community in this study is synonymous with the *kebele* (formerly known as the peasant association), the lowest administrative unit in Ethiopia. *Kebeles* are grouped together to form a wider administrative entity called a *wereda*, which in turn are combined to form a zone. For purposes of the study, the team decided to select two kebeles from each of the nine weredas in South Wello zone, namely Ambassel, Dese Zuriya, Kalu, Kuta Ber, Legambo, Tanta, Tehuledere, Werebabo, and Wereilu. Due to difficult road conditions in Legambo, only one kebele was visited. Four kebeles from two weredas in the adjacent Oromiya Zone with close marketing ties to South Wello also were picked – Bati and Dawa Cheffa. Thus, the team carried out fieldwork in 21 kebeles. In consultation with local officials, we used purposive sampling to select the communities, trying to differentiate them according to market distance (one kebele in each wereda would be within 10 km of the local market, while the other would be more than 10 km from the market)⁵ and agro-ecological setting – highland (called *dega*), midland (*woina dega*), and lowland (*kola*). The 10 km benchmark served as a useful means of distinguishing physical accessibility to markets, though it was recognized that spatial distance per se was not the only factor at work. The research team also took into account the condition of the roads and other

⁵ In some cases the sampling ended up based on distance from wereda headquarters, which usually also served as the main market in the locale (see Table 1).

logistical issues. The tripartite highland-midland-lowland division is widely recognized in Ethiopia as referring not only to altitude, but also climate and farming systems. The research team also tried to take into account the range of local food security situations in their selections, for example, asking local officials to take into account whether communities were highly or less drought-prone. The communities are listed according to wereda, agroecological zone, and distance to market (or wereda) in Table 1.

The research team conducted three sets of group interviews in each community during one day visits. The team members recognized the shortcomings and biases of quick, group interviews, but, given their own experience with rapid rural appraisal, they felt that such an approach offered a generally timely and accurate method to accomplish the task at hand.⁶ As economist Paul Taylor (1942, reprinted 1983), a pioneer of quick data collection methods, noted long ago, careful observation and interviewing over brief periods can yield significant and timely – albeit nonstatistical – information about patterns and trends regarding human problems on the land. A comparison of the data obtained from Tebasit kebele in Dessie Zuria wereda during the March field test and its survey in early April is illustrative (see Castro 1999 and the profile contained in Part I of this report⁷). Some specific bits of information differ in the two accounts – for example, the estimated population by key informants is 7,000 in the pre-test and as 10,155 in the actual survey; the women’s focus group identified eucalyptus and (“sometimes”) cabbage as main cash crops in the pre-test but cited barley in the later survey. Despite such differences, the overall depiction of agriculture, land access, farm inputs, labor, off-farm income, marketing, food security, and social relations provide a very similar portrait of the community and its situation. Given existing logistical, resource, and time constraints, the use of rapid appraisal techniques proved to be a cost-efficient decision.

A “key informant” interview was conducted usually with three to four members of the kebele administration (the chairman, secretary, treasurer, and social sector head were typical participants). The team used a questionnaire that consisted largely of inventory questions regarding the local population, its access to markets and public services, its demographic change, and its experience in addressing food security. Perhaps one of the most imprecise parts of the community assessments arises from the key informant interviews. A few of the estimates of population and household (including female-headed households) supplied by kebele officials strained credulity; for example, Kallo reportedly has 5,000 households out of a total estimated population of 10,000. The team decided to report such information “as is” in these profiles, with a full exploration of methodological issues to be presented elsewhere. As mentioned previously, the “inventory” information given in this report is not intended to present a comprehensive nor statistically precise picture of each community. Rather, the intent is to furnish a general overview of local conditions and perceptions, as well as trends within the community.

Two focus group interviews – separate men’s and women’s groups – were carried out in each community. The focus group questionnaire contained some inventory-oriented questions, but it also sought to elicit local views, perceptions, and aspirations on a range of subjects –

⁶ See Chambers 1997, on rapid data collection approaches.

⁷ The field test in Tebasit was carried out by Yared Amare, Degafa Tolossa, and Peter Castro, and the actual assessment was conducted by Yared Amare and Yigremew Adal.

agriculture, land, agrarian change, access to inputs and markets, savings patterns, community relations, food security, and coping strategies during times of food shortages. The women's and men's focus groups often differed in the information they provided, reflecting differences in their participation in local economic, social, and cultural affairs. Once again, the reasons and complexities behind these differences will be explored in future publications by the team.

Officials were asked to select people from different socio-economic backgrounds (income groups, levels of well-being, female-headed households) and age groups, so that the focus groups could include a range of local views. Each group usually consisted of eight individuals. The team's experience – based on the informant self-reports, their appearance (such as type and quality of clothing), and comments during interviews (including intra-group chatter, remarks, and responses to each other) – indicated that officials generally did a very good job in selecting people from diverse backgrounds, including the poor, middle, and more prosperous community members, as well as female-heads of households and returned “resettlers.” Casual conversations with community members suggested that the information obtained during the interviews was reliable and valid.

The team members sometimes supplemented the questionnaires with their own questions or written observations (mostly notably and extensively in Yigremew Adal's field diary notes that appear at the beginning of “Part II”).

The Profiles

The research team decided to generate two types of outputs from the community assessments: comparative analyses derived from the database; and descriptive “profiles” of each kebele. This report presents the latter. It collects the 21 kebele profiles, which had been prepared previously in four separate reports divided according to the fieldwork itinerary. The different weredas and dates covered in each of the field trips, along with the different field researchers and the desire to make information available in a timely manner, made for a “natural” division of the profiles into separate four entities:

- Part I: Fieldwork April 4-9, 1999, in Dessie Zuriya, Kalu, and Ambassel Weredas of South Wello Zone by Yared Amare and Yigremew Adal
- Part II: Fieldwork May 2-8, 1999, in Werebabo, Kutaber, and Tenta Weredas of South Wello Zone by Yigremew Adal with Demeke Deboch
- Part III: Fieldwork May 27-June 5, 1999, in Batti and Dawa Chaffa Weredas of Oromiya Zone by Degafa Tolossa
- Part IV: Fieldwork July 24-July 30, 1999, in Tehuledere, Legambo, and Wereilu Weredas of South Wello Zone by Yared Amare with Demeke Deboch and Assefa Akirso.

This four-part division has been retained in the present report. With slight modifications to the text (particularly in Part II, where descriptive notes by Yigremew Adal have been added), the original introductions to each of the reports have been retained.

The profiles synthesize information from the focus group and key informant interviews. Each profile covers ten aspects: basic community characteristics (including population, ethnic and religious distribution; location from administrative centers and transport); local farming systems; land, water, and communal resources; agricultural labor; agricultural inputs, credit, and local savings; non-agricultural and off-farm income earning; marketing; food security; community relations and community-based organizations; and additional local views and priorities. These categories largely correspond to the topical divisions contained within the questionnaires. It should be emphasized that the population and household figures, as well as those regarding the religious and ethnic membership of community members, are estimates provided by kebele officials. The number of households usually includes both taxpaying and non-taxpaying families. The overall precision of the figures no doubt varied.

The breakdown of information within each category of the community profile does not exactly mirror the categories within the questionnaires. This divergence is most notable in the category “Food Security” in the profiles, where the heading “Current Situation” appears. Neither the focus group nor the key information schedule of questions directly asked about the current state of food security (or insecurity) in the community. Key informants were asked to list when in the past ten years crop failure or the widespread threat of hunger had occurred, and focus groups were asked to identify the most recent food shortage. Each research instrument asked a few additional items about what happened during the most recent food shortage. No specific query was aimed, however, at detailing the dimensions of the severe food crisis experienced in 1999. The study had been set up to examine food security and insecurity in a general sense, as a recurrent phenomenon in terms of chronic and episodic hunger, instead of being a specific exploration of the 1999 event. Nonetheless, it was not difficult to assess the current situation from the various responses, as well as from the “additional local views and priorities” items. The differences between the women’s and men’s focus groups, as well as those between the focus groups and the key informants, are indicated in the profiles.

The 1999 Food Crisis and the Profiles

These community assessments provide an “on the ground” portrait of 1999’s severe food crisis from the vantage point of 21 kebeles in a range of agroecological settings. As noted earlier, it was not the intent of the project to investigate a particular food insecurity event. Rather, the project is concerned with examining the dynamics of food insecurity as a recurrent, chronic phenomenon in South Wello, mindful that dramatic fluctuations in supply and consumption are integral parts of the situation. Still, each community’s profile contains significant insights regarding local perceptions, priorities, and behaviors regarding the food crisis.

In December 1998, the Ethiopian Government’s Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) estimated that the total population requiring direct food assistance in South

Wollo decreased to 224,600, a drop of almost two-thirds from the previous year's estimate (see Table 2; also see DPPC 1997, 1998a, 1998b). It was also less than half the number identified in the DPPC's April 1998 report. Generally good meher season rains had generated much optimism about the food situation, despite a late and poor 1998 belg season rains in some areas. However, the December 1998 report identified some trouble spots in South Wollo: Ambassel, Dessie Zuria, and Kutaber Weredas had suffered from early withdrawal of the meher rains and significant pest infestations. Nevertheless, the number of people requiring food assistance in the South Wollo and Oromiya weredas included in the BASIS/IDR research project had estimated to fall from 460,226 in December 1997 to 172,100 in December 1998. The DPPC estimates had been based on rapid assessments performed from October 24 to November 15, 1998, by teams consisting of its staff, along with members drawn from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, National Meteorological Service Agency, Ethiopian Mapping Authority, United States Agency for International Development's Early Warning System, World Food Programme, European Union, Canadian International Development Agency, UN Emergency Unit for Ethiopia, World Vision, Save the Children Fund-UK, Catholic Relief Services, and CARE-Ethiopia.

When the BASIS/IDR research team conducted its field test in mid-March 1999 near Dessie, it was stunned by the extent of the food shortages reported in the two kebeles. The field visit revealed very high levels of food insecurity due to the cumulative impact of prior past harvests and the apparent failure of the belg rains (see Castro 1999). The team reported its observations to zonal officials before returning to Addis Ababa. Because of the complete failure of the belg rains, the food shortage had widened and intensified when the project's community assessments got underway in early April. That same month the DPPC and its collaborating agencies carried out their own reassessment⁸ of the food situation, issuing its revised report of the food situation in late May. The DPPC acknowledged that it had failed to take fully into account the impact of the 1998 belg crop in Amhara Region. Its optimistic estimated had also not recognized significant crop loses due to unusually late rains, severe frosts in some Amhara highland areas (including South Wollo), pests, and early harvesting forced on farmers by bad weather conditions (DPPC 1999: 16-20). The number of people identified as needing food assistance in South Wollo now jumped to 774,150 (see Table 2), roughly one-third of its inhabitants. The food requirements for South Wollo's needy population rose from 20,214 metric tons in the December 1998 estimate to 77,964 metric tons in the May 1999 appeal.

The community profiles presented in this report and the DPPC's revised appeal are similar in their portrayal of a rural population under considerable stress due to hunger and deep food insecurity. Both accounts recorded similar stress indicators, including:

- Increased mortality and sickness due to hunger, physical weakness, and stress;
- Increased movement of people in search of jobs and food;
- Depletion of food stocks, livestock (due to deaths, emergency sales, slaughtering) and other household assets;
- Rising grain prices and rock-bottom livestock prices;
- Increased firewood sales to urban areas;

⁸ It is the DPPC's standard practice to assess the meher season harvest once it has been completed.

- Erosion of household purchasing power (see DPPC 1999: 18-19)

The people of South Wello clearly faced a serious situation, with vulnerable households already experiencing immense hardships. Some food aid had been received, but it had yet to reach many of the needy.

The profiles indicate that the problems occurring in South Wello communities go beyond a single season's drought or crop failure. Many communities reported frequent poor harvests or crop failures in recent years due to insufficient or too much rainfall, frost, pests, and crop diseases. Very little irrigation occurs. Soil fertility appears to be declining, while soil erosion is increasing. The interviews also reveal widespread concern about land fragmentation, tenure insecurity, growing indebtedness (especially due to the poor performance of farm inputs such as chemical fertilizer and other investments⁹), the lack of off-farm and non-farm income opportunities, and poor infrastructure in terms of transport, marketing facilities, and public services. The profiles also vividly portray the strain experienced households and their networks of mutual assistance among kinfolk, neighbors, and community members. Interviewees also emphasized the difficulties faced by community-based organizations during the current crisis. Once again, further information about the patterns emerging from the community assessments will be discussed in the synthesis report that is currently in preparation.

⁹ Key issues about agricultural productivity and fertilizer use are covered in Mulat Demeke *et al.* 1998.

Table 1

**The Profiled Communities:
Wereda, Kebele, Agroecological Zone, and Distance from Weekly Market**

Wereda/Kebele	Agroecological Zone	Reported Distance from Market
Dessie Zurie/Gerado	Woina dega	0.5 km (7 km from daily market)
Dessie Zurie/Tabasit	Dega	30 km
Kalu/Abechu	Kolla	2 km (46 km from wereda headquarters)
Kalu/Kedida	Kolla	5 km (15 km from wereda headquarters)
Ambassel/Abet	Dega	5 km
Ambassel/Mariye	Dega/woina dega	25 km
Werebabo/Gubissa	Woina dega	4 km
Werebabo/Challi	Kolla	16 km (27 km from wereda headquarters)
Kutaber/Alasha (Werkaria)	Dega	6 km (14 km from daily market)
Kutaber/Ambi Gibi	Kolla (some woina dega)	3-7 km (30 km from wereda headquarters)
Tenta/Amba Mariam	Dega	5 km
Tenta/Watta	Kolla	20 km (32 km from wereda headquarters)
Dawa Chaffa/Shakilla	Kolla	0 km (12 km from wereda headquarters)
Dawa Chaffa/Kallo	Kolla	5 km (5 km from wereda headquarters)
Batti/Kamme	Kolla	7 km
Batti/Chachato	Kolla	12 km
Tehuledere/Gobeya	Woina dega	9-19 km (9 km from wereda headquarters)
Tehuledere/Boru Metter	Dega	4 km (20 km from wereda headquarters)
Legambo/Akesta (029)	Woina-dega	1 km
Wereilu/Aremfema	Dega	10-15 km (30 km from wereda HQ)
Wereilu/Chisa (Kaya)	Woina dega	3 or 15 km (15 km from wereda HQ)

Please note: The distances from the markets are as reported by kebele officials during the key informant interviews.

Table 2

DPPC Food Aid Estimates for South Wello Population

DPPC Report	South Wello Population Requiring:	
	Food Assistance	Monitoring
December 1997	616,500	250,500
April 1998	511,400	--
December 1998	224,600	283,708
May 1999	774,150	--

Sources:

DPPC, *Food Supply Prospect 1998: Early Warning System Report*. Addis Ababa, November 1997.

DPPC, *Food Situation in 1998 and Additional Requirement*. Addis Ababa, April 1998.

DPPC, *Food Supply Prospect 1999: Early Warning System Report*. Addis Ababa, December 1998.

DPPC, *Revised Appeal for Assistance: Emergency Relief Needs in Ethiopia in 1999*. Addis Ababa, May 27, 1999.

Table 3

**Population Needing Food Assistance According to the
Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC):
Selected Weredas in South Wello and Oromiya Zones**

Wereda	Date of DPPC Report:		
	Dec. 97	Apr. 98	Dec. 98
Tenta	51,088	40,900	16,000
Kutaber	3,353	30,000	11,000
Ambassel	34,110	34,100	10,000
Tehuledere	15,525	8,500	7,500
Werebabo	37,145	37,100	7,000
Kalu	82,576	78,500	18,000
Dessie Zuria	68,829	44,700	30,000
Legambo	41,800	33,500	18,000
Wereilu	20,000	11,000	12,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>354,426</i>	<i>318,300</i>	<i>129,500</i>
Dewa Cheffa	49,200	47,400	10,000
Bati	56,600	62,100	32,600
Total	460,226	427,800	172,100

Note:

South Wello Zone also includes Mekdela, Sayint, Debersina, Jama, and Wegdi woredas, but they are not part of the study area.

Sources:

DPPC, *Food Supply Prospect 1998: Early Warning System Report*. Addis Ababa, November 1997.

DPPC, *Food Situation in 1998 and Additional Requirement*. Addis Ababa, April 1998.

DPPC, *Food Supply Prospect 1999: Early Warning System Report*. Addis Ababa, December 1998.

DPPC, *Revised Appeal for Assistance: Emergency Relief Needs in Ethiopia in 1999*. Addis Ababa, May 27, 1999.

**BASIS/IDR
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**Kebele Profiles, Part I:
Dessie Zurie, Kalu, and Ambassel Weredas
in South Wello Zone**

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Introduction to Part I

This report presents the preliminary findings from rapid community assessments carried out in six kebeles in South Wello, Ethiopia, by Yared Amare and Yigremew Adal from April 4-9, 1999. It is the first in a series that will cover a total of 22 kebeles in 11 weredas spanning a range of local agroecological settings in South Wello. The report provides a concise socioeconomic profile of each kebele, covering 10 aspects: basic community characteristics; agriculture; land, water, and communal resources; agricultural labor; agricultural inputs, credit, and local savings; non-agricultural and off-farm income earning; marketing; food security; community relations and community-based organizations; and additional local views and priorities. These community assessments are being carried out as part of the project entitled "From Household to Region: Factor Market Constraints to Income and Food Security in a Highly Diverse Environment, South Wello, Ethiopia." The project is a collaborative effort between the BASIS Horn of Africa Program and Addis Ababa University, Institute for Development Research (IDR). The project is directed by Peter Little and Tegegne Gebre-Egziabher. Alfonso Peter Castro prepared the report.

When the community assessments are completed in June 1999, the BASIS/IDR team will prepare a report synthesizing the findings from all 22 kebeles. It would be premature to derive conclusions based on the results of the six communities featured here. However, several points can be highlighted about the assessments. The following kebeles are covered: Gerado and Tebasit in Dessie Zuria wereda, Abechu and Kedida in Kalu wereda, and Abet and Mariye in Ambassel wereda. The information is based on key informant interviews conducted with kebele officials and on focus groups carried out with local men and women in separate groups. Using guidelines presented by the research team, the kebele officials selected respondents for the focus groups. The research team tried to include people from diverse backgrounds in terms of socioeconomic status and age. The research procedures and instruments were developed by the BASIS/IDR team and pre-tested in two South Wello kebeles in March 1999.¹⁰ The assessments themselves underscore the similarities and differences to be found in farming systems, marketing arrangements, and food security situations in the mountains and valleys of South Wello. They also indicate the numerous economic and other linkages occurring between different agroecological zones. The widespread food shortage experienced throughout the region in the first half of 1999 is vividly portrayed in the responses and observations of the men, women, and kebele officials. In many places people reported severe problems. The differences in perceptions and comments between the men's and women's focus groups are also striking at times.

¹⁰ See Castro 1999.

Kebele/number: Gerado (03)
Wereda: Dessie Zuria

Date visited: 4 April 1999

Field Researchers: Yared Amare (Key Informants/Women's Focus Group) and Yigremew Adal (Men's Focus Group)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: Not recorded

Estimated population: 5,000

Number of households: 1,100

Number of female-headed households: 150

Religious Groups as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 75%

Christian: 25%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100%

Distance from all-weather road: 0 km

Distance from seasonal road: --km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from Wereda headquarters: 7 km

Distance from nearest bank: 7 km

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 2

Number of churches and mosques: 3 mosques, 1 church

Demography

Gerado's population has grown in the past 10 years due to natural increase and the return of resettled people.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Woina dega

Cropping pattern: Double-cropping, with meher as the main season; irrigation is important

Crops: Teff, maize, wheat, sorghum, chickpeas, fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*), eucalyptus, peas, barley, horse beans (*Vicia faba*), vetch, kale, "greens," potato, garlic, green pepper, onion, juniper

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Maize (1), teff (2), wheat (3)

Men's focus group: Teff (1), maize (2), wheat (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Kale (1), potato (2), garlic (3),

Men's focus group: "none"

Note: The women reported that they exclusively grow kale and garlic.

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Teff (1), maize (2), wheat (3), fenugreek (4), garlic (5)

Men's focus group: fenugreek, teff, wheat

Bartering:

It takes places within the kebele in small amounts, mainly to get seed for planting in January and July. Maize or wheat is exchanged for teff.

Production Trend in Gerado:

Decreasing, due to drought, rust, frost, pest, and crop disease (*wag*)

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Landholding Pattern:

Average household landholding: 4 timad

Range of household landholding: 6 timad to 2 timad

Number of landless households: 300

Access to Agricultural Land

Farmland in Gerado has been obtained through land redistribution, sharecropping, inheritance, and rental. People mainly graze livestock on individually held plots. People who lack oxen or sufficient labor will rent or sharecrop their land to those who have an abundance of these resources. Land will rent for Birr 300-400 per timad, while sharecropping is done on a 50-50 split. The men reported that rents have increased, while sharecropping now requires an advanced commitment of money in the form of a loan to the landholder.

Land Redistribution

The last land redistribution took place in 1991. Some landless families and returned resettlers received up to two timad. The men reported that female-headed households got small plots, but the women stated that some female-headed households lost land. The women said it was not a great proportion in comparison to other households. Both focus groups said that land redistribution did not increase output. The women specified that crop failure was the main reason. The men stated that land redistribution increased the scarcity of land.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Flooding (1); land scarcity (2)

Men's focus group: Land scarcity; increase rents

Water

Both men and women pointed out that there is insufficient water for all to engage in irrigation. Water for irrigation is used in a sequence determined by local group leaders. The women also reported a lack of potable water.

Communal Resources

Local common property resources consist of a small patch of grazing ground and streams. With the exception of water for irrigation, access to these resources was described as “free.”

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

People reported that most households in Gerado face a problem of surplus labor – that is, not having enough work for their members. However, households headed by women, the elderly, and the sick were identified as having problems of labor scarcity.

Hired Labor

Some hiring of labor takes place within the kebele for weeding, harvesting, and other agricultural tasks. Families that are prosperous, with good harvests, or labor deficient do the hiring, while people from poor, land-scarce, and landless households seek work. The men also reported that migrant workers are sometimes hired.

Reciprocal Labor

The women reported that about 30 percent of the households engage in reciprocal labor arrangements. It is engaged in to carry out work in a timely manner, thus avoiding loss. The women also stated that it makes work more enjoyable and enhances people’s endurance.

Changes in Access to Labor

People observed that the demand for hired labor has decreased. The women noted that wages are increasingly paid in cash rather than in grain (going from 0.5 kg to Birr 3). Reciprocal labor is also being supplanted by wage labor paid in cash. The men stated that the price of labor has largely stayed the same.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 360

Number of households receiving farm credit: 380

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 380

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA supplies credit for, and information on, fertilizer and hybrid seeds to landed households. The women reported that most types of farmers are involved. Both groups concluded that MOA activities have had a low or insignificant impact due to drought and crop failure.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The men also mentioned the local service cooperative as a source of credit for agricultural activities.

Purposes of farm credit

People use farm credit to purchase fertilizer and hybrid seeds. They also use loans to help accumulate and fatten livestock.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The men cited the lack of assets to serve as collateral for loans as a constraint, as well as the inability to pay contribution fees. The women stated that creditors do not want to give loans for fear of people reneging. They also said that people are reluctant to borrow from the MOA, because crop failure has left people unable to repay their loans.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

The women cited lack of cash as a constraint on using agricultural inputs. The men pointed out that drought itself constrained effective use of inputs. As noted above, people in Gerado are reluctant to take out loans for inputs given their poor performance and the need to repay despite crop failure.

Local savings

The main reasons why people save is to serve as a buffer in time of need, such as during famine or illness. The women also said that people save to marry off their children. Key mechanisms for saving resources include accumulating livestock, fattening sheep, hoarding grain and money, and participating in the local Kire association to cover funeral expenses. Upon death the Kire provides to the surviving family one birr, two injera, one cup of grain, and two pieces of wool.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Spinning yarn, basket work, trading grain and livestock from the area, urban day labor, migrant labor to Jimma, and brewing

Men's focus group: Day labor in nearby Dessie and firewood sales

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Spinning yarn, basket weaving, and brewing

Men's focus group: Selling firewood

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

The women reported that these income sources did not help much, since they provided little income. The men reported that out migration used to be important during such times, but no longer so.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

People reported that there is a low demand for such labor, and that such activities provide little income. The price of some commodities, such as firewood sold in urban markets, has also decreased.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 7 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 0.5 km

Number of retail shops: 5

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals and walking

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 0%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People go to a number of sources to buy food and other items for their everyday needs, including private and service cooperative shops within the kebele, the nearby market and the large market at Dessie. Agricultural and livestock traders do not visit Gerado; instead, they are found in nearby Dessie.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

The men reported that red peppers and horse beans are acquired from other areas. The women stated that none were obtained.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The landless, the elderly, families with many children, and returned resettlers who have little land

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: April to September

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1994 – cause: drought; 1998 – cause: excessive rain, crop disease; 1999 – cause: drought, crop disease

Current situation

People agreed that a severe food shortage exists in Gerado, threatening to become worse than the 1984 crisis if the meher rains fail. Food assistance had yet to be distributed when the interviews were conducted.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: agricultural employment, grain loans, livestock sales at a cheap rate

Men's focus group: selling livestock, labor migration, going to resettlement areas (in the past)

Changes in coping practices

Women reported that people used to give one another grain loans to a greater extent in the past. Men stated that the demand for hired labor has decreased, and that resettlement areas no longer exist as an outlet.

Impact of severe food shortages

People clearly identified impoverishment as a major impact. Men reported the death of people and livestock, as well as out-migration. Women cited malnourishment and the selling of livestock as key impacts.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

People mentioned that grain prices increased, while livestock prices sharply declined. Women pointed out the decline in wood prices, and men cited the decrease in demand for laborers. Compared to the past, the men believed that grain prices had reached higher levels. The women suggested that conditions were similar to previous times of severe food shortage in Gerado.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

The kebele received food-for-work, totaling 12.5 kilos of grain per person for 1,000 people. The women stated that the landless and resettlers were the main beneficiaries of this assistance, which was reportedly issued about four times. A much greater amount of assistance in terms of grain and other items (such as blankets) was received during the 1984-5 famine.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought, crop disease (*wag*), frost

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

The women reported that among kinfolk, people would exchange labor, give cash, and take-in children during times of stress. They stated that among neighbors, people will also exchange labor, as well as provide grain loans and invite hungry friends for meals. The men said that people lent grain, food, and pack animals, though these exchanges have decline since everyone now is poor.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

Both the men and women agreed that people no longer are able to help one another due to the widespread shortages and impoverishment.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

People felt that the extent of assistance has declined.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, the burial-assistance society, operates in the Gerado. Although it is open to all households, membership requires a Birr 30 entrance fee. Kebele officials estimated that 1,100 households

belong to it. It plays no special role during times of food shortage. During such periods fewer people participate in, or contribute to, the organization. But the men reported that the overall membership in kire has increased, along with a rise in the entrance fee.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

No NGOs operate in Gerado.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

(1) Open projects to provide employment; (2) open health center and clinic; and (3) increase the involvement of private entrepreneurs.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

Both the women and men in Gerado identified the need for a project to create employment. The women contended that relief alone was not of much use in the long run. They also said the lack of a health center should be address.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was carried out with the kebele chairman, treasurer, two capacity builders, social sector head, and justice/security head. All six were men. There were seven women in their focus group (aged 26, 26, 27, 35, 35, 38, 45) and eight men (aged 30, 30, 32, 32, 38, 50, 60, 70) in their focus group.

Kebele/number: Tebasit (021)
Wereda: Dessie Zuria

Date visited: 5 April 1999

Field Researchers: Yigremew Adal (Key Informants/Women's Focus Group) and Yared Amare (Men's Focus Group)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: Not recorded

Estimated population: 10,155

Number of households: 1,500 (taxpayers)

Number of female-headed households: 324 (taxpayers)

Religious Groups as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 95%

Christian: 5%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100%

Distance from all-weather road: 0 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 30 km

Distance from nearest bank: 30 km

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 1

Number of churches and mosques: 4 mosques, 1 church

Demography

Tebasit's population has grown in the past 10 years due to natural increase and the return of resettled people. Recently, some people have moved out of the community due to drought and hunger.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Dega

Cropping pattern: Double-cropping, with belg as the main season. No irrigation reported.

Crops: Barley, beans, peas, chickpeas, oat, linseed, kale, potato, garlic eucalyptus, juniper

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Barley (1), beans (2), peas (3)

Men's focus group: Barley (1), beans (2)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: "Greens," potato, garlic

Men's focus group: Kale (1), potato (2)

Note: The men reported that kale is grown exclusively by women.

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Barley

Men's focus group: Barley (due to crop failure, not much sold)

Bartering:

The women reported it focuses on grain, with people seeking seed for planting. It is carried out with people from other kebele (in the kolla zone). The men stated that nothing has been bartered recently due to low grain production.

Production Trend in Tebasit:

Decreasing in recent years, due to drought, erratic rainfall, and frost

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Landholding Pattern:

Average household landholding: ½ ha

Range of household landholding: 8 timad (2 ha) to ½ timad (0.125 ha)

Number of landless households: 64

Access to Agricultural Land

The men reported that farmland is obtained through land redistribution, but the women also identified inheritance, sharecropping and rental as important. The latter added that land rents for Birr 300-400 per timad, with sharecropping done a 50-50 basis. The women stated that the frequency of rentals has increased since land redistribution. They also said that sharecropping (yekul) now requires an up-front cash payment by the land borrower. In contrast, the men said that land transactions have not occurred since the early 1970s (EC). For grazing livestock, people mainly pasture their animals on individual land acquired through land redistribution.

Land Redistribution

Land redistribution occurred in Tebasit in either 1978 (EC) or 1980, and again in 1984 (EC). Land was taken originally from those who had large holdings to provide for the landless and land-poor, including female-headed households. The latter redistribution focused on the sizable holdings of former officials. It provided one timad to people who had returned from the resettlement schemes. The men stated that female-headed households received land but failed to benefit because of drought.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women: Decreasing yield, land scarcity

Men: Land scarcity (1), flooding/erosion (2), land exhaustion (3)

Water

People cited a lack of potable water, insufficient water for irrigation, and a lack of access to water for livestock.

Communal Resources

Local water points were the only communal resources, freely available to all members.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

The men reported a problem of surplus labor – the local workforce is underemployed.

Hired Labor

In the past people may have hired labor, but it is no longer done given the poor state of Tebasit's economy.

Reciprocal Labor

Both men and women reported that reciprocal labor is not used at the present time. In the past it provided a means to harvest quickly, thus avoiding risk.

Changes in Access to Labor

The men reported no changes in the past 10 years, since agriculture depends wholly on household labor. The women cited a decline in work opportunities and declining employment.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 97

Number of households receiving farm credit: 91

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: none

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA supplies credit for, and information on, fertilizer and hybrid seeds in Tebasit. The women reported that it also furnishes credit for the purchase of livestock to be fattened and sold. They said the programs involved poor, oxenless, and landless people who could work properly. The women added that the initial trend had been good, but, under present adverse conditions, these activities have been difficult to achieve.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The women mentioned the Amhara Savings and Credit Institution as a possible source of credit for agricultural activities.

Purposes of farm credit

The women stated that people use farm credits to finance small-scale grain trading, to obtain and to fatten livestock, and for buying chickens. The men said it has not been used so far this year for fertilizer and hybrid seeds, given the failure of the rains.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The women reported that the poor and individuals that cannot work do not get loans, especially given their lack of assets for collateral. The men also mentioned the unwillingness of agencies to issue credit. They further cited the lack of farm productivity and thus the resultant inability to repay any loan.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

People identified drought as a major constraint. The men added that hybrid seed has been in short supply.

Local savings

As in other communities, people in Tebasit save to provide a buffer during times of need and disaster. The men sadly observed that they had had no savings for several years. In good times savings takes place through the fattening of sheep, use of the gudguad (ground storage of grain), the hoarding of cash, and the giving out of sheep to one's social network. No community-based organizations were identified as having a role in mobilizing local savings.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Migrant labor, urban work, food-for-work, sale of tea, brewing, and tej (very few people)

Men's focus group: Migrant labor to coffee area, urban day labor

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling tea, bread, areki, and brewing

Men's focus group: None

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

People reported that these have survival value, allowing them to meet daily food needs.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The women cited a lack of demand for labor, plus the fact that migrant labor often means going to very distant places, with all the risks entailed by that. The men noted the lack of demand for local products.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 30 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 30 km; The kebele has a small local weekly market on Tuesdays

Number of retail shops: 2

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals, walking, and motor vehicles

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 2%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People in Tebasit buy food and other items for everyday use at nearby market centers and in the kebele marketplace. The women mentioned that people not only go to local shops, but they will also travel as far as Dessie's market. The men said that agricultural traders never visit the area, but the women reported that grain traders come weekly. The men stated that livestock traders go to the area once a month; in contrast, the women observed that goats, sheep, and chicken are usually sold locally by traders on a weekly basis.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

The women stated that maize, sorghum, vetch and other foodstuffs are obtained from other places. The men emphasized that it has been difficult to get such goods during the past five years due to drought.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, the landless, the elderly, families with many children, female-headed households, families without oxen or other livestock, people in remote areas, returned resettlers with little land, those residing in remote area, and, essentially, all local families

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: January to April

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1994-5 – cause: drought, pest, wurchi (climate); 1995-6 – cause: drought, pest, wurchi (climate); 1996-7 – cause: drought, pest, wurchi (climate); 1997-8 – cause: drought, pest, wurchi (climate); 1998-9 – cause: drought, pest, wurchi (climate)

Current situation

People reported widespread food shortages due to repeated crop failure. The men stated that most households now faced severe hunger.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Sale of livestock, eating livestock, off-farm employment, reduced consumption, out-migration, and eating wild roots and leaves

Men's focus group: selling livestock, off-farm employment, and urban day work

Changes in coping practices

The men emphasized that local herds have been greatly reduced during the last 10 years due to repeated drought sales. In the past people in Tebasit would have started selling livestock sooner in response to poor conditions, but today they simply lack the animals to do so. The women reported no changes in coping practices.

Impact of severe food shortages

People cited the loss of life, sickness, impoverishment, and out-migration as major consequences. The men also noted that labor migrants to the lowlands often died from malaria during these periods. Both men and women also described the harsh impact on livestock, with animals dying and herds being decimated through desperation sales.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

There is less food available in local markets. Grain prices have been rising, as well as the price of salt, sugar, and other commodities. In contrast, livestock prices have sunk. The men noted that livestock prices have been depressed for five years, and that they dropped steeply since last year. In comparing the present situation to the past, both men and women observed that grain is scarcer. According to the men, in the 1984-5 famine, for example, grain prices were not as high, and there was grain available locally. Today, prices are not only higher, but also at times grain cannot be found in the local market.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Tebasit reportedly received a little food-for-work aid in 1997-98. The men stated that the program provided 10 kilos of food per person every three months to the elderly, returnees from the resettlements who lacked land, and others who were absolutely food-deficient. Some food-for-work activities have been carried out in 1998-99, but the food had yet to be distributed at the time of the interview. In previous years the kebele also got food relief. The women observed that food assistance furnishes very little food and helps only a few people.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought, wurchi (climate), frost

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

The men and women reported that among kin and neighbors in the past, people typically lent cash, seed, and pack animals, gave gifts during weddings and funerals, and engaged in reciprocal labor arrangements for plowing, harvesting, and other tasks.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The men noted that such relations and exchanges helped people cope with difficulties, but both focus groups agreed that the present dire conditions do not permit households to share in the same manner.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Because of growing resource scarcity, people offer less assistance to one another. For example, the men mentioned that people are no longer willing to provide grain loans or to accept guests.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, the funeral assistance society, operates in Tebasit. It is open to all households, and officials claimed that everyone is a member. But the women noted that very poor people are unable to join. Kire plays no special role during times of severe food scarcity. In such periods membership usually declines and the association is less active in providing assistance. Sometimes it is unable to contribute to funerals.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

No NGOs operate in the kebele.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

To migrate; to design projects to create employment, including jobs for school dropouts.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

Both the women and men in Tebasit cited the need for a project to create employment. The men also emphasized the need for immediate assistance to deal with the present severe food shortage.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was carried out with members of the kebele executive committee, including the social sector head, the capacity builder, mobilization head, and the justice/security head. All four were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 24, 24, 35, 35, 40, 40, 40, 45) and eight men (aged 25, 28, 30, 35, 45, 45, 45, 53) in their focus group.

Because Tebasit served as one of the pre-test communities, additional information about it can be found in Castro (1999).

Kebele/number: Abechu (19)
Wereda: Kalu

Date visited: 6 April 1999

Field Researchers: Yared Amare (Key Informants/Women's Focus Group) and Yigremew Adal (Men's Focus Group)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: 20 gasha (about 40 ha)

Estimated population: 7,000

Number of households: 1,129

Number of female-headed households: 150

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 100%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100%

Distance from all-weather road: 2 km

Distance from seasonal road: --km

Distance from motorized transport: 2 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 46 km

Distance from nearest bank: 15 km

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 1

Number of churches and mosques: 13 zawyas

Demography

Abechu's population grew the past 10 years due to natural increase, the return of resettled people, and, recently, refugees from Assab who left because of the war. Some people recently moved from the community due to crop failure arising from crop failure arising from drought and plant disease.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Kolla

Cropping pattern: Single-cropping, with no significant irrigation reported.

Crops: Sorghum, teff, chickpeas, maize, millet, sesame, *adenguari*,¹¹ bananas, papayas, coffee, eucalyptus

¹¹ Possibly *Vigna unguiculata* cv.-group *Unguiculata* or *Phaseolus vulgaris*, a pulse (see Westphal with Westphal-Stevens 1975).

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), chickpea (3)

Men's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), chickpea (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: None

Men's focus group: None

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), chickpea (3)

Men's focus group: Sesame (1), sorghum (2)

Bartering:

The women said bartering took place up to four years ago. They traded to get foods grown in the woina dega zone, exchanging sorghum for beans or millet. People also bartered to obtain seeds, often trading sorghum for teff, or one variety of sorghum for another. The latter type of bartering generally occurred in April and May, the planting season. The men reported no bartering.

Production Trend in Abechu:

Decreasing production because of drought, crop disease, and pests

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Landholding Pattern:

Average household landholding: 4 timad

Range of household landholding: 8 timad to 1 timad

Number of landless households: 100

Access to Agricultural Land

People get access to farmland through land redistribution, sharecropping, and inheritance. Farmers with sufficient oxen and labor do sharecropping. They obtain land from those without oxen, labor, or seed. The women reported that the frequency of sharecropping has increased, but the overall types of land transaction have remained the same. The men noted no recent changes in such transactions. Livestock get pastured on individual plots, but the women also cited government forest and local communal lands.

Land Redistribution

Land redistribution happened in Abechu around 1972 (EC) – 1980. The landless received land at that time. More recently, the kebele allocated one timad to returned resettlers, ex-soldiers, and refugees from Assab, including female-headed household. Since the plots are so small, it is expected that these people will have to augment their income through non-farm means.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women: Crop disease (1), land scarcity (2)

Men: Land scarcity

Water

Abechu lacks potable water, and supplies are often far away from homes. The men pointed out the lack of adequate water for livestock and for irrigation. They also cited conflicts over the use of water among herders and others.

Communal Resources

The women described a nearby government forest where people graze livestock and cut fodder and thatching grass. Local administrators regulate the use of the forest. The men focused on water, saying that people generally had free access. Some individuals also sell potable water for a small charge.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

The women identified several types of households – the sick, the elderly, and the female-headed – that often suffer from labor scarcity. The men mentioned that during a good harvest, extra workers are always needed. Under present conditions, however, local people are unable to find sufficient employment. The men stated that the demand for labor has decreased in recent years. They also said that the price of labor has declined. In contrast, the women contended that the practice of hiring labor is actually increasing.

Hired Labor

The men reported that few people are hired locally as agricultural workers at present. Both women and men agreed that individuals with good quality land, oxen, and an adequate harvest often hire landless, poor people for a few days.

Reciprocal Labor

The women stated that about 25% of households engage in reciprocal labor exchange. The men contended that few families practice it at present, since farming conditions and harvests have been poor. People use reciprocal labor because it speeds up work, ensuring that planting and harvesting are done in a timely manner and thus reducing risk.

Changes in Access to Labor

As noted above, the practice of hiring labor may be increasingly commonplace, even while the demand for workers may be depressed because of poor farming conditions.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 222

Number of households receiving farm credit: 260

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 215

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA provides credit, fertilizer, and training. Fertilizer is distributed through direct sale and credit, with the latter involving farmers with sufficient land and other assets. Programs for providing credit for fattening livestock and for engaging in small-scale trade are reportedly aimed at poorer families.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

Concern, an NGO, provides farm credit to about 23 households. The women indicated that some merchants used to offer credit, but given the present poor conditions they no longer offer advances in grain or cash. The Amhara Credit and Savings Institution and the Rural Credit Association also operate in Abechu.

Purposes of farm credit

People use credit to purchase seeds, oxen, sheep, and goats.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The men stated that people who lack assets – such as land or livestock – do not qualify for credit. The women cited the frequent payments demanded by creditor agencies as a drawback. Such repayment can be problematic if the supplied inputs are ineffective due to drought or other factors. The women also mentioned that merchants sometimes demand high interest rates.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

People identified drought as a major constraint, since the application of inputs does not result in any significant increase in yields.

Local savings

People try to build up buffers for times of need and investment. The women specifically noted that savings are directed towards house building, educating children, and marrying them off. Several means are used to acquire and save resources, including loaning grain with interest; purchasing, breeding, and fattening livestock; and hoarding cash. The women also pointed out that some people engage in rotating credit groups with their neighbors. They identified it as a largely urban phenomenon. No community-based organizations are involved in mobilizing local savings.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Migrant labor (to maize and cotton growing areas), trading grain, spinning yarn, and food-for-work

Men's focus group: Handicrafts (weaving), migrant labor, and small trade

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Spinning yarn

Men's focus group: Small-scale grain trade

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

The women reported that only those who trade in grain are able to reduce such food shortages. The men claimed that such income sources were not significant in mitigating food shortages.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The women cited a lack of cash to engage in the grain trade. The men noted the poor labor market. In addition, migrant workers must go to distant places, encountering health hazards.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 2 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 2 km

Number of retail shops: 3

Main means of transporting goods: Camels, other pack animals, and walking

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 3%

Marketing strategies and patterns

Abechu residents purchase food and other items at nearby market centers, in the kebele marketplace, and at local shops. Agricultural and livestock traders visit the area every week.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

The women indicated that obtaining foods from other areas contributes significantly to local food security. People obtain maize and sorghum in the local market from merchants who brought it from Addis Ababa and Wollega. The men stated that people also obtained vetch, horse beans, and sorghum from other areas. Finally, the men observed that people had come recently to Abechu from the dega zone, begging for food – an indicator of widespread food shortages.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

Families with sick members, orphans, many children, the elderly, and those without livestock

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: June to September

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1982 (EC) – cause: drought, crop pests; 1990 (EC) – cause: drought, crop pests

Current situation

Abechu is experiencing a widespread and severe food shortage. The women said it started about three years ago. This year is becoming particularly difficult. The short rains did not appear. Now people have great expectations for rain in April and May. Otherwise, food insecurity and hunger will deepen within the community. There may be a lack of seed for planting in the future. The

women pointed out that merchants are no longer providing advances in grain or cash. As mentioned earlier, some people from the dega zone have come begging for food.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling wood and eucalyptus trees, seeking employment outside the community, and selling wood dismantled from one's house

Men's focus group: Selling livestock, selling firewood, migrating, reducing consumption, and eating the meat of slaughtered livestock

Changes in coping practices

The women observed that livestock sales are no longer possible because herds have been depleted by crisis sales in prior years. The men noted that people's ability to engage in such practices has generally deteriorated in Abechu.

Impact of severe food shortages

Both focus groups identified increasing human mortality, decreasing herds, growing impoverishment, and rising out-migration. The women cited a higher incidence of illness, while the men pointed out increased livestock mortality as well.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

People agreed that grain prices have risen substantially. The women pointed out that the price for sorghum has gone from Birr 1.25 to Birr 2.00, while pulses rose from Birr 1.50 to 2.50.

Meanwhile, livestock prices have dropped. The women stated that merchants no longer offer advances in cash or grain. Both focus groups observed that grain prices are higher than in past times of food shortages, while livestock prices are much lower. The women noted that during previous crop failures they could at least sell their livestock at a reasonable price.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Last year Abechu received food-for-work and food relief assistance. It was reported that some households received approximately 12.5 to 15 kilos per person for upwards of five months. Officials reported that the overall assistance amounted to less than had been received in the past during similar conditions.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought, crop disease

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

In the past considerable assistance and exchange occurred among kinsfolk and neighbors. Kinsfolk could be counted on to provide grain loans and other food assistance, labor exchanges, and livestock endowment for children. Similarly, neighbors engaged in cash and grain loans, labor exchange, and borrowing.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The men stated that food aid and borrowing among kinfolk and neighbor help just to ensure survival. The women cited a lack of such assistance and exchanges at the present time, due to the severe and widespread food shortage. They said that such relations have not been very significant in helping individual households to survive.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Both focus groups cited a decline in the level of assistance between households and neighbors due to the community's increasing impoverishment.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, the funeral assistance society, operates in Abechu. It is open to all households, and officials claimed that all 1,129 kebele heads of households are members. The focus groups agreed. They also pointed out that contribution to, and participation in, kire have declined because of the severe food shortage. Kire plays no special role in helping households survive during times of hunger.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

Concern, an NGO, has operated in Abechu since May 1998. It has provided oxen to about 23 households in the community. Beyond that, it has not had a role in addressing local food security. Officials reported that the Red Cross had operated in the kebele during the past.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

(1) Food-for-work activities (with food relief needed for those unable to work), (2) provision of crop pesticides, (3) initiation of irrigation.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

Both the men and women emphasized the problems created by the severe food shortage. The women also cited the high incidence of malaria, as well as the problem of distant sources of water supply. The men appealed to Allah for assistance.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the chairman, secretary, and social sector head of the kebele. All three were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 27, 29, 40, 40, 40, 50, and two not recorded) and eight men in their focus group (aged 38, 40, 50, 50, 50, 55, 56, 60).

Kebele/number: Kedida (07)
Wereda: Kalu

Date visited: 7 April 1999

Field Researchers: Yigremew Adal (Key Informants/Women's Focus Group) and Yared Amare (Men's Focus Group)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: 20 gasha

Estimated population: 4,000

Number of households: 1,500

Number of female-headed households: 300

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 100%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100%

Distance from all-weather road: 0 km

Distance from seasonal road: --km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 15 km (in Harbu)

Distance from nearest bank: 5 km

Number of health clinics: --

Number of schools: 0

Number of churches and mosques: 1

Demography

Natural increase, the return of people from the resettlement schemes, and refugees from Assab caused Kedida's population to grow in recent years. The number of people moving out of the community has reportedly decreased. Officials said that there appear to be no jobs in distant places, no Afar farms offering employment, and the resettlement program no longer exists.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Kolla

Cropping pattern: Double-cropping, with the meher the most important crop season. Limited irrigation for perennial and other crops occurs.

Crops: Sorghum, teff, wheat, millet, barley, oats, maize, chickpea, orange, sugar cane, eucalyptus, tomato, onions, potato, garlic, sweet potato, basil, kale

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), wheat (3)

Men's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), millet (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Tomato, garlic, onions, basil, kale, potato

Men's focus group: Potato (1), tomato (2), sweet potato, onion.

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Teff, sorghum

Men's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2)

Bartering:

The men reported that bartering takes place, chiefly to get food. It involves people from the highlands. Teff and sorghum from Kedida are exchanged for beans, barley, and lentils. Bartering occurs from January to May. The women reported no bartering.

Production Trend in Kedida:

Decreasing due to drought, crop disease, pests (especially worms), and land scarcity

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: ½ ha

Range of household landholding: 1 ha to 0.25 ha (25m x 25m plots)

Number of landless households: 500

Access to Agricultural Land

People get access to cropland through land redistribution, sharecropping, inheritance, and, according to the men, rental. Farmers with oxen do sharecropping, obtaining land from the elderly and those without draft animals. The men said that farmers with grain surpluses are the ones who rent land, getting it from grain-deficient families. Land rents for Birr 50 per timad. This is reportedly half the rent that people used to get in past. The men stated that land transactions such as sharecropping and rental have been increasing, but the women perceived no change in this regard. They pointed out, however, that land is becoming increasingly scarce.

Land Redistribution

Redistribution took place in Kedida around 1974 (EC) – 1981/82. The landless, the land-poor, ex-soldiers, resettlement returnees, and female-headed households got land through the years. Recently, some returned resettlers and ex-soldiers got plots measuring 50m x 50m, roughly enough land to permit them to pay taxes. The men said that female-headed households received land but it has been of little benefit due to poor farming conditions.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Land scarcity

Men's focus group: Land scarcity

Water

Both focus groups cited a lack of water for irrigation. The men also mentioned a lack of access to water for livestock.

Communal Resources

Local springs and streams are the only communal resources in Kedida, and they are available to all. The men mentioned a nearby government forest, where people sometimes illegally cut trees for sale during times of crop failure and food shortage.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

As in other communities, people in Kedida stated that poor agricultural conditions have resulted in a local labor surplus. Only the elderly, the sick, and, according to the men, female-headed households are chronically short of labor.

Hired Labor

Additional workers are often hired during bountiful crop seasons, but recent harvests have not been good. Hiring has declined because of diminishing cash and other resources in the local economy. The men stated that farmers who have sufficient grain employ a few young people on an annual basis. These workers receive a yearly sum of Birr 200.

Reciprocal Labor

The men reported that about 30% of the households engage in reciprocal labor exchanges. The women said few people did so because their farms are too small and the harvests have been poor. People stated that reciprocal labor allows them to complete tasks, such as harvesting, in a timely manner, avoiding loss. The men also noted that households who lack labor and cash ask for assistance.

Changes in Access to Labor

Poor farming conditions have reduced overall employment opportunities.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 200

Number of households receiving farm credit: 200

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 200

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA provides credit, fertilizer, hybrid seeds, pesticide, and extension services in Kedida. The men said that people who possessed irrigated land were given training, with half of them –

reportedly involuntarily – received fertilizer. The women stated that the extension program focuses on households with oxen.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The men mentioned Ambassel, a corporation, as another source of credit for agricultural activities.

Purposes of farm credit

Farm credit is used to purchase fertilizer. The men pointed out that loans also allow people to buy oxen and equipment.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The women said that farm credit is not available to many people because of their lack of assets. When it is available, such loans are not issued in a timely manner. Credit is only available for limited purposes – crop production – whereas people need loans for other reasons as well. Both focus groups emphasized that drought conditions have undermined the effectiveness of the activities for which farm loans were received. The men cited the short duration of the loans as a constraint. They also complained about the decline in price for livestock purchased through credit arrangements. Moreover, oxen obtained through loans have not been used for plowing due to drought.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

People identified drought, crop disease, and pests as major constraints in Kedida, since the application of inputs does not result in any yields. The men complained that the fertilizer does not give good results, yet agricultural officers still make the peasants purchase more of it. As mentioned above, livestock obtained for draft power and for fattening have not been able to retain their commercial value.

Local savings

People attempt to accumulate savings in cash and other forms for investment (such as livestock) and to serve as a buffer in times of need (for example, to buy grain during crop failures). The men added that people try to save to purchase clothing and to pay taxes. They cited sheep and goat breeding as one form of savings. The women described other mechanisms for saving: using the bank; hoarding cash and grain; and fattening livestock.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Selling wood, grass, and straw; migrant labor

Men's focus group: Day work for semi-skilled laborers

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Small-scale grain trade

Men's focus group: None

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

Both focus groups emphasized that these income sources were of very limited value.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The women said that no demand existed for their labor. They also lacked the assets and cash to carry out small trade. The men stated that rural workers must compete with urban residents for jobs in town. Their “peasant status” prohibits them from getting hired. They noted that the closing of state farms reduced their employment opportunities.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 5 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 5 km

The main market used is Kombolcha

Number of retail shops in the kebele: 3

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals and walking

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 2%

Marketing strategies and patterns

Kedida residents purchase food and other items at nearby marketplace, at local shops, and in Kombolcha. Agricultural traders visit Kombolcha market three times a week, while livestock traders come to Kombolcha twice a week. These traders do not sell or buy within the kebele.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

People in Kedida reported getting many commodities from other places. The men said that people get beans, barley, and lentils from the highlands. The women observed that red pepper, coffee, horse beans, pea, and chickpea are imported into the area.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, the landless, the land-poor, those without livestock, and female-headed households

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: July to October

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1996/97 up to the present – caused by bad weather (periods of excessive rains and drought) and pests

Current situation

Kedida is suffering from repeated crop failures and widespread food shortages. The men pointed out that the problems are compounded by the lack of alternative sources of income. The women appealed to Allah and to the government for assistance.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling livestock, firewood (including dismantled houses), and corrugated iron (also take from their houses); reducing consumption; eating wild fruits; and going to resettlement areas

Men's focus group: Selling crop residues, privately owned eucalyptus trees, and trees illegally cut from the government forest

Changes in coping practices

The women pointed out that the resettlement program no longer exists, and that migrant labor is not possible. They added that livestock prices are very low in comparison to the past. The men said that in previous times more livestock was sold earlier.

Impact of severe food shortages

The women cited the death of people, poverty, and hunger. The men identified an increase in the incidence of disease, including malaria and respiratory illness. They also cited malnutrition and the selling of materials dismantled from houses.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Both focus groups noted the increase in the price of grain and the decrease in the price of livestock. The men pointed out that maize has risen from Birr 0.80 to Birr 1.35 per kilo, while the price of oxen has dropped from Birr 1,000 to Birr 400. They said that in the 1984-85 famine, the price of grain was not as high as now because of relief assistance. Moreover, there was more grain available in the market at that time than at the present. The men added that the condition of livestock was worse during 1984-85. Although the animals are in better condition at this time, the current prices are as low as 1984-85.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Last year Kedida received both food-for-work and food relief assistance. The men reported that 1,000 individuals were engaged in the food-for-work scheme, receiving 50 kilos per five-person household. This ration was distributed about four times. The women stated that no assistance has been given this year. Officials noted that in the past the community received a higher allocation of grain from the government. NGOs such as Concern were also involved in prior years distributing food aid and special assistance for children. Finally, the kebele officials said that they have difficulties selecting food aid recipients, given the limited amount of resources available for assistance.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought and land scarcity.

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

The men observed that kinfolk and neighbors ideally help one another through grain contributions at weddings, grain loans in times of need, cash loans for the purchase of animals, and the loaning

of oxen for draft purposes. The women stated that such practices occurred in the past but have been stopped due to growing local impoverishment.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The men observed that the loaning of oxen for plowing, the issuing of cash loans to purchase grain, and the lending of grain till the borrower can return it are all survival strategies followed by people. Again, the women stated that such practices have declined in recent times.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Both focus groups cited a decline in the level of assistance between households and neighbors in Kedida due to the community's increasing impoverishment. In particular, the men noted that fewer grain loans and advances for livestock purchase are given nowadays.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, the funeral assistance society, operates in the community. It is open to all households in Kedida. The focus groups agreed. Due to the food crisis, there has been a decline in participation in, and contributions to, kire. The men reported that some households have terminated their monthly contribution. The organization plays no role in helping households survive times of food shortages.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

No NGO operates in the kebele at present.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Appeal to Allah. The officials also complained that researchers – such as this team – do not report the local situation correctly. More people in Kedida need assistance due to the severe situation.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The women appealed to Allah and the government for assistance. The men emphasized the widespread food shortages, the lack of employment, the high incidence of malaria and malnutrition, and the problem of peasants having to purchase fertilizer despite its failure to yield satisfactory results.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the chairman and social sector head of the kebele. Both officials were men. There were five women in their focus group (aged 20, 23, 40, 43, 45) and eight men in their focus group (aged 32, 43, 57, 58, 59, 68, 69, 80).

Kebele/number: Abet (012)
Wereda: Ambassel

Date visited: 8 April 1999

Field Researchers: Yared Amare (Key Informants/Women's Focus Group) and Yigremew Adal (Men's Focus Group)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: Not recorded

Estimated population: 5,274

Number of households: 1,500

Number of female-headed households: 200

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Christian: 99%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: Not recorded (presumably around 100%)

Distance from all-weather road: 5 km

Distance from seasonal road: 5 km

Distance from motorized transport: 5 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 5 km

Distance from nearest bank: -- km

Number of health clinics: --

Number of schools: 1

Number of churches and mosques: 3

Demography

The population of Abet grew due to natural increase and the returned of resettled families.

Recently, refugees from Assab moved into the kebele. There has been some movement out of the community as well because of declining agricultural production.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Dega

Cropping pattern: Double-cropping, with the belg rains the most important cropping season. No irrigation reported.

Crops: Barley, horse beans, peas, oat, lentils, wheat, teff, maize, hops, kale, "greens," onion, garlic, eucalyptus

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Barley (1), beans (2), peas (3)

Men's focus group: Barley (1), horse beans (2), peas (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Kale (1), onion (2)

Men's focus group: Greens, garlic

Note: The women reported that kale and onion are grown exclusively by women.

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Peas (1), lentils (2), beans (3), barley

Men's focus group: Barley, horse beans, peas

Bartering:

The women reported that bartering occurs, especially around December and January. Peas and lentils will be exchanged with lowlands for sorghum and teff.

Production Trend in Abet:

Decreasing because of drought (or excessive rain in some years), pests, crop rust, hail, and land scarcity.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 2 timad (0.5 ha)

Range of household landholding: 3 timad (0.75 ha) to 0.5 timad (0.125 ha)

Number of landless households: 300

Access to Agricultural Land

People in Abet obtain access to farmland through land redistribution, yekul (sharecropping), and inheritance. Land-hungry farmers with oxen and surplus labor do sharecropping, obtaining land from the elderly, women, and those without draft animals. The men reported that yekul arrangements now require that the farmer provide money to the landholder ahead of time in the form of a loan. The harvest is split on a 50-50 basis. The women observed no changes in land transaction. Both groups agreed that land is becoming increasingly scarce. The men noted that the increasingly smaller holdings result in less output per farm.

Land Redistribution

Some time ago the community underwent radical land redistribution. Further redistribution occurred in Abet during the early 1990s, with land given to returned resettlers and some landless, including female-headed households. They received very small plots. According to the women, these parcels yield only about 30 cans of grain, enough food for two to three months.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: (1) Land scarcity, (2) land exhaustion

Men's focus group: Land scarcity, decreased productivity, loss of soil fertility

Water

The men cited a lack of water for irrigation. The women said no problems existed.

Communal Resources

Local springs and streams are the only communal resources, and they are available to all.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

Only the elderly, the sick, and female-headed households suffer from labor shortages. For some families the problem is excessive labor – not enough work is available.

Hired Labor

Both focus groups said that very little hiring takes place due to the small size of the farms and the poor state of the local agricultural economy.

Reciprocal Labor

Both focus groups reported very little reciprocal labor occurring.

Changes in Access to Labor

Both the men and women reported few or no changes regarding labor.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 60

Number of households receiving farm credit: 300

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 300

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA provides credit, fertilizer, hybrid seeds, livestock and poultry improvement, and extension services. Both groups agreed that the supply of credit for fertilizer and seed is aimed at better-off households. Credit for fattening livestock is also offered to poorer families. Bee keeping soon will be promoted, with poorer households to be included. Because of the drought, crop failure, and lack of forage, these programs are not seen by the focus groups as having had a substantial impact in Abet.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The men mentioned the Amhara Credit and Saving Institution.

Purposes of farm credit

It is used to purchase fertilizer and animals, including oxen and sheep for fattening.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

Both focus groups said that credit is in short supply. They noted that repeated droughts have impoverished people, making it difficult to obtain loans. The women stated that the Ministry of Agriculture is not issuing loans to poor households.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

Drought and, ironically, excessive rain undermined the performance of purchased inputs.

Local savings

People try to save money and resources for investment, for purchase of consumer goods such as clothing, and to serve as a buffer during times of stress, such as drought and bad harvests. Accumulating and fattening livestock has been a major mechanism of saving. The men reported that people also hoard cash. No community organizations are involved in mobilizing local savings. Officials noted that people are not able to save enough on their own to get through the difficult years.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Urban work in nearby town, carrying loads

Men's focus group: Migrant labor, handicrafts (few people), and food-for-work (only recently started, now food distributed yet)

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Urban work, grinding hops, collecting water

Men's focus group: None

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

The men reported that migrant labor used to be important in the past, but it is no longer feasible. There are many health hazards in distant places. The women stated that only a few people from Abet are able to obtain work in the town.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

People cited the general lack of employment and income-earning opportunities in Abet.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 5 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 5 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: 1

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals and walking

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 0%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People go to the nearby market center, which is Wuchale. They also go to the shop in the kebele. Agricultural and livestock traders venture to Wuchale's market once a week. They never come to the kebele.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

As mentioned earlier, people obtain sorghum and teff through exchange with lowlanders. The men also identified red pepper and coffee as commodities brought into the area.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

Female-headed, the landless, the elderly, households with many children, and those without livestock

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: April to May in much of the kebele, but from April to October in its lowlands

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1987 (E.C) due to drought; 1988 (E.C) due to hailstorms; 1989 (EC) due to crop disease; 1990 (EC) due to hail storms; 1991 (EC) due to drought and hailstorms.

Current situation

Abet is suffering severe problems due to drought and, in some locales, excessive rain and hail damage. The women reported that widespread food shortages exist. There is impending hunger. Those who returned from the resettlement schemes, with their tiny plots, are especially impoverished and vulnerable in the present situation. The men appeal to God and to the government for assistance.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Relief assistance, purchase of cheap grains from other areas, selling wood and eucalyptus trees, and selling wood and other materials dismantled from houses.

Men's focus group: Selling livestock, seeking off-farm employment, reducing consumption, and selling firewood.

Changes in coping practices

The men reported that as resources become scarcer, these practices are proving less useful. Livestock prices have decreased substantially, and very little off-farm income is available. The women observed that relief assistance was much greater in 1984-85, when NGOs were involved.

Impact of severe food shortages

The women cited physical exhaustion and malnutrition. The men mentioned the death of people and livestock, increased poverty, and a higher incidence of disease.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

People agreed that grain prices are higher. The women stated that a can of sorghum used to be Birr 1.50, but now sells for 2.00. The price of maize has risen from Birr 1.00 a can in December to its present price (in April) of Birr 1.70. At the present maize and white sorghum remain available in the market. Both the men and women felt that grain prices were not as high in the 1984-85 famine. The two focus groups also reported that livestock prices have dropped below the levels from the 1984-85 famine. The women cited the example of sheep, which sold for Birr 50 in 1984-85 but now only fetch Birr 20.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Both food-for-work and food relief were issued last year in Abet. Officials reported that 12.5-kg per person for upwards of five persons were issued about five times to poorer households. The women stated that everyone in the kebele received 5 kg per person of food about three times last year. The men stated that food aid was issued last September, but no more. The officials said that the assistance was far below the levels received in 1984.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought, hailstorms, untimely rain, and land shortages.

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

The women cited kinfolk and neighbors helping one another through grain loans, gifts of grain and seed, and sharing oxen. But both focus groups said that such assistance is at a minimum because of the current food shortage.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

These self-help practices have declined due to severe food shortages.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Since people have become poorer and poorer, no assistance is possible.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, the funeral assistance society, operates in Abet. Two religious organizations – meheber and senbete – also exist. These groups are reportedly open to all, and officials estimated that the 1,500 households are members of them. However, the women reported that families who are unable to hold feasts couldn't join the religious associations. None of the groups play a role in helping households survive periods of severe food shortage. And all of them have been hurt in terms of participation and contributions by the severe agricultural and food conditions.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

No NGO operates in the kebele.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Create employment through a project in the kebele.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The women emphasized the severe food problems, especially the current predicament of the returned resettlers. The men appealed to God and to the government for assistance.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele's chairman, secretary, treasurer, and economic sector head. All four officials were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 30, 36, 40, 40, 41, 60, 66, 67) and eight men in their focus group (aged 30, 30, 48, 51, 58, 60, 62, 76).

Kebele/number: Mariye (09)
Wereda: Ambassel

Date visited: 9 April 1999

Field Researchers: Yigremew Adal (Key Informants/Women's Focus Group) and Yared Amare (Men's Focus Group)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: Not recorded

Estimated population: 5,555

Number of households: 1,111

Number of female-headed households: Not recorded

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 25%

Christian: 75%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 95%

Distance from all-weather road: 13 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: -- km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 20 km

Distance from nearest bank: 50 km

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 1

Number of churches and mosques: 5

Demography

Mariye's population has grown due to natural increase and the return of ex-soldiers and of people from the resettlement program. Until recently, the number of people moving out of the community has decreased. Drought and food shortages, however, have pushed out some families.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Dega and woina dega

Cropping pattern: Double-cropping, with the meher rains the most important cropping season. The men reported limited irrigation, used mainly for raising vegetables.

Crops: Sorghum, teff, maize, horse beans, peas, barley, chickpeas, lentils, wheat, oats, kale, cabbage, carrot, melon, beet, garlic, eucalyptus, hops, chat, coffee, juniper (*tid*), cactus

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), maize (3)

Men's focus group: Red sorghum (1), teff (2), maize (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Kale, garlic

Men's focus group: Carrots (1), kale (2), beet (3), melon, cabbage

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Sorghum, barley

Men's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), pea (3)

Bartering:

Both focus groups identified bartering as a means of obtaining food and seed. Within the kebele households will trade, for example, beans for sorghum. The people of Mariye also trade with people from the lowlands. Such exchanges typically include beans for sorghum; lentils and peas for teff; peas and beans for coffee; beans for cotton. Much of it occurs in October and January.

Production Trend in Mariye:

Decreasing because of drought, pests, and crop disease

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 1 timad (0.25 ha)

Range of household landholding: 5 timad (1.25 ha) to 0.25 timad (0.06 ha)

Number of landless households: 211

Access to Agricultural Land

People obtain access to farmland through land redistribution, yekul (sharecropping), and inheritance. As in other communities, people unable to farm the land themselves arrange with families who possess sufficient oxen and labor to work the land. The harvest is split 50-50. The men perceived that such transactions have been decreasing, while the women reported no change. The grazing of livestock largely occurs on individual plots and a small patch of communal land.

Land Redistribution

Radical land redistribution occurred in Mariye around 1976 (EC) – about 1984. Landless and land-poor families received plots taken from land-surplus households. The men reported that former tenants became self-sufficient, and landholdings were made equal at that time. Both focus groups said that female-headed households received land equal to other families. The women said that land scarcity worsened in the community.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Land scarcity, soil infertility

Men's focus group: Land scarcity (1), inequality in landholding (2)

Water

People reported a lack of water for irrigation and for livestock use. The women noted the lack of potable water, while men observed that water supplies are too distant.

Communal Resources

Local springs and streams are the main communal resources, and they are available to all. The women mentioned a small patch of communal pasture, but no information was collected about it.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

As in other communities, many families in Mariye have surplus labor owing to land shortage and the drought. Labor shortages occur in a few households – among the elderly and female-headed families.

Hired Labor

When the rains are good, some local hiring of labor takes place. People who lack sufficient labor – including families with many small children or ones attending school – will employ the landless, the poor, and resettlers.

Reciprocal Labor

The men reported that 100% of the families engage in reciprocal labor arrangements, but the women stated that very few households are involved. People agreed that exchange labor helps speed up completion of tasks. Plowing can be completed before the rains stop, and harvesting gets finished before the rains spoil the produce.

Changes in Access to Labor

The decline in agricultural production has decreased the demand for farm workers.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 300

Number of households receiving farm credit: 300

Number of households actively involved with farm credit: 300

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA provides extension services and credit for fertilizer, hybrid seeds, livestock and poultry improvement in Mariye. Both focus groups reported that the MOA programs are aimed at poor farmers as well as those with oxen and larger holdings. But both focus groups stated that the MOA lacks sufficient resources to reach all the households in need.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The women mentioned the Amhara Credit and Saving Institution. The men cited the Rural Development Bank and also farmers who lend money.

Purposes of farm credit

People use loans to buy fertilizer and livestock.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

Not enough credit is available to cover all farmers in Mariye. Because of poverty and drought, some households are unable to pursue loans. The drought has undermined activities supported by loans, substantially reducing their output. Some farmers have not repaid their MOA loans, and this prevents other members of their credit group from getting financial support. The insistence that farmers repay fertilizer loans, despite the serious crop failure, is said to be worsening the local food security situation.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

Prolonged drought, pests, and other problems have hurt agricultural productivity. In these conditions fertilizer has not raised yields significantly. The focus groups observed that livestock purchased through loans have become too weak to sell.

Local savings

The focus groups emphasized that people try to save for survival in times of need and drought. They both identified the fattening of sheep as a key savings mechanism. The women also cited the hoarding of cash. The men reported storing grain in gudguad and using banks for savings.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Migrant labor and food-for-work

Men's focus group: Migrant labor (only a few households), food-for-work, and spinning yarn

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Small-scale grain trading and brewing local beverages

Men's focus group: Spinning yarn and weaving

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

Both focus groups said that these income sources were not significant in mitigating severe food shortages in Mariye.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The women cited the lack of demand for labor. They also said that migrant labor is difficult because of the distance and the health hazards involved. The men noted that the closing of Assab reduced the opportunity for migrant labor. They also stated that poor transport – both in terms of

roads and vehicles – prevented trade, including the sale of wood. The main market for the kebele is over 20 km away.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 25 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 25 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: 1

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals and walking

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 0%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People in Mariye buy their food and goods at the kebele marketplace, which meets twice a week, as well as at the local service cooperative, nearby markets, and the outlying main market. The focus groups indicated that agricultural and livestock traders visit the area at least once a week.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

As described in the section on bartering, the people of Mariye are actively engaged in obtaining commodities from other areas. In addition to the crops described earlier, the focus groups also reported importing maize, wheat, and white sorghum.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, female-headed households, the landless, the elderly, households with many children, those without livestock, and the land-poor

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: April to May and August to September

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1993/94 – due to drought and pests; 1998/99 – due to drought, floods, and pests

Current situation

People are experiencing severe food shortage this year. Both focus groups emphasized that the kebele required immediate food assistance. The women said they were praying for the future, and also asking the kebele administration to report the situation to the government. People reported that some families have already started leaving the kebele in search of food, work, and relief. The officials stated that whether the rains come or not, relief is urgently required, or deaths will soon follow.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling livestock, eating meat from slaughtered livestock, migrant labor and other off-farm employment, and reducing consumption

Men's focus group: Moving to other areas to beg for food

Changes in coping practices

The women reported that the effectiveness of these practices has deteriorated. The market for livestock has declined, and no off-farm employment can be found. The men perceived little change in these practices.

Impact of severe food shortages

The women cited starvation, growing poverty, and reduced resistance to diseases. The men reported deaths and movement out of the area.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Both focus groups claimed that grain prices had risen considerably, exceeding the levels experienced in the 1984 famine. They also stated that livestock prices had fallen rapidly. The men emphasized that better conditions existed for livestock in 1984, and prices for animals were higher at that time.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Food-for-work and food aid were provided last year in Mariye. Officials reported that a small number of families were issued 50 kg of food five times during the year. The men stated that poorer peasants were given 12 kg of food per person for a family of five. They received it five times. Compared to the past, food distributions were quite small. Officials recalled that in 1984 the community received more food and other assistance from the government and NGOs.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought, pests, and land scarcity

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

Under ideal conditions, people provide different sorts of assistance to kinfolk and neighbors. The men specified that people would give grain loans, seed loans, cash loans, grain and cash gifts, as well as share oxen for farm work.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

These practices have declined this year due to severe food shortages. People do not find it possible to help one another as in the past.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

The men observed that the nature of such assistance and exchanges still remains intact, but the current severe shortage of food and income compels such practices to be held to a minimum.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, for funeral assistance, operates in the community. Meheber and senbete, the religious associations, are also found in Mariye. Almost all families belong to kire, and about one-fourth of the community are members of meheber and senbete. The women reported that very poor people who are unable to pay the entrance fee (Birr 15) couldn't join kire. The severe food shortages have reduced the activities of these organizations, especially meheber and senbete. None of these organizations plays a role in helping households survive periods of food shortage.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

No NGO operates in Mariye.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Family planning and birth control; using quick-maturing seeds, and providing food assistance. Officials also called for immediate aid to stave off deaths from hunger.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

Both focus groups asked for prompt assistance for their community. In addition, men drew attention to a number of other local concerns: the lack of transport, the need for more local schools, the lack of an adequate health clinic, and the need for electricity in the nearby small town.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele's chairman, secretary, social sector head, and economic sector head. All four officials were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 37, 38, 39, 40, 40, 45, 45, 52) and seven men in their focus group (aged 34, 35, 42, 48, 53, 54, 55).

**BASIS/IDR
Community Assessments**

**Kebele Profiles, Part II:
Werebabo, Kutaber, and Tenta Weredas
in South Wello Zone**

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Introduction to Part II

This report is the second in a series presenting the findings from rapid community assessments carried out as part of the project entitled “From Household to Region: Factor Market Constraints to Income and Food Security in a Highly Diverse Environment, South Wello, Ethiopia.” The project is a collaborative effort between the BASIS Horn of Africa Program and Addis Ababa University, Institute for Development Research (IDR). This report contains the results from fieldwork conducted by Yigremew Adal and Demeke Deboch from May 2-8, 1999. They surveyed six communities located in three South Wello weredas – Werebabo, Kutaber, and Tenta. The communities covered a range of local agroecological settings in the northern and central part of the zone. The report provides a concise socioeconomic profile of each kebele, covering 10 aspects: basic community characteristics; agriculture; land, water, and communal resources; agricultural labor; agricultural inputs, credit, and local savings; non-agricultural and off-farm income earning; marketing; food security; community relations and community-based organizations; and additional local views and priorities. Following this “Introduction” are descriptive notes about Werebabo, Kutaber and Tenta by Yigremew Adal. These insightful observations, derived from his field diary, supply more details about the weredas, the communities, and their predicaments, revealing the gravity of the food situation in mid-1999. Alfonso Peter Castro prepared the report.

Additional Notes by Yigremew Adal

Werebabo Wereda

Werebabo looked bleak, no rain yet. About 40,000 people are identified as in need of urgent food aid. People were very much aggrieved with the fertilizer issue. People were speaking about individuals death of starvation. Elderly people and children are reported to be at a critical stage most unable to move out of their home. At Bistima, there was World Food Programme’s store already handed over to the Amhara Relief and Development Organization (ARDO). Officials told me some food has been brought but ARDO was not yet prepared to distribute it. The wereda officials were waiting for forms and guidelines from ARDO for the food distribution. They complained that they were simply registered in the extension program and provided with fertilizer without considering the weather situation. They had the fertilizer at home without use but they were urged to pay for it. They complained that they could not pay last year debt and still they had to take more in fear of not being labeled as opposing the government’s Five Year Development Plan (may be the five-year program of food self-sufficiency).

Kutaber Wereda

Kutaber’s Meher season appeared to be totally hopeless. Most of the landscape is the worst terrain I saw in South Wello: very stony, steep and bare. Officials informed me that many people had already migrated, particularly Belg croppers. Out of 105,000 people in Kutaber, about 45,000 were identified by the Wereda Early Warning Committee as being in a dire need of food aid. People informed me that a sizable number of people have already left the area, including some

kebele officials. In Alasha-Werkaria, people told me 78 people have already died of starvation, including husbands and wives. They said that even if rain comes, they had no seeds to plant.

They also complained about lack of demand and low prices for their eucalyptus trees. Among the factors they mentioned resulting in low price is the recent government tax on traders who buy eucalyptus from those areas. They mentioned that now the tax rate is one Birr per a medium-size eucalyptus log, while it was thirty-five cents before. Ye Mahiber Den (communal forests) were another source of complaint. A peasant commented that it is a “disease”. They complained: “ We planted those trees on our own previous holdings. But they do not belong to us; we are unable to use them even in such a critical time. What community trees are they? Some starved people cut trees at nights for sale, then we will be holding meeting after meeting to identify those who cut trees. How boring a task it is. This is what we gained from such forests”.

Those people also complained about fertilizer loans and other credits. They noted that these things are impoverishing the peasants. No excuses are allowed for the forgiving of debt, although animals bought from the loans die or crops fail because of the severe drought. The people mentioned that they must borrow from others to pay the farm-loan debt. Moreover, they complained that rural credit was not accessible to the poorer who do not have guarantee (assets). The peasants said that during the time of the Emperor and the Derg regimes such farming debts would be canceled.

In the areas especially north of the wereda capital, I saw no vegetation on the steep cliffs. An Italian NGO, Recerca Italian Rural Development Project, used to do some rural development activities there. Its offices and other premises were still there but in a bad condition. Some peasants told me that Recerca was providing them important services. Swedish Philadelphia mission (NGO) was functioning in the area (at Kundina) but people told me its activities were very limited. In the same Kebele I found a grain mill (functioning) and an inactive shop belonging to Agricultural Service Cooperative. Peasants I talked to appreciate very much the grain mill service as it was the only one in the area.

A very distinct element in Kutaber was the existence of a very vast communal grazing land (Boru Meda) which survived the population pressure and all other factors. People have a belief related to the field that makes it taboo to plow any part of it. This belief is that anyone who plows the field will face a disaster such as the death of people and animals.

Tenta Wereda

Along the Dessie - Tenta road, particularly starting from Tebasit (30 km from Dessie), I saw maybe the worst of all places I visited. A highland plateau area was bare, with no trees, and no crops. This was Belg producing area which had no rain up to May. Every plot was prepared for planting. A lot of elderly people were soliciting for food alongside the road and also in those small town-like settlements. Some dead animal bodies had been lying about, and all types of animals (except dogs) were skinny. On the way to Tenta, I had to go to Akesta, Legambo wereda, to arrange for the future fieldwork there. Officials told me that DPPC high officials had

visited the area during the last week of April. On May 6, 1999, I saw people receiving relief food (from World Food Programme) and officials told me it had started a week before. According to the wereda officials, 94,000 people were identified as in need of emergency food aid. Many had left the area, however, and food aid was arranged only for 39,000 people. By that time, officials reported that those people who had left the area were coming back as they heard about the food distribution.

We saw many starved people digging the ground to collect roots of grass for their animals (this act may damage the soil for future agricultural use) and many others collecting tiny green wild plants like *samma* to eat for themselves. I visited a small open market place at a village called Tullawaliya, at the juncture of the Akesta-Tenta road. Three eggs sold for Birr 1, and one sheep skin at Birr 1, but a bundle of grass sold for Birr 3. People told me that grain prices were very high compared to even a month before (I did not know the measure they used because it was based on local containers). The reason for such low sheep skin prices was obvious, as many animals were dying and their skin quality was very poor. Some of the animals were not salable at all. People at the market told me that it had become risky in terms of one's health to eat the meat of animals who suffered from a shortage of feed.

When we reached Ajibar, capital of Tenta, we saw many people receiving food aid. Wereda officials told us ARDO was doing the distribution. I visited a weekly market at Ajibar town. I found that a kilo of each crop was approximately (of course I have weighed those containers for each crop using scale) Teff (red) was Birr 2.37; white Birr 2.66; sorghum Birr 2.40; maize Birr 2.40. At Amba Mariam, an adjacent kebele to Ajibar, a lot of people came to us to show and tell as that they were disabled as a result of eating too much vetch during the time of food shortage. A kebele official told as that their condition has been verified by a medical personnel. When we went to Watta kebele, about 37 km north of Ajibar, we found a rugged terrain with alarming gully erosion. In a small market place – weekly market called Guna – I found a lot of peasants selling vegetables and fruits. Coffee and sugarcane were the most significant ones. These are grown around the Beshillo river banks and this practice of utilizing such alluvial soils and wet lands is common both in Kutaber and Tenta.

Kebele/number: Gubissa (06)
Wereda: Werebabo

Date visited: 2 May 1999

Field Researcher: Yigremew Adal (Key Informant, Men's & Women's Focus Groups)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: 20 gasha

Estimated population: 5,394

Number of households: 1,205, plus 394 non-taxpaying families

Number of female-headed households: Not recorded

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 95%

Christian: 5%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 80%

Oromo 20%

Distance from all-weather road: 17 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 4 km

Distance from nearest bank: 50 km (in Dessie)

Number of health clinics: --

Number of schools: --

Number of churches and mosques: 1 church, many zawyas

Demography

Gubissa's population has expanded due to natural increase and the return of ex-soldiers, families from resettlements, and people from Assab. Because of drought and hunger, some people recently left the kebele. In one "got" alone 80 people or so reportedly moved in search of food and relief. On balance, however, population is increasing.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Woina dega

Cropping pattern: Double-cropping, with the belg rains the most important cropping season. No irrigation reported.

Crops: Maize, wheat, barley, horse beans, peas, oats, garlic, onion, carrot, kale, potato, eucalyptus

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Horse beans (1), maize (2), wheat (3)

Men's focus group: Maize (1), wheat (2), barley (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Garlic, onion, kale, potato

Men's focus group: Carrot, onion, garlic

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Wheat (1), barley (2), maize (3)

Men's focus group: Barley, horse beans, peas

Note: Sale of firewood also appears to be very important, given Gubissa's proximity to Bistima town.

Bartering:

People carry out bartering on a small scale throughout the year. It becomes especially important during the planting season. The people of Gubissa exchange with those from the lowlands (Kolla). They will trade horse bean, barley, or peas to get sorghum and other foods.

Production Trend in Gubissa:

Decreasing because of the cumulative impact of drought, torrential rain, hail, frost, pests, rust, crop disease, and loss of soil fertility.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 0.5 timad

Range of household landholding: 1.5 timad to 20m x 20m

Number of landless households: 25

Access to Agricultural Land

People in Gubissa obtained access to farmland through land redistribution, sharecropping, and inheritance. Individuals who cannot farm because of age, sickness, or lack of oxen arrange with farmers possessing resources to work the land under a 50-50 split. Nowadays the landholder expects to receive a cash loan before sharecropping begins. The men reported that some people from Gubissa obtain land in other kebeles through sharecropping. The grazing of livestock largely occurs on individual plots.

Land Redistribution

Land redistribution occurred around 1975 (EC) or 1976 (EC) – approximately 1984. Landless and land-poor families, included female-headed households, received land. The women reported that land became scarcer. The men stated that redistribution soon brought about crop failure. They contended that land redistribution was “a bad and cursed activity.”

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Land scarcity, soil infertility
Men's focus group: Land scarcity (1), soil infertility (2)

Water

The men cited many problems regarding water: lack of potable water, including conflicts over supplies for drinking; lack of access to water for livestock, and the drying up of streams and other water points. Both focus groups mentioned the lack of water for irrigation.

Communal Resources

Local springs and streams are communal resources, and they are available to all. As noted above, however, some conflicts were reported over access to water for drinking.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

With agricultural production in decline because of drought and other factors, there is no major demand for labor. But when harvests are good, labor is in scarce supply.

Hired Labor

When the rains are good, many farmers with good land and bountiful harvests will hire workers to help carry out tasks. The poor and people from large families seek employment. People from other kebeles will be hired during a good harvest. According to the men, laborers used to be paid in-kind with grain. Nowadays they are often paid in cash. The women stated that the cash wage has increased from Birr 1.50 or Birr 2.00 to Birr 3, but the rate for the in-kind payment of grain has stayed the same.

Reciprocal Labor

The focus groups reported that many households participate in *debo* and *wonfel* – reciprocal labor arrangements among kinfolk and neighbors.¹² *Debo* is essentially a form of festive labor, where a person will provide food for a large work party in order to carry out some urgent task. No reciprocity is expected. *Wonfel* involves small work parties, usually with the direct expectation of reciprocity among the members. The latter is more common. People practice reciprocal labor to plant and harvest in a timely fashion, thus avoiding the risk of crop loss.

Changes in Access to Labor

The main change has been the declining demand for agricultural labor. As in other communities, many households essentially possess a surplus of labor.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 1,205

Number of households receiving farm credit: 1,205

¹² The significance of traditional self-help labor sharing is highlighted in Yigremew Adal 1998.

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 1,205

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA provides extension services and credit for fertilizer, hybrid seeds, livestock improvement, and small-scale trading. According to officials, all households are required to take at least the fertilizer loan. Credit is also available for buying oxen, for fattening sheep, and other activities.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The focus groups mentioned the Amhara Credit and Saving Institution.

Purposes of farm credit

People obtain credit to buy fertilizer, hybrid seeds, sheep, goats, oxen, for helping to fatten animals, and to engage in small-scale trading.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The widespread availability of farm credit has not benefited the people of Gubissa. As mentioned above, people have been urged by agricultural officers to accept loans for fertilizer, seeds, and other purposes. The focus groups pointed out that fertilizer has become very expensive, therefore the loans involve taking on a substantial debt load. With the failure of the rains, the farmers are still told to take fertilizer loans. Drought and pests have undermined the application of these farm inputs and livestock purchases. Both focus groups bitterly complained that the overall result has been increased indebtedness and impoverishment. The men stated that in the midst of this severe crop failure, the loan administrators are asking for repayment loans; no excuses are accepted. They asked, “Why do they oblige us to take the loan without use?” Although they have yet to fully pay back previous fertilizer loans, and thus remain indebted, they are afraid to refuse the new loans for fear of being accused of opposing the government’s Five-Year Plan. The women said that loan officers are pressing hard for repayment, threatening to take their land away.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

The women observed that using inputs such as fertilizer is appropriate when the rains are good, but under present conditions it has only led to impoverishment. The men claimed that fertilizers have actually added to the crop losses during the current drought. Fields with fertilizer generally perform worse than those without.

Local savings

People seek savings in order to accumulate wealth, for improvements, and to use as a buffer during bad days. Forms of savings practiced in Gubissa include multi-year storage of grain, gudguad, fattening sheep, and buying livestock.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Agricultural wage labor, embroidery, selling firewood, migrant labor, urban work, brewing, handicrafts, food-for-work

Men's focus group: Small-scale trading, going to other kebeles to sharecrop, selling firewood, migrant labor, urban work, and food-for-work

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling firewood, food-for-work, embroidery, handicrafts, brewing, agricultural wage labor, migrant labor, urban work.

Men's focus group: Selling firewood

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

Both focus groups cited the present depressed demand for labor. The women also noted that the demand for firewood has declined. Thus, not much income has been generated by these activities. The men stated that when a demand for labor exists, such sources of income are important, but not now.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The demand is low for labor and local products.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 4 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 4 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: --

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals, walking, and motor vehicles

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 1%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People in Gubissa do much of their marketing in nearby Bistima. They also use the market at Bokekisa. Agricultural and livestock traders can be found in Bistima three times a week. The men reported that during some periods agricultural traders are in Bistima on a daily basis. Although livestock traders are often around, much of the trading in livestock is focused on one day a week.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

As mentioned in the bartering section, people from Gubissa regularly obtain farm commodities from the Kolla zone. Sorghum and red pepper are two key items.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, female-headed households, the elderly, households with many children, those without livestock, the land-poor, and people who live in the lower part (Kolla) of the kebele

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: February to August

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:
From 1995/96 to the present day, due to drought, frost, hail, pests, and rust

Current situation

Gubissa is experiencing a very severe food shortage due to the present drought and the cumulative effects of repeated crop failure. The women's focus group called it a famine. The men stated that livestock are dying and that people are forced to consume their seed reserve. Officials reported that people already are dying from hunger and that some have been driven to suicide. They also said that small groups of people have moved from the kebele in search of relief.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling firewood (including wood dismantled from their houses), selling household items, selling clothes, selling livestock, selling agricultural implements, and, for males, migrant labor

Men's focus group: Selling livestock, selling firewood (including wood dismantled from their houses), food-for-work, migration, urban work, reducing consumption, selling cow dung, seeking food aid

Changes in coping practices

Both focus groups agreed that it is increasingly difficult to cope with food scarcity in Gubissa, since many strategies are no longer effective. Compared to the past, job opportunities have decreased substantially, including the lack of food-for-work. The men cited the lack of migrant labor employment. There is no work available in Asayita or Wollega. The price for firewood has dropped, and there is essentially no demand of it. Both the men and women emphasized that selling livestock has become difficult, given the collapse in prices.

Impact of severe food shortages

Both focus groups identified dire consequences: death (including suicides), starvation, epidemics (fever), livestock mortality, and out-migration.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Food is available in the market, but its price has gone up sharply. Compared to 1984/85, grain prices today are much higher. At that time grain was always available in the local market, and its price was relatively low. Livestock prices are much lower today than in 1984/85. The women said that an ox could be purchased today for Birr 100, an extremely low price.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Only a small number of people benefited last year from food-for-work and food aid in Gubissa. Although many families sought assistance, the kebele received only a very limited allocation of wheat. In contrast, Gubissa received substantial assistance in 1984/85, including significant help from NGOs. Officials emphasized that now no NGOs operate in the community, and no food-aid relief had been received at the time of the interview in early May.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:
Drought, crop disease, frost, hail, and declining yields

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

Both focus groups stated that in past “good days” people helped one another through sharing, lending, donating, and other means of assistance. Nowadays such help is not possible because of the dire conditions. The women’s focus group said that these days not even brothers could help each other.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

Traditional forms of sharing have declined because of the current severe food shortage.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Such forms of assistance are almost non-existent at present.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, for funeral assistance, operates in Gubissa, but it has been weakened by the poor economic conditions. Although membership is open to everyone, a growing number of people are unable to continue contributing to it. Senbete, the religious association, halted its activities due to hard times. None of these organizations has played a role in helping households survive periods of food scarcity.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

Officials and the men’s focus group stated that no NGOs operate in Gubissa. The women said that one NGO was present but they could not identify its name. They said it had sponsored some food-for-work activities, but three months had passed without it providing grain.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Employment opportunities need to be sought for the community, such as a project that will provide jobs. The officials also stated that people are insistently asking for help because of the dire conditions, and more food and resources need to be allocated so they can meet their appeals. In particular, the food-aid quota for Gubissa must be raised.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The women drew attention to the severe food problem. Both focus groups called on the government to reduce the pressure to pay back fertilizer loans. The men also made an urgent appeal to the government for help, particularly for food, seed, and a raising of the local food-aid

quota. They said they had already reported their concerns to officials, but each level of the bureaucratic hierarchy only says that it has passed on their request to higher authorities. No help has been forthcoming.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele's chairman, secretary, social affairs head, and local party representative. All four officials were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 35, 37, 45, 55, 56, 60, 60, 60) and eight men in their focus group (aged 36, 37, 40, 45, 55, 58, 59).

Kebele/number: Challi (012)
Wereda: Werebabo

Date visited: 3 May 1999

Field Researcher: Yigremew Adal (Men's & Women's Focus Groups) and Demeke Deboch (Key Informants)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: Not recorded

Estimated population: 2,760

Number of households: 589, plus 200 non-taxpaying families

Number of female-headed households: 111

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 100%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100%

Distance from all-weather road: 44 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 27 km

Distance from nearest bank: 71 km (in Dessie)

Number of health clinics: 0

Number of schools: 1

Number of mosques: 2 mosques, 9 zawyas

Demography

Challi's population has increased due to natural increase and the movement of people into the kebele. The latter included the return of families from resettlements and refugees from the war in the North. It also included individuals who had migrated from the kebele but returned because they were sick or unable to find work. The recent drought and severe food shortage has caused some movement of people out of Challi in search of employment.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Kolla

Cropping pattern: Farming only during the meher rains. No irrigation reported.

Crops: Sorghum, sesame, teff, chickpea, pepper, eucalyptus, chat, haricot bean

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Sorghum, teff, chickpea, sesame
Men's focus group: Sorghum (1), sesame (2), teff (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Pepper

Men's focus group: Pepper

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Sesame (1), sorghum (2), teff (3)

Men's focus group: Sesame, sorghum

Bartering:

People in Challi barter with those in neighboring areas and in the dega zone. With the latter they exchange sorghum for barley, wheat, and horse beans. This trade occurs throughout the year.

Production Trend in Challi:

Decreasing due to drought, pests (including locust), and rust

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 0.5 ha

Range of household landholding: 1.5 ha to 0.25 ha

Number of landless households: 200

Access to Agricultural Land

Challi households obtain access to farmland through land redistribution, inheritance, and sharecropping. As in other areas, people who are unable to farm their land (such as the elderly, the poor, women, those without oxen) will hire out their holdings to farmers with sufficient oxen and labor. They will split the proceeds 50-50. Nowadays this division not only includes the harvested crops, but also any crop residues. The grazing of livestock takes place on individual plots and, according to the women, on a small patch of communal land. The men also noted that local livestock is taken to the Afar area, usually during April and May. However, they have encountered conflicts in doing so with a nearby kebele.

Land Redistribution

The redistribution of land has taken place three times in Challi – 1976 (EC), 1984 (EC), and 1985-86 (EC). The initial redistribution provided land to the landless and land-poor. The latter two occasions have been to provide land to people who have moved back into the community – returnees from Sefera in 1984 (EC) and from Assab and other places in 1985-86. Female-headed households have been beneficiaries of land redistribution. Both focus groups claimed that land redistribution has worsened land scarcity in Challi.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Land scarcity, soil infertility

Men's focus group: Land scarcity, soil infertility

Water

People cited many problems regarding water: lack of potable water; lack of water for irrigation; lack of access to water for livestock; the drying up of streams and other water points; and water supplies are too distant. The women noted that conflicts over water access and use arise during times of drought.

Communal Resources

Local springs and streams are communal resources, and they are available to all. As noted above, conflicts about water occur during times of drought. No information was collected about the patch of communal grazing ground mentioned by the women.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

People reported that no problems exist in the kebele regarding the availability of labor for agriculture.

Hired Labor

Some hiring of labor takes place when people get good harvests. Those households with high quality land will do the hiring. They employ poor people, who get paid Birr 3 per day. In the past the day wage rate used to be Birr 0.50 per day. Because of the drought, no demand exists for agricultural wage workers at present.

Reciprocal Labor

Many families in Challi engage in reciprocal labor, especially relying on it for timely harvesting.

Changes in Access to Labor

The poor state of Challi's economy has depressed the demand for agricultural workers.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 250

Number of households receiving farm credit: 80+

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 250

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA provides extension services and credit for fertilizer, hybrid seeds, livestock improvement, and small-scale trading.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The Amhara Credit and Savings Institution is a source of credit for carrying out small-scale trade in grain and livestock. Officials also mentioned that the NGO Kale Hinot provided Birr 600 loans to about 80 households.

Purposes of farm credit

To buy fertilizer, seeds, and to engage in small-scale trading.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

Because of drought, crop failure, and the depressed livestock market, people in Challi have not been successful with farm credit and what it can buy. Poor agricultural conditions have meant that those who received fertilizer – the 250 households cited above -- have not been able to use it effectively. They are unhappy with the high debt incurred so far, as well as the pressure to repay their loans in such desperate times. Both focus groups stated that at the moment people do not want additional loans. Drought and crop diseases are preventing people from benefiting from the proper use of inputs and thus credit. The officials added that people need relief from their agricultural debt.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

People have been using fertilizer and hybrid seeds for three years, but because of drought it has had little impact, except for increasing debt.

Local savings

People seek savings in order to accumulate wealth and to use as a buffer in times of need. Forms of savings practiced in Challi include multi-year storage of grain, gudguad, fattening sheep, and hoarding cash. The women stated that people are currently unable to save because of hard times.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Migrant labor, urban work, handicrafts, food-for-work

Men's focus group: Migrant labor, urban work, food-for-work

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Spinning yarn ("but no market")

Men's focus group: None

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

Since so few sources of income are available, they do not have a significant impact.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The demand is low for labor and local products.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 3 km to 12 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 16 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: 2

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals and walking

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 0%

Marketing strategies and patterns

Challi households purchase food and other items at Bokekisa, at other nearby markets, and local shops. No agricultural and livestock traders visit the kebele; instead, they go to Bokekisa.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

People obtain pepper, horse beans, peas, pulses, barley, and onion from nearby areas and the highlands.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, landless, female-headed households, the elderly, households with many children, those without oxen or other livestock, and the land-poor

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: January to August

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1988-89 (EC) to the present – due to lack of rain, crop disease, and pests

Current situation

A severe food shortage exists in Challi. People emphasized that they need food-aid in order to survive until they can get enough food from their harvest. If the rains come, they still require assistance to tide them over until they have their own food supply. The men reported that people are moving out in search of help and jobs. Some are said to be dying while in transit.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling livestock, seeking off-farm employment, eating livestock, selling firewood, eating wild plants, seeking food-aid, going to resettlement areas

Men's focus group: Selling livestock, seeking off-farm employment, migrating, seeking food-aid, selling personal property, dismantling houses and selling the wood

Changes in coping practices

Both focus groups observed that the scope and significance of the coping practices have declined. The women said it is very difficult to find wild plants to eat. They also noted that the resettlements no longer exist and no migrant labor opportunities are available. Both focus groups

stated that no food-aid is available. The men emphasized the difficulties in trying to sell assets, as well as the low prices for livestock. Finally, they said that few jobs are available at present.

Impact of severe food shortages

Both focus groups identified dire consequences: death, starvation, epidemics (fever and dysentery), impoverishment, and out-migration.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

The women and men stated that grain supplies are becoming increasingly scarce in local markets. Sometimes the supply runs out early. The men said that it is difficult to purchase grain after 11 a.m. at Bokekisa market. Intensifying the situation is the fact that Challi households have very little purchasing power, and that they often have transport problems. Both focus groups agreed that grain prices have soared, while livestock prices have fallen. In contrast, they claimed that food supplies were always available in local markets in 1984, and those food prices were not as high and livestock prices were not as low at that time.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Last year food-for-work was provided by the DPPC. Rations of wheat and cooking oil were distributed to a relatively small number of families. Kale Hinot also provided limited assistance. People observed that the scope and magnitude of food aid have been considerably reduced.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought, lack of oxen, and land scarcity

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

Both focus groups emphasize that in the “good days,” when people had assets, they shared and assisted one another. For example, the men mentioned sharing food, taking-in children from needy relatives, and giving gifts. But under present severe conditions such help is not possible.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

Traditional forms of sharing have declined because of the current severe food shortage.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Such forms of assistance have deteriorated due to increased poverty.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, for funeral assistance, operates in Challi, but it has declined due to hard times. Although it is opened to all, people are finding it increasingly difficult to make contributions. Therefore, its activities have been reduced.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

Officials identified Kale Hinot as an NGO that has operated in the kebele, but neither focus group mentioned it.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Food needs to be provided to the people of Challi in order for them to survive till their next harvest. Officials also mentioned the following: the debt load of the farmers who received fertilizer requires relief; there is a severe lack of water; the road maintenance is difficult due to drought; and the kebele lacks a basic health clinic (this is especially important, given that the area is malaria-prone).

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

Both focus groups emphasized the need for immediate food relief.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele's chairman, secretary, social affairs head, and economic affairs head. All four officials were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 28, 35, 35, 40, 40, 44, 60, and one unrecorded) and eight men in their focus group (aged 41, 50, 50, 52, 54, 55, 60).

Kebele/number: Alasha/Werkaria (03)
Wereda: Kutaber

Date visited: 4 May 1999

Field Researcher: Yigremew Adal (Men's & Women's Focus Groups) and Demeke Deboch (Key Informants)

I. Community Characteristics

Kebele Area: Not recorded

Estimated population: Not recorded

Number of households: 1,848, plus 250 non-taxpaying families

Number of female-headed households: 415, plus 50 non-taxpaying families

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 95%

Christian: 5%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100%

Distance from all-weather road: 14 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 6 km

Distance from nearest bank: 14 km

Number of health clinics: --

Number of schools: 2

Number of mosques and churches: 40 zawyas

Demography

Alasha/Werkaria's population has generally increased due to natural increase and the movement of people into the kebele. Ex-soldiers, evacuated people from Assab, and returnees from the resettlements have moved back into the area in recent years. But in the past couple of years there has been some out-migration, especially people moving to Jimma in search of employment.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Dega

Cropping pattern: Single-cropping; no irrigation reported

Crops: Barley, wheat, maize, horse beans, oats, potato, "greens," gesho (buchkthorn, *Rhamnus prinoides*), eucalyptus

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Barley (1), wheat (2), maize (3)

Men's focus group: Barley (1), wheat (2), maize (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Potato, kale

Men's focus group: Potato, kale

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Barley, wheat, horse beans

Men's focus group: Barley, wheat, maize

Bartering:

The women reported that little bartering takes place, mainly to get seed during the planting season. They also obtain ingredients for sauce (wat) through bartering. The men stated that bartering takes place with people from the lowlands (Kolla). They get pepper, sorghum, and pulses. This trade mainly occurs in June and July.

Production Trend in Alasha/Werkaria:

Decreasing due to drought, pests, frost, rust

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 2 timad

Range of household landholding: 4 timad to 5m x 50m plot

Number of landless households: 250

Access to Agricultural Land

People in Alasha/Werkaria obtained land through land redistribution, inheritance, and sharecropping. As in other communities, the latter is driven by the combination of people who lack oxen, seed, or labor to work their farms (such as elderly or female-headed households), and those who have sufficient oxen and labor available. The proceeds are divided on a 50-50 basis. The men and women differed in their assessments of sharecropping. The men claimed it was decreasing because of land scarcity. In contrast, the women said it was increasing due to poverty. The women added that nowadays "gird" (crop residues) get divided. They also said that the sharecropper must sometimes provide cash ahead of time. Communal lands are available for pasture. The men stated that it is "very large and good."

Land Redistribution

The main redistribution of land in Alasha/Werkaria occurred in 1969 (EC) – 1976.. A further redistribution of cooperative land to its members happened in 1982 or 1983 (EC). People reported that the landless and female-headed households received land. According to officials, women received one-half of the shares allocated to men. For example, if men received 2 timad,

then women were given 1 timad. Both focus groups emphasized that land scarcity worsened as a result.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Land scarcity

Men's focus group: Land scarcity

Water

Both groups mentioned a lack of water for irrigation. In some places potable water is lacking. The men said that water supplies are too far away.

Communal Resources

Pasture, streams, and springs and streams are communal resources, and they are freely available to all.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

Because of the poor harvests lately, no problems exist in Alasha/Werkaria regarding labor. In fact, the men claimed that labor is abundant because of the lack of demand. When good harvests occur, however, some families require additional workers.

Hired Labor

Some hiring of farm workers occurs with good harvests. The poor, the landless, and those without oxen seek such employment. The men said that the price of labor has decreased due to the lack of demand.

Reciprocal Labor

The men stated that many households engage in reciprocal labor, but women reported that very few did so. People work together to plant and harvest on time use reciprocal labor.

Changes in Access to Labor

The demand for farm labor is decreasing due to the depressed rural economy.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 180

Number of households receiving farm credit: 180

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 180

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA engages in farm and forestry activities. It provides extension services for crop production and furnishes fertilizer, seed, and credit.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The Amhara Credit and Savings Institution is also a source of credit. The women reported that some individuals lend out money.

Purposes of farm credit

People purchase fertilizer, seed, and animals for fattening.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

Credit for farming and trading is limited to those people who have good assets and are judged able to repay the loan. Poor people in Alasha/Werkaria do not get it because they lack a guarantee of repayment. Because of drought, crop failure, and the fall in livestock prices, the fertilizer and livestock loans have not been successful in raising productivity. The men reported that some people have been left poorer and less capable to engage in farming due to severe indebtedness. The women reported that individuals used to give loans for farming purposes but they no longer do so.

Officials reported that bad credit has undermined the ability of the community to maintain its service cooperative mill. The DBE provide a loan (perhaps to upgrade the mill?), but since the mill has not been used much the money ended up misappropriated.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

Drought, crop failure, and low livestock prices have undermined the use of farm inputs.

Local savings

The women stated that savings are mainly used to get people through troubled times. They cited buying livestock, purchasing property such as gold, and hoarding grain as key savings mechanism. The men identified multi-year storage of grain, fattening sheep, and hoarding of cash as means of saving.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Small-scale trading, selling firewood, migrant labor, urban work, handicrafts, food-for-work

Men's focus group: Migrant labor, urban work, handicrafts, food-for-work

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: handicrafts

Men's focus group: None

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

Except for wood sales, these sources of income do not contribute much. The men noted that some people recently left the kebele in search of work.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The women reported that poor people find it difficult to access such sources of income. They also said that small enterprises are not very profitable, so they cannot repay loans, shutting off credit. The men said that they resist migrant labor because they do not want to leave their families alone. They agreed that small-scale trading in Alasha/Werkaria has become difficult due to the bad economic conditions.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 14 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 6 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: 10

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals, walking, and motor vehicles

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 1%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People purchase food and other items from local shops, at the weekly marketplace in Werkaria, at the nearby market in Kutaber, and sometimes as far away as Dessie. Agricultural and livestock traders regularly come to the Tuesday market in Werkaria.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

People obtain teff, niger seed, pepper, sorghum, pulses, and peas from the lower areas.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, landless, female-headed households, the elderly, households with many children, those without oxen, and the land-poor

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: February to August

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1987 (EC) – due to drought, pests, rust; 1990 (EC) – due to drought and rust; 1991 (EC) – due to drought

Current situation

Alasha/Werkaria has suffered repeated crop failures during the past four years. The present severe food shortage emerged in June 1990 (EC) and has intensified. The women reported that 78 deaths have occurred.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling livestock, eating wild plants, selling firewood, dismantling houses to obtain wood for sale, migrant labor, urban work, resettlement, food aid, food-for-work

Men's focus group: Selling eucalyptus trees, selling livestock, off-farm employment, small-scale trading, going to Assab or other areas, resettlement, food aid, food-for-work, and obtaining a government loan

Changes in coping practices

Both focus groups emphasized that the spectrum of coping practices has narrowed considerably in Alasha/Werkaria. They stated that no food assistance has been offered so far. Migration is difficult due to the cutting off of Assab and the lack of jobs elsewhere. The women cited the current low prices for firewood. The men stated that the option of resettlement is no longer opened. They also mentioned that the government loans were only allocated in 1962 (EC).

Impact of severe food shortages

Both focus groups identified dire consequences: death, starvation, impoverishment, suffering, and out-migration.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

The women stated that food supplies are still adequate in local markets. Both focus groups emphasize the rise in grain prices and the fall in livestock values. The women said that firewood prices and returns for labor have declined. They said the situation in 1984 was different. At that time supplies of grain were sometimes absent in local markets, and that prices for food were higher then. However, the price of livestock was not as low as it is at the present.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Last year the kebele received wheat, sorghum, and maize distributed through the food-for-work program. Direct food aid was provided only for one month. Both the men and women said they had engaged in food-for-work activities this year but had yet to receive any ration distribution. Officials said that the system of food assistance is very different from in the past. Nowadays the amount of food available is much smaller. The system of distribution itself is reportedly not as "rational" in terms of targeting people.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought and famine, the large population size of the kebele, and the large size of individual families

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

In the past people would give grain, borrow, host one another, and so on, but today such assistance and sharing is not possible due to hard times.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The crop failures of the past four years have undermined traditional relations.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

These forms of assistance have decreased due to increased poverty.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire operates in Alasha/Werkaria. Besides assisting in burials, its members also serve as “a jury” in resolving local conflicts. Membership in kire is open to all. Increased poverty in the kebele has resulted in fewer contributions and less participation, so the association is less active than in the past. Kire plays no role in helping families survive food shortages.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

Officials identified Mekan Yesus, an NGO, as having been active in the kebele. It helped build a primary school and apparently has provided some assistance during times of food shortage. Neither focus group mentioned its presence.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Local water resource should be used to establish an irrigation system throughout the kebele. Investment is also needed to create jobs in the community, thus minimizing unemployment and out-migration. The officials also asked the government to be more understanding about the debt burden of local farmers, and the impact of such debt on their activities. Finally, they asked for assistance regarding the service cooperative mill’s predicament.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

Both focus groups emphasized the need for food relief and for projects to create employment. The men asked for jobs to be created for their sons and daughters who have completed their education. They also requested that the government take measures to control the steep rise in grain prices. Finally, they queried whether they are to be resettled somewhere else.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele’s social affairs and mobilization head. Both officials were men. There were six women in their focus group (aged 25, 25, 28, 30, 30, 35) and eight men in their focus group (aged 30, 40, 44, 55, 60, 65, 69).

Kebele/number: Amba Gibi (010)
Wereda: Kutaber

Date visited: 5 May 1999

Field Researcher: Yigremew Adal (Men's & Women's Focus Groups) and Demeke Deboch (Key Informants)

I. Community Characteristics

Kebele Area: 20 gasha (?)

Estimated population: 9,500

Number of households: 1,055, plus 500 non-taxpaying families

Number of female-headed households: 200, plus 150 non-taxpaying families

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 75%

Christian: 25%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100%

Distance from all-weather road: 50 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 30 km

Distance from nearest bank: 50 km

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 2

Number of mosques and churches: 14 zawyas, 2 churches

Demography

Amba Gibi's population increased mainly due to natural increase, but the return of people from resettlements and from Assab has also contributed to growth. Some people also moved into the kebele from other areas because of conflict. Officials cited the example of families from Dromiga. There has been some movement out of the community due to the recent food shortage.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Mainly Kolla, but also some woina dega

Cropping pattern: Single-cropping during the meher season. A little irrigation takes place near the riverbank.

Crops: Sorghum, teff, barley, maize, lentils, horse beans, chickpea, kale, pepper, pumpkin, onion, chat, fruit, coffee, eucalyptus

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), barley (3)

Men's focus group: Sorghum, teff, barley, horse beans, chickpea

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Kale, pepper, pumpkin, onion

Men's focus group: Pepper, pumpkin, kale

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Teff (1), sorghum (2), coffee (3), pepper

Men's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), coffee (3)

Bartering:

People in Amba Gibi practice bartering to get seed and to obtain foods not grown in their zone. They exchange sorghum and teff for wheat, horse beans, and peas from the dega zone.

Production Trend in Amba Gibi::

Decreasing due to drought, torrential rain, rust, pest, and the lack of soil fertility

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 1.67 timad

Range of household landholding: 4 timad to 0.5 timad

Number of landless households: 50, but 300 households have less than 0.5 timad

Access to Agricultural Land

People in Amba Gibi obtained land through land redistribution, inheritance, and yekul (sharecropping). The motivations behind, and arrangements for, the latter are similar to those found in other communities of South Wello. Besides the half-sharing of the harvest, the men reported that yekul now involves the distribution of crop residues as well. During the rainy seasons livestock graze on the holdings of individuals, but after the harvest the animals are allowed to roam everywhere. Except for the increasing scarcity of land, no significant changes were perceived in land access or land transactions.

Land Redistribution

Land distribution occurred in Amba Gibi around 1976 (EC) – 1983/84. The landless got land, including female-headed households. Some recent redistribution has taken place for the returnees from resettlements and similar people. Both focus groups claimed that redistribution intensified land scarcity. The women stated that the original land redistribution “brought drought with it.”

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Troublesome weeds and land scarcity

Men's focus group: Land scarcity and lack of soil fertility

Water

People reported numerous problems related to water: lack of potable water, lack of water for irrigation, lack of access to water for livestock, conflicts over access to water for irrigation, the drying up of water points, and water supplies are too distant. Both focus groups said that conflicts over access to water for irrigation have occurred with people on the other side of the riverbank in Ambassel wereda.

Communal Resources

Communal resources in Amba Gibi include water resources (streams and springs), some wooded land, and a small patch of pasture. The women said that people are not allowed to harvest big trees, but they can take already fallen branches and bush. The men reported free access to the pasture. It is essentially the same as when livestock are allowed to roam after the harvest.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

Because of the recent poor harvests, no labor scarcity exists in Amba Gibi. In good harvests or particular times of need people will rely on reciprocal or hired labor.

Hired Labor

Some hiring of farm workers takes place in Amba Gibi during good harvests. Poor people from the kebele and from other places will come seeking work from those with good land and large harvests. The rate for casual day labor is Birr 2 to Birr 3 per person. Both focus groups said that labor is currently cheap because of the lack of demand due to drought and crop failure.

Reciprocal Labor

Many people engage in reciprocal labor to carry out tasks in a timely manner, especially during planting and harvesting. They practice wonfel rather than jige.

Changes in Access to Labor

The demand for farm labor is depressed due to drought and crop failure.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 368

Number of households receiving farm credit: 30

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 368

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA furnishes extension services, fertilizer, seed, and credit. A main task appears to be issuing and trying to collect fertilizer loans from local farmers.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

During 1985/86 (EC) the DBE also furnished loans, but not in recent years.

Purposes of farm credit

Credit has been largely issued for the purchase of fertilizer. A small number of people received loans to buy oxen.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

Credit is only available to purchase fertilizer. People were told it was the government's plan that they use fertilizer, so they accepted it. They were sometimes given the fertilizer loan without requesting it. Because of the drought and poor farming conditions, the crop failed. Now people are left impoverished and indebted, with the government requesting repayment despite the dire conditions.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

Both focus groups were highly critical of the use of fertilizer. The men stated that the fertilizer did not work well in the infertile soil and the bad weather. They were better off not using it, since they have accumulated debt. The women said that using fertilizer increased the incidence of crop pests and rust attacks. The harvest was worse than if no fertilizer had been used.

Local savings

People accumulate savings to increase their wealth and as a buffer for hard times. Both focus groups mentioned buying and fattening livestock as key mechanisms for storing savings.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Migrant labor, urban work (very little), food-for-work

Men's focus group: Migrant labor, food-for-work

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: None

Men's focus group: None

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

They are insignificant.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The women stated that migrant labor opportunities have been scarce and difficult to find. They added that food-for-work is intermittent and only benefits very few people. Men emphasized the lack of demand for labor.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: None

Distance from the main weekly market: 3 km to 7 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: --

Main means of transporting goods: Walking and pack animals

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 0%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People in Amba Gibi do much of their marketing in Ziha (about 4 km away) and at Kutaber. No agricultural or livestock traders come to the kebele. Instead, they can be found on a weekly basis at Ziha. The kebele used to have a service cooperative shop but it is no longer active.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

People obtain wheat, peas, and horse beans from the higher areas.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, landless, the elderly, households with many children, those without oxen or other livestock, and the land-poor

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: July to September

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1987 (EC) – due to drought and crop failure; 1989 (EC) – due to unseasonable rainfall; 1990/91 (EC) – due to drought

Current situation

Amba Gibi has suffered repeated crop failures in recent years. The current severe food shortage emerged by January 1999. Officials emphasized that people require food aid to get them through till the next harvest. Both focus groups emphasized that little food aid was received last year and nothing has been forthcoming so far. The men claimed that the food-aid has not been properly administered, that people are already dying from hunger. The women reported that families no longer have seed if the rains come. The enforced repayment of fertilizer loans worsens the situation.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Eating wild plants, going to resettlements, selling livestock, eating livestock, migrant labor, food-aid

Men's focus group: Resettlement, remittances from family in the city, food aid, migrant labor, selling livestock, eating livestock, using irrigation

Changes in coping practices

Both focus groups emphasized the decline in such practices. Livestock prices are very low, migrant labor opportunities have decreased, and government assistance has dropped off. The women noted that edible plants can no longer be found in the wild, and that resettlements no longer exist. The men said that land used for irrigation has eroded.

Impact of severe food shortages

Both focus groups cited dire consequences: death, starvation, impoverishment, out-migration, and the disruption of all socio-religious activities such as weddings.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

There is an adequate supply of grain in the market, but its price has soared. The livestock market is saturated because of lack of demand, and animals are in poor conditions, very skinny. In the 1984 famine the grain supply was generally okay, and prices were lower. Livestock prices were higher at that time, and it was much easier to sell animals.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Officials reported that the DPPC helped some families from July 1990 (EC) to September 1991 (EC). The various interviews indicated that food assistance is much smaller than in the past, both in terms of the population targeted and the amount of rations distributed. For example, food aid nowadays is calculated on the basis of a five-person family, with no extra rations provided for additional family members. In the past no limit existed.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought, unpredictable natural conditions (such as unseasonable rainfall), and crop pests

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

Both focus groups emphasized that people used to share and assist one another in the past, providing food, employment, childcare, lending, and other practices.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

Crop failures have undermined traditional self-help.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

These forms of assistance have diminished due to hard times. The men said that their relatives in other weredas are experiencing similar problems.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire operates in Amba Gibi. Besides assisting in burials, its members also help one another resolve conflicts and other difficulties. Membership in kire is open to all, and officials estimated that all 1,555 taxpaying households are members. The bad conditions have led to a decline in contributions and participation. A similar fate has also befallen senbete, a Christian religious

association. It has about 150 members. Neither association plays a direct role in helping people overcome hunger.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

Officials identified the Swedish Philadelphia Church Mission as operating in the kebele. Its activities include soil conservation work, such as terracing. In 1989 (EC) the mission gave the oxen to 21 families as a gift. It has tried to provide some assistance during the food shortage, but given the large size of the Amba Gibi's population, the NGO has not had a major impact. The men reported that the mission has offered very little food-for-work to a small number of people.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Immediate food aid is needed, and enough needs to be distributed till people can reap a satisfactory harvest. They pointed out the need for more and affordable health facilities, especially given the high prevalence locally of malaria. Finally, they noted that most farmers have sold their implements in order to get money to survive the food crisis. Now the farmers are worrying about their vulnerable condition.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

Both focus groups emphasized the dire conditions, and they called for divine assistance, as well as help from the government, to overcome their predicament. In the women's focus group some people suggested resettlement as a possible solution, but three members who had previous experience with it said "never." The women emphasized the need to provide seed to the community for planting in the upcoming rains. The men also mentioned resettlement. They also described the need to provide employment to their children who are educated and skilled but who lack contacts in urban areas to obtain jobs. The men stated that the wereda has had administrative problems that require addressing. Finally, they identified the need for a project to create local employment.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with three kebele officials (all men) whose responsibilities included jury member, executive member, militia commander, and association cashier. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 25, 27, 30, 36, 38, 39, 42, 60) and nine men in their focus group (aged 35, 38, 39, 39, 54, 59, 63, 67, 71).

Kebele/number: Amba Mariam (05)
Wereda: Tenta

Date visited: 7 May 1999

Field Researcher: Yigremew Adal (Men's & Women's Focus Groups) and Demeke Deboch (Key Informants)

I. Community Characteristics

Kebele Area: Not recorded

Estimated population: 5,600

Number of households: 1,279, plus 150 non-taxpaying families

Number of female-headed households: 600

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 75%

Christian: 25%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100%

Distance from all-weather road: --

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 5 km

Distance from nearest bank: 17 km

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 1

Number of mosques and churches: 1 mosque, 1 churches

Demography

Amba Mariam's population grew due to natural increase and the return of people from resettlement and other areas. Recently, there has been population movement out of the kebele because of drought and hunger.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Dega

Cropping pattern: Double-cropping. The women stated that the meher is the main growing season, while the men claimed that it is the belg. No irrigation was reported.

Crops: Barley, teff, horse bean, oat, wheat, peas, kale, potato, carrot, garlic, onion, lentils, vetch, eucalyptus.

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Barley (1), horse bean (2), teff (3)

Men's focus group: Barley (1), oat (2), horse bean (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Potato, carrot, kale

Men's focus group: Kale, potato, carrot, garlic, onion

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Not recorded

Men's focus group: Barley, wheat, horse bean

Bartering:

Both focus groups reported that bartering takes place between people in Amba Mariam and those in the lowlands (kolla). Local residents seek sorghum, peppers and other crops not grown in the dega. They offer wheat and horse bean. Bartering tends to occur during the planting season.

Production Trend in Amba Mariam:

Decreasing due to drought, frost, hail, and crop pests.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 2 timad

Range of household landholding: 5 timad to 0.5 timad (officials noted that only two farmers possess 5 timad; most of the larger farms are about 4 timad)

Number of landless households: 150

Access to Agricultural Land

Land in Amba Mariam has been obtained through redistribution, inheritance, and sharecropping. The practice of sharecropping is very similar to that found in other communities in South Wello. Aside from the half-sharing of the harvest, people now divide the crop residues and "gird" as well. During the crop growing seasons livestock graze on individual holdings, but after the harvest the animals feed on the crop stubble. Neither focus group reported significant changes in land access or transactions.

Land Redistribution

Amba Mariam's land redistribution took place in 1983 (EC). The landless, land-poor, returnees from resettlement, ex-soldiers, and female-headed households have been the main beneficiaries. Both focus groups said that land scarcity increased, since the sizes of holdings were minimized.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Land scarcity

Men's focus group: Land scarcity and lack of soil fertility

Water

The men reported a lack of potable water and a lack of water for irrigation. The women cited conflicts over access to water for irrigation.

Communal Resources

Amba Mariam's communal resources consist of water sources, woodlots, and pasture. The men reported that some household pay a small amount of money to get water, but other kebele members obtain it freely. People can use woodlots for grazing or collecting fallen branches, but they are not permitted to cut trees. No information on communal resources was collected from the women.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

Both focus groups reported that no labor shortages exist in Amba Mariam due to the decline in agricultural activity.

Hired Labor

When good harvests occur, the more prosperous households will hire workers. The poor and landless seek such employment. The men reported that in the past recruiting labor used to involve "some sort of informal relations." Workers were paid in kind. Nowadays, laborers expect to be paid in cash. Both focus groups said that the price for hired labor was costly, with workers demanding up to Birr 3 per day.

Reciprocal Labor

When conditions are good, reciprocal labor is widely practice. But few people do so at the moment because of the poor state of the rural economy.

Changes in Access to Labor

A labor surplus exists because of the contraction of agriculture.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 70

Number of households receiving farm credit: 70

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 70

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA furnishes extension services, fertilizer, seed, and credit in Amba Mariam.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

Officials reported that the DBE gave loans in 1990 (EC) during March and September. Two types of loans were offered: to farmers for buying oxen and to merchants for supporting trading activities. The women reported that the Rural Credit Office provided loans, though this may be the same as the DBE's actions.

Purposes of farm credit

Credit is mainly used to buy fertilizer. A small number of people received loans to buy oxen or support trading.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

Both focus groups thought that sufficient credit was available for those who wanted to purchase fertilizer. The main constraint is that the weather and other conditions did not allow the inputs to be used in a productive manner. Now people face what the men called a "bad effect of credit" – the need to repay the loan despite the severe crop failure and their lack of money. The women reported that "people are very scared of repayment problems." The officials felt that "no one knows our debt burden which has been created by extension programs." They suggested that the main beneficiaries of the programs so far have been only the sellers of hybrid seed and fertilizer.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

The bad weather, pests, and other adverse conditions have undermined the use of fertilizer. The women stated that using fertilizer is sometimes "bad", as it seems to bring more risk of crop failure.

Local savings

People in Amba Mariam accumulate savings to increase their wealth and to use as a buffer during hard times. Grain storage, buying livestock, and fattening animals are the main means of savings.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Urban work, small handicrafts, food-for-work

Men's focus group: Migrant labor, urban work, handicrafts, food-for-work

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Handicrafts, brewing

Men's focus group: Handicrafts

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

They are not important because few jobs and other income-earning opportunities are available.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The main constraint is the lack of demand for local labor and products.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 5 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 5 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: 2

Main means of transporting goods: Walking and pack animals

Proportion of households using vehicles for transporting goods: Less than 1%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People in Amba Mariam purchase food and other items at shops within the kebele and at the nearby weekly market in Ajibar. Agricultural and livestock traders visit the Ajibar market, but they do not come to the kebele.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

They get sorghum, pepper, teff, and spices from people living in the kolla and other areas.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, landless, the elderly, female-head households, families with many children, those without oxen, and the land-poor

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: January to June

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

Continuously from 1986 (EC) to the present due to bad weather and a variety of other problems. The women said that the kebele has largely experienced drought for the last 10 years.

Current situation

Years of repeated crop failure and hunger have yielded a bleak situation in Amba Mariam. The women said that food scarcity started to intensify about three years ago. Both focus groups emphasized that the situation has grown worse during this time. The men reported more than 30 deaths already from hunger and related suicides, and the women also observed that several deaths had occurred. Livestock has become very skinny and animals are dying. Although many people are facing starvation, very few have received food aid. Food aid distribution did not begin in the kebele till May 2, 1999, less than a week before the interview took place. The women reported that it went only to those individuals who were screened and found to be in a very severe condition. The men estimated that 450 families ended up receiving assistance. The women said that many people would have left the kebele in search of relief but they hear that “the famine is now everywhere.” Therefore, they have “nowhere to go.”

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling livestock, food aid, resettlement, selling wood, consuming meat from dying or slaughtered livestock, migrant labor, and dismantling houses to sell their wood for fuel

Men's focus group: Eating meat, eating wild plants, selling livestock, migrant labor, food-aid

Changes in coping practices

Both focus groups stressed that the range of options has narrowed. Resettlement no longer exists. Firewood has become cheap. The sale of livestock is difficult because the animals are in very poor condition. Moreover, since there is no demand for them, prices are very low. Some animals are dying, and they provide very little food due to their bad condition. Wild plants and foods are not much available. Few opportunities exist for day or migrant labor.

Impact of severe food shortages

Both focus groups cited dire consequences: death, starvation ("famine"), suffering, and out-migration.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Grain prices have risen sharply. Both focus groups noted that food is still available in local markets. But the men stated that some traders are no longer coming due to the lack of local effective demand – people have no means to buy food. Prices for livestock have fallen due to the skinny condition of the animals and the overall lack of demand. The women reported that an ox on the verge of death was sold in the local market for Birr 25. The men and women differed somewhat on how the present situation compared to the 1984 famine. Both groups agreed that the supply of grain in the present market is much better than it was in 1984. However, the men felt that grain prices were not as high back then, whereas women recall it as being higher than at present. They added that livestock prices in 1984 were not as low as they are today.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Some food-for-work was offered earlier this year, though both focus groups reported that only a few people were engaged. Food aid started on May 2, 1999. It was given to approximately 450 households, who received 50 kg of food. The men said that this is issued on the assumption that the family has four members. Officials reported that a greater amount and variety of foods were distributed in the past. People used to receive wheat, canned butter, maize, and cooking oil, but now they do not receive such a range of food.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Unpredictable weather conditions (since 1987 EC especially), land scarcity, to be oxenless

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

Both focus groups emphasized that people regularly helped one another in the past, providing food, employment, childcare, lending, and other practices. The women said that relatives in other areas would also provide food aid when needed.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

Repeated crop failures have undermined traditional self-help by impoverishing the community.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

These forms of assistance have diminished due to hard times. The women said that poverty has made people “lose” their relations; there is not only no assistance but also “even no affection.”

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire operates in Amba Mariam, providing funeral assistance. The women noted that it does not contribute grain, only towards the burial of the dead. Although it is opened to all families, officials estimated that 1,350 households out of a total of 1,429 (including non-taxpayers) belong to kire. Its activities have declined due to reduced participation and contributions. Officials reported that senbete is found in the community, with about 150 members. The women identified meheber as having existed; though the group has been abandoned due to hard times. People could not afford to prepare the required feasts. The purpose of the two religious associations is to create a greater sense of group affiliation among Christians. None of the groups play a direct role in helping households survive periods of food shortage.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

World Vision has operated in the community, sponsoring some terracing work. The men claimed that it has not contributed significantly to the community’s predicament. They complained that World Vision took pictures of “our starved children” in order to raise donations yet has failed to provide additional contributions to the community. The men were recorded as saying, “We think there is a donation coming [to World Vision] but we do not get it.”

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Building a dam for an irrigation system; initiating terracing; providing credit to oxenless farmers; and all programs related to farming should firstly take into consideration the local farmers’ needs and conditions. The officials drew attention to the urgency of the local situation. They pointed out that the Amba Mariam has a very large population, so land scarcity will remain a problem. They noted that the community had been “surveyed” regarding the food situation, but aid had gone to other areas. “No one has perceived our real problems from the past up to now.” They also called for debt relief from the fertilizer loans.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The women emphasized the community’s urgent need for assistance, appealing to the government for help. They said that food aid is not coming on time for the starving. The possibility of

resettlement was raised by some of the women. The men similarly focused on the kebele's dire situation. "The future is bleak." They said that are waiting for any government measure, including urgent food aid and resettlement. They claimed that other weredas, such as Mekdela, have received substantial food aid in a timely manner, and they wondered why their wereda has not been treated in the same way. The men also contended that Amba Mariam is allocated only a very small food-aid quota. Besides food, people in the kebele need seeds and some need oxen to carry out planting for the next cropping season. Finally, they asked that a project be created to generate employment in the community.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele's chairman, secretary, health head, and mobilization head. All four officials were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 40, 40, 45, 47, 48, 49, 55, 60) and nine men in their focus group (aged 43, 43, 54, 55, 55, 55, 63, 66, 67).

Kebele/number: Watta (016)
Wereda: Tenta

Date visited: 8 May 1999

Field Researcher: Yigremew Adal (Men's & Women's Focus Groups) and Demeke Deboch (Key Informants)

I. Community Characteristics

Kebele Area: Not recorded

Estimated population: 5,529

Number of households: 1,234, plus 260 non-taxpaying families

Number of female-headed households: 230

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 95%

Christian: 5%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100%

Distance from all-weather road: --

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 32 km

Distance from nearest bank: 20 km (in Tenta)

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 1

Number of mosques and churches: 3 mosques, 10 zawyas, 2 churches

Demography

Watta's population expanded due to natural increase and the return of people from resettlements. The latter returned because of homesickness and conflicts with people living near the resettlements. There has been some recent movement out of Watta due to drought and hunger.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Kolla

Cropping pattern: Single-cropping during the meher rains. Limited irrigation occurs along the delta and Beshillo River.

Crops: Sorghum, teff, horse bean, peas, chickpeas, wheat, banana, sugar cane, coffee, pepper, kale, pumpkin

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), horse bean (3)

Men's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), horse bean (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Kale, pumpkin, pepper

Men's focus group: Pepper, kale

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Sorghum, teff

Men's focus group: Teff, sorghum

Bartering:

Both focus groups agreed that bartering takes place. People in Watta engage in bartering to get foods that do not grow in the agroecological zone. They also employ it to get seed during the planting season, and to obtain particular foods when feasts and weddings are held. The women said that it mainly occurs with people from the kolla zone. The men cited bartering as happening with people from the dega zone. Both groups reported that the most common exchange involves giving sorghum or teff for maize or barley.

Production Trend in Watta:

Decreasing due to drought, pests, rusts, and, according to the women, the use of fertilizer.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 2.5 timad

Range of household landholding: 6 timad to 0.5 timad (officials noted that only 10 households 6 timad; most of the larger farms are about 4-5 timad)

Number of landless households: 260

Access to Agricultural Land

People in Watta obtained land through redistribution, inheritance, and sharecropping. The practice of sharecropping is very similar to that found in other communities in South Wello. As is increasingly typical throughout the region, the landholder and sharecropper now divide the crop residues and "gird" as well. Many times the landholder now asks for a loan as a precondition for lending the plot. During the crop growing seasons livestock graze on individual holdings, but after the harvest the animals feed on the crop stubble. There is also a small amount of communal ground available for grazing. With the exception of the changes occurring in sharecropping, neither focus group reported significant changes in land access or transactions.

Land Redistribution

Amba Mariam's land redistribution took place in 1983 (EC). The landless, land-poor, returnees from resettlement (those who refused to accept resettlement), and female-headed households received land. The women said that the landless men and women received "small plots." The men stated that redistribution increased land scarcity.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Land scarcity and the diminishing fertility of some plots

Men's focus group: Land scarcity and the diminishing fertility of some plots

Water

Both groups cited the lack of potable water, the lack of water for irrigation, and the lack of access to water for livestock. The men also cited the problem of water supplies being too distant.

Communal Resources

Watta's communal resources consist of water sources, some wooded land, and small patches of grazing ground. Access to these resources was described as "free."

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

Excess labor presently exists in Watta due to the poor state of agriculture.

Hired Labor

When good harvests occur, prosperous households with large crops and those families lacking in labor will hire day laborers. The poor, the landless, and young men and women seek such jobs. In the past payment was in kind, but now it is usually cash. Both groups said that labor during good harvests used to be inexpensive, but it now it is costly. For the last three years, however, the harvests have been very poor in Watta, so there has been very little demand for hired workers.

Reciprocal Labor

People engage in wonfel to do tasks quickly, especially urgent ones. It is regularly used for weeding and harvesting.

Changes in Access to Labor

Hard times in agriculture have led to reduced demand for workers.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 260

Number of households receiving farm credit: 260

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 260, plus 20 households who received loans of Birr 800-900

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA furnishes extension services, fertilizer, seed, and credit.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The Rural Credit Office has also offered a small number of loans

Purposes of farm credit

Credit is mainly used to buy fertilizer.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

Both focus groups reported that credit has been widely available to purchase fertilizer and hybrid seeds. The men stated that such loans have been offered for about three years. They added that officials sometimes imposed such loans on them. Because of crop failure, the loans have only resulted in debt burden for the people of Watta. In all the interviews people strongly complained about indebtedness, forced upon them by the obligatory loans. They also spoke out against the pressures to repay their loans at a time of severe food scarcity. The women were recorded as saying, “We are crying because of debt payment. Fertilizer loans have been great problems.” Both groups appealed to government to minimize their “obligatory indebtedness.” They also said that farm credit is not available for other purposes because of their inability to pay back what they have already borrowed. The women observed that people are weary of taking on any more loans because of the present situation.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

Poor agricultural conditions have undermined the use of hybrid seeds and fertilizers. The men stated that the local soil “does not like fertilizer.” People certainly seemed to lack confidence in fertilizer’s ability to do anything more that raise their debt.

Local savings

People in Watta accumulate savings to enrich themselves and to use as a buffer when troubles come. When they have the opportunity to do so, they store grain and fatten livestock, but such options have not been available for several years.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women’s focus group: Handicrafts and food-for-work

Men’s focus group: Food-for-work

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women’s focus group: None

Men’s focus group: None

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

They are not important because few jobs and other income-earning opportunities are available.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The main constraint is the lack of demand for local labor and products. The men added that they are too far away from cities. They have nowhere to migrate.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: --

Distance from the main weekly market: 20 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: --

Main means of transporting goods: Walking and pack animals

Proportion of households using vehicles for transporting goods: 0%

Marketing strategies and patterns

The residents of Watta buy food and other items at the small weekly market in the kebele, at the market in Tenta, and, according to the men, at a nearby service cooperative shop. The latter is said to have few items.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

People get barley, maize, and spices, mainly from the dega zone.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, the elderly, female-head households, families with many children, and those without oxen.

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: April to October

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1987 (EC) – due to lack of rain; 1989 (EC) to the present – due to lack of rain and pests

Current situation

The past three years have seen repeated crop failures in Watta. The women stated, “Our assets were livestock, for the past three years they are dying.” Food assistance was provided from May to August 1998, but nothing has been received this year despite widespread hunger.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women’s focus group: Going to relatives, resettlement, food aid

Men’s focus group: Resettlement, food aid, food-for-work, selling livestock, consuming livestock, eating wild plants

Changes in coping practices

Both focus groups emphasized that few options are available. Resettlement no longer exists, and very little food assistance has been available. The women stated that no assistance from relatives is possible. The men reported that livestock prices are low, and that wild plants cannot be found as before.

Impact of severe food shortages

Both focus groups cited dire consequences. The women reported death, starvation, and out-migration, and the men cited impoverishment, starvation, and indebtedness.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Both groups emphasized the rise in grain prices. The men said that since January the price of wheat has gone from Birr 2.50 to Birr 3.50 per kg. The women stated that it is almost impossible to buy food with their meager resources. Meanwhile, livestock prices have collapsed. In contrasting the present situation to 1984, the women stated that grain prices were much higher back then. The situation is better now. Both groups felt that present livestock prices are higher today than in the 1984. But the men said it was easier to sell animals back then.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Some food-for-work was distributed last year by the DPPC. Households received 50 kg of wheat – calculated on the basis of a 5-person family. Larger families do not receive any increment. Officials felt that food aid was larger in the past.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought and unbalanced natural conditions, land scarcity, and lacking oxen

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

In the past people provided lots of assistance to one another in Watta. Relatives and neighbors provided food and other assistance to the needy, taking care of the starved. Nowadays people are unable to help because of poverty. Even relatives in far places are facing the same situation.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

Repeated crop failures have reduced traditional self-help.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

These forms of assistance have diminished due to hard times.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire operates in Watta, providing funeral assistance. Membership is opened to all. Although some people now are unable to contribute because of poverty, they are still regarded as members. The men were recorded as saying, “We do not stick to the rules that everyone has to contribute. Many people are not in a position to contribute.” But the women pointed out that kire has had to reduce

its activities. Senbete, the religious association, also exists in Watta. Both focus groups stated that its members are generally “better-off people” who can afford to host the feasts. Its activities have greatly diminished due to the current dire situation.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

The Red Cross may have been active in the past, but no NGOs operate at present.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Establishing an irrigation system and providing more food aid. The officials also drew attention to the lack of educational and health services in the kebele. They also called for debt relief from the fertilizer loans.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The women appealed to Allah for help. They were recorded as saying, “If it rains this month [May], we will survive.” The women also drew attention to the fertilizer debt issue and the decline of livestock. The men also appealed to Allah, as well as to the government “to help us save our lives.” They also complained about the fertilizer debt, and they also called for a relief from the heavy taxation they face.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele’s chairman, education head, health head, and mobilization head. All four officials were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 21, 22, 30, 40, 40, 45, 50, 50) and nine men in their focus group (aged 40, 45, 47, 50, 53, 63, 64, 67, 70).

**BASIS/IDR
Community Assessments**

**Kebele Profiles, Part III:
Dawa Chaffa and Batti Weredas
in Oromiya Zone**

Prepared by

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Introduction to Part III

This report is the third in a series presenting the findings from rapid community assessments carried out as part of the project entitled “From Household to Region: Factor Market Constraints to Income and Food Security in a Highly Diverse Environment, South Wello, Ethiopia.” The project is a collaborative effort between the BASIS Horn of Africa Program and Addis Ababa University, Institute for Development Research (IDR). This report contains the results from interviews conducted by Degafa Tolossa May 27 to June 5 1999, in four kebeles located in two Oromiya Zone weredas – Batti and Dawa Chaffa. Besides being in a different administrative zone, these communities are set apart from the South Wello field sites by their ethnic composition (the higher proportion of Oromos). Yet, they are linked to their South Wello neighbors through marketing and other social relations. As in previous reports, this section provides a concise socioeconomic profile of each kebele, covering 10 aspects: basic community characteristics; agriculture; land, water, and communal resources; farm labor; agricultural inputs, credit, and local savings; non-agricultural and off-farm income earning; marketing; food security; community relations and community-based organizations; and additional local views and priorities. Alfonso Peter Castro prepared the report based on the key informant and focus group surveys, plus detailed discussions with Degafa.

Kebele/number: Shakilla (07)
Wereda: Dawa Chaffa

Date visited: 27 May 1999
Field Researcher: Degafa Tolossa for all interviews

I. Community Characteristics

Kebele Area: 20 gasha
Estimated population: 7,100
Estimated number of households: 1,483
Number of female-headed households: 500
Religious Group as a percentage of the population:
Muslim: 98+%
Christian: 15 households

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:
Amhara: 25%
Oromo 75%

Distance from all-weather road: 0 km
Distance from seasonal road: 0 km
Distance from motorized transport: 0 km
Distance from wereda headquarters: 12 km
Distance from nearest bank: 60 km
Number of health clinics: 0
Number of schools: 1
Number of mosques and churches: 12 mosques

Demography

The population of Shakilla has grown in recent years due to natural increase and the return of ex-soldiers and resettled families. The number of people moving out of the kebele has reportedly decreased in recent years.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Kolla
Cropping pattern: Double-cropping, with the meher being the most important in terms of output. No irrigation reported.

Crops: Maize, sorghum, teff, barley, wheat, chickpeas, vetch, emer wheat, sugar cane, coffee, papaya, chat, tobacco, cabbage, garlic, onion, sweet potato, potato, tomato, eucalyptus

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Six identified but none ranked

Men's focus group: Maize (1), sorghum (2), teff (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Cabbage, garlic, onion, sweet potato, potato, tomato

Men's focus group: tobacco, cabbage

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Teff (1), maize (2), chat

Men's focus group: Teff (1), maize (2)

Bartering:

Both focus groups reported that bartering takes place. The women said that it is very important as a means of obtaining seed for planting. The men reported that bartering occurs "in rare cases."

Both groups agreed that maize is exchanged for sorghum.

Production Trend in Shakilla:

Decreased. The women cited repeated crop failure. No explanation was obtained from the men.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 1.25 ha (6 timad)

Range of household landholding: 3 ha to 0.5 ha

Number of landless households: 700

Access to Agricultural Land

People in Shakilla obtained access to cropland through land redistribution, inheritance and sharecropping. As in other communities in South Wello, sharecropping is based on a 50-50 splitting of the proceeds of the harvest between the farmer and landholder. The men reported that sharecropping increased due to the recent land redistribution. Many of the recent beneficiaries of the redistribution – the former landless, the aged, the sick – lack the resources or labor to farm their parcels. Thus, they hire out their land to those with sufficient oxen and other resources. People have access to communal grazing grounds and other resources.

Land Redistribution

A round of land redistribution occurred in 1989 (EC) – 1996. The landless, female-headed households, and returned resettlers received land, which raised their living situation. But the men complained that redistribution adversely affected farm production. Families that could "cultivate farmlands properly" lost land, being left with very small parcels. On the other hand, the landless and poor who received land still lack the resources to utilize their holdings efficiently. Both focus groups also claimed that the redistribution was unfair because some officials and others received land, although they already possessed relatively large farms.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Climate – drought in some years, excess rain in others. The women reported no land scarcity.

Men's focus group: About 300 ha of land along the Borkana river is affected by flood; land scarcity; the climatic situation

Water

Both groups reported a lack of potable water, a lack of water for irrigation, and lack of access to water for livestock. The men also stated that water supplies are too distant.

Communal Resources

Shakilla possess communal forest (which includes bushland) and streams and other water points. Using the forest and bush requires the permission of kebele officials, particularly to cut trees, make charcoal, or graze cattle. Some illegal felling of timber apparently takes place. Water resources are freely available. However, the men reported that a "land use conflict" exists between "private investors and small holders, especially with regard to water use."

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

Both focus groups stated that no problems exist regarding labor availability in Shakilla. In contrast, the men identified a severe shortage of draft animals in the kebele. They reported that the majority of households lack oxen, reducing their ability to farm effectively.

Hired Labor

Some hiring of agricultural workers will occur during good harvests.

Reciprocal Labor

Both groups said that most people engage in reciprocal labor, with the men citing 75% of the population as participants. As in other areas, reciprocal labor is a means of raising labor efficiency, allowing tasks to be done in a prompt manner and at the appropriate time.

Changes in Access to Labor

Under present conditions the kebele has an excess of labor.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 300

Number of households receiving farm credit: 250

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 80

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA furnishes extension services and credit for crops, livestock, and agroforestry production.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

Amhara Rural Credit, World Vision, and Wisdom (an NGO) also offer credit for agricultural purposes.

Purposes of farm credit

People obtain loans for purchasing farm inputs and livestock, as well as to engage in small-scale trading. The women stated that credit is used to buy food.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The women observed that the credit-issuing organizations have a limited capacity to serve the local population. The men pointed out that most people in Shakilla are not eligible to receive credit because they lack sufficient assets. In particular, households that lack oxen are not able to obtain loans.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

The women cited the lack of money as the biggest constraint to using inputs such as hybrid seeds and fertilizers. The men stated that such inputs were introduced into the kebele about four years ago. During this period Shakilla has suffered from drought, pests, weeds, and poor harvests. They felt unable to judge whether farming with these inputs yielded any higher than using traditional methods.

Local savings

People try to accumulate savings to provide security and to serve as a buffer during food shortages or other problems. Grain storage, gudguad, and the fattening of sheep are key mechanisms for saving resources. The men cited the kire membership contribution as a form of savings. The contribution is Birr 1 in some places and Birr 0.50 in others.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Migrant labor, brewing, selling firewood, small-scale trading

Men's focus group: Migrant labor, food-for-work for World Vision (about 30 people), brewing, and selling firewood

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling firewood and small-scale trading

Men's focus group: Brewing and selling firewood

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

Both groups stated that these sources of income provide much support for households.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

People lack the skills or knowledge to pursue such sources of income. There is also a lack of opportunity. The women stated that people often lack the capital to start up such enterprises.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 12 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 0 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: 4

Main means of transporting goods: Walking and motor vehicles

Proportion of households using vehicles for transporting goods: 80%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People in Shakilla purchase their food and other items at local shops in the kebele, at the weekly market held within the kebele, or at the large market in Kamise. Agricultural traders come to the weekly kebele market, but livestock traders do not visit the area.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

The women were recorded as saying, “We purchase what we can and what is necessary for us.” The men added, “We obtain almost everything from Kamise.”

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

This year all families, but especially the poor, the elderly, female-head households, the landless and land-poor, those without oxen

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: No specific time recorded, though it was noted: “Since 1988 [EC] for about 6 months”

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1989 (EC) – due to drought; 1990 (EC) – due to excessive rain; 1991 (EC) – due to drought

Current situation

There have been several poor harvests since 1987 (EC), and this year is very serious. The women stated, “Our real problem now is hunger and we would like to receive relief food aid.” Food assistance was offered last year by the DPPC through food-for-work, with participating households receiving 25 kg of wheat. A small amount of food aid has been issued this year.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women’s focus group: Selling livestock, off-farm activities (minor), and reducing consumption

Men’s focus group: Selling livestock, reducing consumption, off-farm employment

Changes in coping practices

Both groups agreed that coping practices have changed over time, with the men specifying that the range of options has decreased.

Impact of severe food shortages

Both groups identified famine. The women also said that people use up all their seeds, which results in poverty. The men mentioned out-migration by a few households.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Grain prices have increased and livestock prices have fallen. The men stated that an ox sold for Birr 1,200 in 1988 (EC) but now sells for Birr 500. In contrast, maize sold for Birr 60 per quintal but now goes for Birr 160 per quintal. The women said that grain prices were much higher now than in the past.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Some food aid has been distributed to the most highly affected persons. Officials said that more food assistance had been available in the past.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Climatic problem (drought, excessive rain), pests and diseases, and the low possibility of double cropping

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

In the past people regularly assisted one another. They also shared ceremonial and social occasions. The women stated, “We had coffee ceremony along with our neighbors.”

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The women reported that households support their children and relatives during such times. The men stated that the relatively well to do households offer gifts to needy relatives.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Food shortages have reduced the capacity of people to help one another.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, the funeral association, operates in Shakilla. It is opened to all. Both focus groups said that kire’s activities have weakened due to declining contributions. The food situation has eroded the ability of people to participate. Kire plays no role in helping its members during periods of food shortage. Both groups said that kire is not strong enough financially to do so.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

World Vision operates in Shakilla. It engages in rural development and some relief activities, including providing employment on water supply, bridge construction, and food-for-work projects. According to the women, it also offers credit “to some segments of the population.”

Officials attributed the issuing of credit to an organization named Wisdom. It is unclear whether Wisdom is affiliated with World Vision. The officials estimated that 2,000 people have benefited from NGO activities.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Introduce irrigation and implement population policy. They also pointed out the problem of pests and disease that attack crops and livestock. The officials added that the kebele suffers from a lack of potable water year-round. Finally, they mentioned a dependency syndrome that exists within the community.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The women urgently called for food aid to deal with Shakilla's severe food shortage. They were also recorded as saying, "Our problems are so many, which is partly caused by our poverty." The men mentioned the problem of agricultural pests, as well as certain troublesome weeds. They also drew attention to the conflict over land use and water between private investors and small holders.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele's chairman, justice officers (2), economic section head, and cadre. All five officials were men. There were 14 women in their focus group (aged 20, 22, 25, 25, 30, 30, 30, 30, 34, 35, 35, 35, 40, 60) and nine men in their focus group (aged 20, 23, 34, 37, 42, 42, 52, 54, 70).

Kebele/number: Chachato (04)
Wereda: Batti

Date visited: 29-30 May 1999

Field Researcher: Degafa Tolossa for all interviews

I. Community Characteristics

Kebele Area: 29 gasha

Estimated population: 2,380

Estimated number of households: 456

Number of female-headed households: 51

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 100

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 0.5%

Oromo 98.0%

Afar 1.5%

Distance from all-weather road: 5 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 5 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 12 km

Distance from nearest bank: 12 km

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 0

Number of mosques: 9

Demography

Officials reported that the population of Chachato has declined in recent years due to the prevalence of disease (especially malaria) and out-migration. The area's environment is reportedly too harsh to attract people, given the chronic disease and food-scarcity situation.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Kolla

Cropping pattern: Double-cropping, with the meher being the most important in terms of output. Some households practice irrigation. The men reported that the landscape of the area and the stoniness of the soil create problems for practicing irrigation.

Crops: Maize, sorghum, teff, chickpeas, sugar cane, coffee, papaya, mango, banana, pepper, cabbage, haricot bean, and dibilal¹³ (coriander, a spice and condiment)

¹³ *Coriandrum sativum*.

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Maize (1), teff (2), sorghum (3)

Men's focus group: Maize (1), sorghum (2), teff (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Pepper, cabbage, haricot bean, dablal

Men's focus group: Pepper

Note: The women reported that they are the ones who mainly grow cabbage, haricot bean, and dablal

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Teff (1), sorghum (2), chickpeas (3)

Men's focus group: Sorghum ("in very rare cases")

Bartering:

The women reported that some bartering takes place within the community, with people exchanging maize for sorghum. The men stated that people prefer to sell their crops and buy whatever they need.

Production Trend in Chachato:

Decreased because of climatic problems and pests.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 1.5 ha

Range of household landholding: 3 ha to 0 ha

Number of landless households: 52

Access to Agricultural Land

People in Chachato obtained access to cropland through inheritance, sharecropping, and probably land redistribution. The actors involved, and the motivations behind, sharecropping are similar to those found in other South Wello communities. But the practice of dividing the harvest differs. The people call it "megazo": the cultivator keeps two-thirds of the harvest and the landholder gets one-third.

Both focus groups reported getting access to pasture through communal land, inheritance, and land sale. No information was collected on the latter. There has been a significant conflict over the control and use of communal land between the local Oromos and the neighboring Afars in the next administrative region. The conflict, which emerged around 1983 (EC), is a boundary dispute, and it has yet to be settled. Some Oromos who had cultivated in the area were reportedly displaced by the conflict

Land Redistribution

No land redistribution has occurred in Chachato during the current regime, probably because of the ongoing boundary dispute. No information was collected on any prior redistribution.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Uneven topography, stoniness of the land, scarcity of farmland

Men's focus group: Crop pests, stoniness, rugged topography

Water

Both groups reported a lack of potable water, a lack of water for irrigation, lack of access to water for livestock, and conflicts over use of water among herders and others. The women also cited the problem of watering points and streams drying up. The men also mentioned that water supplies are too distant.

Communal Resources

Chachato has communal forests (with "bushland") and pasture. The women reported that people have free access to the bushland, but the men claimed that permission must be obtained from kebele officials to use the forest resources. Both groups said that access to the pasture was free, though the women said it was only so during the "summer."

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

The women stated that no problems exist in terms of labor availability. But both groups noted that the issue of labor couldn't be discussed without reference to malaria and its toll on the work force. Chachato is very vulnerable to this disease.

Hired Labor

The men reported that a small amount of hiring occurs during good harvests. The women said that no hiring currently takes place.

Reciprocal Labor

Both groups said that about half the population practices reciprocal labor. As in other communities, it is a means of raising labor efficiency, allowing tasks to be done in a prompt manner.

Changes in Access to Labor

Under present conditions the kebele has an excess of labor.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 0

Number of households receiving farm credit: 21

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 46 (for crop, chicken, goat, vegetable, agroforestry, and livestock fattening activities)

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA furnishes extension services and credit for livestock, poultry, agroforestry, and crop production.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

None listed by the focus groups. Officials said the MOA in combination with “the bank” provided credit.

Purposes of farm credit

People obtain loans for purchasing goats, oxen, and chickens.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The men noted that the credit-issuing organizations have a limited capacity to serve the local population. The women stated out that people in Chachato are eligible to receive credit on the basis of having sufficient assets. If households lack resources they are unable to receive credit.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

The men stated that the local land’s response to fertilizer has not proven profitable.

Local savings

People try to accumulate savings to provide economic security. Grain storage, gudguad, and fattening sheep are key mechanisms for saving resources.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women’s focus group: Selling firewood and charcoal, doing food-for-work road and terracing projects

Men’s focus group: Food-for-work terracing and digging water hole projects, selling firewood and charcoal

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women’s focus group: Selling firewood and charcoal, doing food-for-work

Men’s focus group: Selling firewood and charcoal, doing food-for-work

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

Both groups stated that these sources of income provide much support for households during times of need.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The men stated that too few opportunities are available for local households to earn money. The women reported that selling charcoal and firewood has resulted in deforestation in the area.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 12 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 12 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: 0

Main means of transporting goods: Walking, with some use of pack animals

Proportion of households using vehicles for transporting goods: 0%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People in Chachato purchase their food and other items at Batti. Agricultural traders do not visit the area; instead, they go to Batti.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

In Batti people purchase maize, sorghum, wheat, and vegetables.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, the elderly, female-head households, families with many children, the landless and land-poor, those without oxen or other livestock, families without irrigation, and those with difficult access to markets

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: March to October

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1985 (EC) – due to pests, crop disease, and conflict with the Afar; 1986 (EC) to 1988 (EC) – due to the ongoing conflict; 1989 and 1990 – crop disease and pests; 1991 – failure of the rains

Current situation

Chachato has faced several years of poor harvests. There is currently a severe food shortage. Officials requested that the kebele receive immediate food aid “to save lives and to stop the out-migration of people.” The officials did note that the situation has yet to reach the scope and magnitude of the 1977 (EC) – 1984 – famine. Chachato was severely affected that year. Officials noted that the memories of that era remain so painful that people have a “77 phobia” – that dislike hearing that number. Food-for-work was organized seven times during 1990 (EC) by the DPPC and once in 1991 (EC).

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women’s focus group: Migration, selling livestock, off-farm employment, reducing consumption

Men’s focus group: Out-migration, resettlement, selling charcoal and firewood, reducing consumption, food assistance

Changes in coping practices

The men noted that the strategies are different today than in 1977 (EC). That year the famine and food shortages were sudden, and the coping strategies such as out-migration, resettlement, and food aid were not too effective. This year the problem of hunger is more a cumulative effect of the series of bad harvests.

Impact of severe food shortages

The women identified livestock deaths, out-migration, and weight loss. The men stated out-migration and reduced consumption.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Grain prices have increased and livestock prices have fallen during the current shortage. The women observed that food prices are much higher than in previous food shortage periods. The men claimed that in 1977 (EC) at the height of the famine, maize sold for Birr 150 per quintal. Now it is selling for Birr 160. They said that in 1977 (EC) oxen sold for Birr 50, but now an ox could fetch Birr 225.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

As mentioned earlier, a limited amount of food aid has been distributed.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Local food supply problems and the prevalence of disease

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

People shared ceremonial and social occasions, such as weddings, funerals, coffee ceremonies, and so on.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The relatively better off households try to assist their needy relatives.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Food shortages have reduced the capacity of people to help one another.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, the funeral association, operates in Chachato. It is organized into nine “goth” in the kebele, and membership is open to all. Officials estimated that about 450 people actively participate. As in other areas, the food shortage has weakened participation in the association. The men reported that kire had dissolved in some places because the members cannot pay their contribution.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

No NGOs were reported as active in the kebele.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

The conflict between the Afar and Oromo needs to be settled; the problem of pests and crop disease must be overcome by some means; and soil and water conservation activities should be enhanced. They also called for immediate food relief. Finally, the officials complained about the “poor savings practices” of the local people, and also about the extravagant chat chewing by villagers.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The women described the difficulties faced by families without oxen. Two of the focus group participants talked about their own predicaments as female-headed households composed of several children and possessing a small plot and no cattle. The men complained about the lack of access to schools, the inaccessibility of the market, the lack of grain mills, the water supply problem, and the poor management of post-harvest resources.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele’s chairman, justice officer, security officer, propagandist, and economic section head. All six officials were men. There were seven women in their focus group (aged 35, 35, 45, 48, 50, 52, 59) and seven men in their focus group (aged 28, 32, 44, 46, 48, 48, 68).

Kebele/number: Kamme (01)
Wereda: Batti

Date visited: 1-2 June 1999

Field Researcher: Degafa Tolossa for all interviews

I. Community Characteristics

Kebele Area: 25 gasha

Estimated population: 5,020

Estimated number of households: 625

Number of female-headed households: 150

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 100%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Oromo 100%

Distance from all-weather road: 5 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 5 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 7 km

Distance from nearest bank: 7 km

Number of health clinics: 0

Number of schools: 0

Number of mosques: 11

Demography

Kamme's population has grown due to natural increase, the return of people from resettlements, and the movement of others into the community.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Kolla

Cropping pattern: Single-cropping during the meher rains. A few households use irrigation to grow vegetables for their own consumption and for sale.

Crops: Sorghum, teff, maize, sesame, chickpeas, haricot beans, flax, sunflower, papaya, zytuna¹⁴ (a fruit), chat, eucalyptus, sugar cane, pepper, cabbage, tomato, tobacco, diblal (spice)

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Sorghum (1), maize (2), teff (3)

¹⁴ *Psidium guajava*.

Men's focus group: Sorghum, (1), maize (2), teff (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Tobacco, tomato, pepper, cabbage, dablal

Men's focus group: Pepper, cabbage

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Chat, zytuna

Men's focus group: Teff (1), sorghum (2), maize (3)

Bartering:

The women reported no bartering in Kamme, but the men said it takes place, especially to obtain different varieties of sorghum. Maize is exchanged for them.

Production Trend in Kamme:

Decreased because of land degradation and climatic problems, which can result in crop failure.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: Not recorded

Range of household landholding: 3 ha to 0 ha

Number of landless households: 100

Access to Agricultural Land

People in Kamme obtained access to cropland through inheritance, sharecropping, land redistribution, and, according to the men rental. The actors involved, and the motivations behind, sharecropping are similar to those found in other South Wello communities. The harvest is split in half by the farmer and landholder. Land is rented out annually for Birr 80 per 0.25 ha. It is usually the poor and destitute who rent their land, while it is the "rich" who obtain it. People get access to pasture from individual plots and some communal land.

Land Redistribution

Kamme has undergone land redistribution since the fall of the Derg. The women stated that the change in landholding was immense and considerable: the landless and poor got land, while those who had large property lost some of it. Female-headed households and unmarried individuals sometimes got land. The women also observed, perhaps ironically, that some of the poor and landless who received land now give it up through sharecropping (and probably rentals). They often lack the oxen and other resources to work their own holding. Finally, the men stated that land redistribution disrupted some multi-year rental arrangements.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Degraded land, land scarcity, soil erosion

Men's focus group: Crop pests and diseases, harsh climatic conditions

Water

Both groups reported a lack of potable water, a lack of water for irrigation, lack of access to water for livestock, and conflicts over use of water for irrigation. The women cited the problem of watering points and streams drying up. The men mentioned that water supplies are too distant.

Communal Resources

Kamme has communal forests (with “bushland”), pasture and streams. The men reported that people have free access to the bushland, but the women claimed that permission must be obtained from kebele officials to use the forest resources. Both groups said that access to the pasture and river was free.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

Both groups stated no problems exist in terms of labor availability in Kamme. The women pointed out that is so because family tend to be large, so households can draw upon sufficient workers.

Hired Labor

No hired labor was reported.

Reciprocal Labor

Both groups said that more than half the population practices reciprocal labor. As in other communities, it is a means of raising labor efficiency, allowing tasks to be done in a prompt manner.

Changes in Access to Labor

The trend has been for “excess” labor to increase year to year.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 60

Number of households receiving farm credit: 20

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 60

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA furnishes extension services and credit for crop and livestock production.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

None listed.

Purposes of farm credit

People in Kamme obtain loans for purchasing oxen and raising sheep and goats.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The men stated that credit is not accessible to all members of the community – presumably the poor. Yet, they also said that many people have not wanted to risk participating in credit schemes because the area is not promising for crop or livestock production. Similarly, the women were recorded as saying, “We fear that we can not repay the credit, as a result of which we did not [get] involve in the credit provision. We heard that the programs were not encouraging.”

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

The women reported that the inputs have yet to prove “economical.” The men stated that some of the area’s farmland does not require fertilizer.

Local savings

People try to accumulate savings to provide economic security. The women reported, “We save in the way we can, but our resources are very limited.” Grain storage, gudguad, and fattening sheep are key mechanisms for saving resources in Kamme.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women’s focus group: Handicrafts (very few households), food-for-work road construction, selling firewood and charcoal

Men’s focus group: Migrant labor, handicrafts, food-for-work schemes, selling firewood and charcoal

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women’s focus group: Selling firewood and charcoal, doing food-for-work

Men’s focus group: Selling firewood and charcoal

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

Both groups stated that these sources of income provide much support for households during times of need. The women said that such activities “save lives” because one harvest lasts a maximum of only five months.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

People lack skills and opportunities for employment and income generation in Kamme.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 7 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 7 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: 0

Main means of transporting goods: Walking, with probably some use of pack animals

Proportion of households using vehicles for transporting goods: 0%

Marketing strategies and patterns

People in Kamme purchase their food and other items at Batti. Agricultural traders do not visit the area; instead, they go to Batti.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

After their harvests run out, they go to buy food in Batti.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor (1), the elderly, female-head households (3), families with many children, the landless (2) and land-poor, those without oxen or other livestock, and families without irrigation (ranking indicated in parenthesis)

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: May to August

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1990 (EC) – crop disease and pests result in crop failure; 1991 – crop disease and pests

Current situation

Kamme is experiencing food shortages. The men pleaded that food relief is needed “to save the life of people.” In 1990 (EC) the DPPC organized food-for-work for five months. This year 870 people received 12.5 kg of grain per person through food-for-work.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women’s focus group: Migration, food relief, reducing consumption, off-farm employment

Men’s focus group: Selling livestock, reducing consumption, out-migration

Changes in coping practices

The women noted that the strategies are different today than in 1977 (EC). That year people relied on out-migration, food relief, and reducing consumption. This time they are mainly reducing consumption and seeking off-farm employment. Significant food relief has not been available. No comments were obtained from the men.

Impact of severe food shortages

The women said that in 1977 (EC) the most severe impact was death; so far today it has been out-migration. The men cited impoverishment and out-migration.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Grain prices have increased and livestock prices have fallen during the current shortage. The men suggested that grain prices are higher today than in 1977 (EC), but the women differed, citing the following prices: teff in 1977 (EC) sold for Birr 400 per quintal; today it sells for Birr 300 per quintal.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage
As mentioned earlier, a limited amount of food aid has been distributed this year.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:
Uneven topography and degraded farmland, drought, pests and crop diseases

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people
People in Kamme commonly share ceremonial and cultural occasions, such as weddings, funerals, coffee ceremonies, and so on.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages
In times of food shortage the relatively better off households try to assist their needy relatives.

Changes in kin- and community assistance
Food shortages have reduced the capacity of people to help one another. The men said it is hard to find a household that is better off than the rest.

Community-based organizations (CBO)
Kire, the funeral association, operates in Kamme, and membership is open to all that has the interest and the capacity to pay. Officials estimated that about 120 people actively participate. As in other areas, the food shortage has weakened participation in the association. The men reported that kire had dissolved in some places because the members cannot pay their contribution. Both focus groups stated that kire is too weak finally to provide help for overcoming food shortages.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)
No NGOs were reported as active in the kebele.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:
Soil and water conservation measures need to be introduced; access to education should be expanded, and employment opportunities need to be increased. The officials also drew attention to the Kamme's land scarcity, lack of irrigation, "poor resource management," and "uncontrolled and rapid population growth."

Comments by the focus groups about their communities
The men called for immediate food relief. They also asked for the introduction of various economic and social infrastructures. The women had no additional comments.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele's chairman, justice officer (2), security officer, and economic section head. All five officials were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 24, 24, 25, 35, 40, 40, 45, and 60).

Kebele/number: Kallo (016)
Wereda: Dawa Chaffa

Date visited: 5 June 1999

Field Researcher: Degafa Tolossa for all interviews

I. Community Characteristics

Kebele Area: 50 gasha

Estimated population: 10,000

Estimated number of households: 5,000

Number of female-headed households: 1,600

Religious Group as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 95%

Christian: 5%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 30%

Oromo 70%

Distance from all-weather road: 0 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from wereda headquarters: 5 km

Distance from nearest bank: 5 km

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 1 (grades 1-4)

Number of mosques and churches: 15

Demography

The population of Kallo has increased in recent years due to natural increase and the return of people from resettlements. Recently, the food shortage caused by drought has led some people to move from the kebele. It bears noting that polygyny is very common in this area.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Kolla

Cropping pattern: Double-cropping, with the meher being the most important in terms of output. A small number of households engage in irrigation. It is said to be a recent practice, prompted by agricultural extension officers.

Crops: Maize, sorghum, teff, chickpea, peas, beans, flax, nug, wheat, barley, papaya, cabbage, onion, carrot, beet, garlic, eucalyptus

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Maize (1), sorghum (2), teff (3)

Men's focus group: Maize (1), sorghum (2), teff (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Cabbage, onion, beet, carrot, garlic

Men's focus group: Cabbage

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Papaya

Men's focus group: Teff, maize

Bartering:

No bartering reportedly takes place because "crops grown in the area are not comparable in terms of price" (recorded from the women's group). People prefer to sell their crops, then use the money to purchase whatever they need.

Production Trend in Kallo:

The women reported that it had decreased. The men stated that production had decreased or stayed the same.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Average household landholding: 0.5 ha

Range of household landholding: 2 ha to 0.25 ha

Number of landless households: 2,300

Access to Agricultural Land

People in Kallo obtained access to cropland through redistribution, inheritance, and sharecropping. The practice of sharecropping is similar to that found in the rest of South Wello. Landholders who are elderly or who lack oxen will lend their plots in return for a half-share in the harvest. The sharecroppers are sometimes landless individuals, but they can also be more prosperous farmers who possess sufficient capacity in terms of oxen and labor. Some communal pasture and woodland are available in the kebele.

Land Redistribution

Land redistribution occurred before the current government came to power. It had provided greater access to land to the land-poor and landless. No further redistribution has taken place because land is already too scarce in the area.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Small holding size, drought, flood

Men's focus group: Small holding size, excessive rain (waterlogging) or drought, pests

Water

Many water points have been developed or enhanced by the government in recent years. Nevertheless, the men cited a lack of potable water, as well as conflicts over access to water for irrigation. The women reported a lack of water for irrigation.

Communal Resources

Kallo possesses some pasture, woodland, and water points that are open to every community member. People also make use of wild foods found in the local woodland, wetland, and grazing grounds.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

No problem of labor scarcity was reported in Kallo.

Hired Labor

The women reported that people sometimes hire children to herd their livestock. For the most part, however, very little hired labor takes place at present due to severe agricultural conditions.

Reciprocal Labor

The men stated that more than 90% of the people engage in reciprocal labor, but the women claimed it was about half the population. As in other areas, people practice reciprocal labor as a means of improving labor efficiency, carrying out tasks in a more timely manner.

Changes in Access to Labor

The contraction in agricultural activities has reduced the demand for labor.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 100

Number of households receiving farm credit: 2,500 (?)

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 100

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA furnishes extension services in the form of crop and livestock packages. According to the men, farmers who are “in better condition” (in terms of their access to productive assets) are selected to participate.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

Amhara Rural Credit and World Vision also offer credit for agricultural purposes.

Purposes of farm credit

People obtain loans for purchasing farm inputs and for buying and fattening livestock.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

Both focus groups emphasized that Kallo is vulnerable to crop failure, so people try to avoid risks in farming. In spite of this, people have taken fertilizer and improved seed loans. Unfortunately, the application of inputs has not been successful due to drought, pests, and other problems. The women stated that households now face the problem of repaying the loans – a difficult task in an area very vulnerable to crop failure. They added that all the credit-issuing organizations are facing problems of getting repayment due to widespread problems local households.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

The men stated that Kallo “is not promising with regard to agricultural production.” Poor farming conditions due to drought and other problems undermined the use of hybrid seeds and fertilizers. The men stated that the fields with the fertilizer package did not yield any better than ones using traditional methods.

Local savings

People try to accumulate savings to serve as a buffer during times of trouble. The women identify the fattening of goats, gudguad, and the use of community-based associations – kire – as mechanisms for saving resources. The men said that households have been unable to save due to hard times and poor local management of resources.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women’s focus group: Migrant labor, brewing, selling food, petty trading, selling firewood and charcoal

Men’s focus group: Migrant labor, urban work, petty trading, brewing

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women’s focus group: Brewing and selling food

Men’s focus group: Selling firewood

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

The men stated that these income sources are important in helping families, while the women reported that they help some households.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

Both focus groups cited a lack of skill among local people, as well as a lack of opportunities for obtaining such income.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 5 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 5 km

Number of retail shops in the kebele: 3

Main means of transporting goods: Walking and motor vehicles

Proportion of households using vehicles for transporting goods: 5%

Marketing strategies and patterns

The residents of Kallo purchase food and other goods at the shops within the kebele and at the nearby marketplace in Kamise. Agricultural and livestock traders do not visit the kebele. Instead, they can be found in Kamise.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

People reported getting many things from other areas, but nothing specific was recorded.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

This year all families, but especially the poor, the elderly, female-head households, the landless and land-poor, families with many children, those without oxen or other livestock, and people without irrigation.

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: Not recorded

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1988 (EC) – due to excessive rain; 1989 (EC) – due to drought; 1990 (EC) – due to excessive rain; 1991 (EC) – due to drought

Current situation

The food situation is quite serious in Kallo. The kebele has experienced several years of poor harvests. With the failure of this year's belg rains, food scarcity is increasing. The officials reported that a serious seed shortage has emerged. Few families are likely to have seed available for the upcoming wet season.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling firewood and grass (for thatching and fodder)

Men's focus group: Selling livestock, migrating to other areas, reducing consumption, and eating wild plants

Changes in coping practices

In the past, such as the 1977 (EC) famine, people receive greater assistance from the government and NGOs. Food aid was more abundant, and some people were also resettled. Nowadays people must rely on local coping mechanisms.

Impact of severe food shortages

The women said that people cut back on consumption, going without eating at times. The men cited migration and health problems.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Grain prices have increased and livestock prices have fallen. The women stated that the present situation is like the past. The men felt that grain prices were currently higher. They pointed out that in 1977 (EC) teff sold for Birr 220 per quintal, but it now fetches Birr 310 per quintal.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Both focus groups said some assistance has been given in the past. The officials reported that no aid has been provided during the present situation.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Unreliable rains (either drought or excessive rain) and the current seed shortage

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

People reported that strong ties normally exist. The men noted that kinfolk support each other, while neighbors will borrow from one another. The community as a whole carries out exchange through the market.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The women stated that as long as the capacity exists, relatives support each other. The men stated that people rely on the market to sell livestock and purchase food items.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Food shortages reduce the capacity of people to help one another.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, the funeral association, operates in Kallo. Although it is nominally opened to all, the women reported that the members evaluate a person's eligibility. The current food shortage has caused some people to withdraw from membership. Officials estimated that 300 households are active members. Both focus groups observed that it is possible to borrow a small amount of money from kire during an emergency.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

World Vision operates in the kebele. It engages in rural development and some relief activities, including health, water, roads, school, and food-for-work projects. It used to offer credit. The women stated that it has reduced its activities. Officials reported that World Vision photographed local children so their pictures could be sent to donors.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

First, people need food relief so that they can be sustained. Next, development activities must be promoted that would directly and indirectly reduce food shortage and bring out sustainable livelihoods. The officials also pointed that the area is prone to malaria, especially during September and October. Livestock also suffer from health problems.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The men pointed out the need for health facilities to serve both people and livestock. No additional comments were recorded from the women's focus group.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele's chairman, secretary, propagandist, security officer, and economic department head. All five officials were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 30, 35, 45, 45, 45, 50, 50, 75) and ten men in their focus group (aged 30, 33, 35, 35, 45, 48, 55, 56, 60, and 60).

**BASIS/IDR
Community Assessments**

Kebele Profiles, Part IV:

Tehuledere, Legambo, Wereilu Weredas

in South Wello

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Introduction to Part IV

This report is the fourth in a series presenting the preliminary findings from rapid community assessments carried out as part of the project entitled “From Household to Region: Factor Market Constraints to Income and Food Security in a Highly Diverse Environment, South Wello, Ethiopia.” The project is a collaborative effort between the BASIS Horn of Africa Program and Addis Ababa University, Institute for Development Research (IDR). Previous reports covered the preliminary findings from 16 communities in South Wello Zone and neighboring Oromiya Zone. The present assessments were carried out by Yared Amare with assistance from Demeke Deboch and Assefa Akirso between July 24 and July 30, 1999, in five communities located in three South Wello weredas: Tehuledere, Legambo, and Wereilu.¹⁵ Alfonso Peter Castro prepared the report based on the key informant and focus group surveys. It provides a concise socioeconomic profile of each kebele, covering 10 aspects: basic community characteristics; agriculture; land, water, and communal resources; agricultural labor; agricultural inputs, credit, and local savings; non-agricultural and off-farm income earning; marketing; food security; community relations and community-based organizations; and additional local views and priorities. At the time of this writing, the IDR and BASIS research teams are working on reports synthesizing the broader findings from the community assessments.

¹⁵ The research team was supposed to visit a second community in Legambo but was unable to do so because of logistical considerations.

Kebele/number: Gobeya (012)
Wereda: Tehuledere

Date visited: 24 July 1999

Field Researchers: Yared Amare (Women's Focus Group), Demeke Deboth (Key Informants), and Assefa Akirso (Men's Focus Group)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: 20 gasha

Estimated population: 4,500

Number of households: 1,780 (1,280 taxpayers and 500 non-taxpayers)

Number of female-headed households: 600

Religious Groups as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 97%

Christian: 3%

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 99.98%

Tigrie: 0.02%

Distance from all-weather road: 9 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from Wereda headquarters: 9 km

Distance from nearest bank: 37 km

Number of health clinics: 0

Note: Officials identified the lack of local health service facilities as a major concern; people have to go 7-9 km to get first aid.

Number of schools: 1

Number of churches and mosques: 20 zawyas

Demography

Gobeya's population has grown in the past decade due to natural increase, the return of resettled people, and the arrival of deportees from Assab. Some people recently left the kebele because of the food shortage, but it is regarded only as a temporary movement.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Woina dega

Cropping pattern: Double-cropping, with meher as the main season. About 300 people practice irrigation.

Crops: Teff, sorghum, maize, chickpea, millet (tebele?), adanguare¹⁶, lentils, flax, red pepper, beans, peas, wheat, beets, cabbage, carrot, potato, besobella (spice)¹⁷, pumpkin, coffee, papaya, orange, banana, eucalyptus

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2), maize (3)

Men's focus group: Meher season: teff, sorghum, maize; Belge season: teff, chickpea, adanguare

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Carrot (1), cabbage (2), red beet (3)

Men's focus group: Sugar beet, local cabbage, carrot, potato, beet root

Note: The men reported that women exclusively grow besobella and pumpkin.

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Sorghum (1), teff (2)

Men's focus group: Teff (1), pepper (2), millet (3)

Bartering:

The women reported that they exchange sorghum for lentils with people from the dega (highlands). This occurs November through January. The men said that no bartering takes place.

Production Trend in Gobeya:

Decreasing, due to drought, crop disease, and "natural disaster."

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Landholding Pattern:

Average household landholding: 4,500 sq. m.

Range of household landholding: 10,000 sq. m. to 1,200 sq. m.

Number of landless households: 50

Access to Agricultural Land

Both focus groups reported that households in Gobeya obtain access to farmland through land redistribution, rental, and sharecropping. The men also identified borrowing from family members as a means of getting land. Access to pasture has been acquired through land redistribution and, according to the men, also through rental and borrowing from family members. The men also stated that land rental takes place on an "individual" to "individual" basis. Rents vary, but may reach as much as 50% of the harvest. No information was obtained on cash payments for land.

¹⁶ Possibly *Vigna unguiculata* cv.-group *Unguiculata* or *Phaseolus vulgaris*, a pulse.

¹⁷ *Besobella* or *basobella* is possibly *Ocimum graveolens* or *Ocimum basilicum* var. *anisatum*), used as a condiment.

The women said that sharecropping takes place on a 50-50 split, with people who lack oxen or seed providing land to those who possess sufficient resources. The men stated that sharecropping rates have remained constant, but the women thought it had been decreasing. The men also reported that land borrowing occurs within families, with the amount paid varying.

Land Redistribution

The main land redistribution occurred in 1976 EC (1984-85). At that time the landless and land-poor families got land. The women stated that female-headed households received land during that occasion, obtaining one timad per person. Further redistribution took place in 1984 EC, with land given to people returned from the resettlements. Assab refugees have also received land. The recent redistribution in Gobeya provided only a small amount of land only capable of producing “enough grain... for a few weeks.” The men observed that “redistribution created equal distribution of land in size, [but] individuals owned different fertile lands in degree.”

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women’s focus group: Land shortage; land exhaustion; floods

Men’s focus group: Farm sizes too small compared to the large family size; lack of grazing land
Kebele officials mentioned soil erosion problems caused by an unfinished dam project. It has caused a number of people to lose their farmland.

Water

The men emphasized the lack of water for irrigation. The local topography prevents people from using water from a nearby lake. They also reported conflicts over water among those who are able to irrigate. Both the women and the men cited a lack of potable water. The women pointed out a lack of water for livestock.

Communal Resources

Local common property resources in Gobeya consist of a lake, a stream, and spring water. Access to the spring is open to all. Use of the spring for irrigation is govern by proximity to it and the topography.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

Food scarcity and the poor state of local agriculture has affected the labor situation. The women reported that people are unable to engage help through labor exchange because of their inability to feed helpers. They are sometimes unable to complete agricultural tasks such as digging.

Hired Labor

In the past some hiring took place, but they mostly engaged in reciprocal labor arrangements.

Reciprocal Labor

Both focus groups said that “100%” of households participated in reciprocal labor. They did so to reduce the individual burden of doing work, facilitating the completion of tasks.

Changes in Access to Labor

The decrease in agricultural production has reduced the demand for farm labor in Gobeya.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 612

Number of households receiving farm credit: --

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 612

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA provides agricultural training, distributes fertilizer and other chemicals, and issues seed loans. The women said that the MOA works with those possessing “appropriate land.” The men stated that it focuses on wetland farm owners. Both groups agreed that the loans have not been successful, leaving farmers with a debt burden.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The women identified the Rural Bank, while the men mentioned the Amhara Credit and Saving Institution.

Purposes of farm credit

People in Gobeya use farm credit to purchase oxen, other livestock, fertilizer, herbicides, and hybrid seeds. The women also said it is used for trading.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The men identified the criteria used by agricultural agents to judge credit worthiness as the major constraint. The women cited high interest rates. They also dislike the practice of issuing group responsibility for loans, so that people ended up with “joint debt.” Both groups also mentioned the size or type of household landholding as a key factor in deciding who received assistance in Gobeya.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

The men emphasized the high cost of fertilizer, hybrid seeds, and herbicides. The women said that the ongoing drought was the biggest constraint on the use of inputs.

Local savings

People try to accumulate savings to serve as a buffer against bad or unexpected events such as drought. The main means for saving resources are fattening livestock (sheep and ox), storing grain, and use of a gudguad. Neither focus group mentioned the use of kin relations or community organizations as means of accumulating or mobilizing savings.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Day labor in cooking and construction in Haik; some migrant labor.

Men's focus group: Migrant labor; urban work; handicrafts; food-for-work.

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: "None"

Men's focus group: Trading of coffee; pottery

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

Few families have access to sources of non-farm income such as wage labor. The women stated that the income from such activities only allows people to meet their daily needs for short periods of time.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

There are few employment opportunities in the Gobeya area. The men stated that they are unable to compete for the limited work available. The women cited the lack of cash to engage in non-farm activities. Malaria is a risk for those engaged in migrant labor.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 9 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 9-19 km

Number of retail shops: --

Main means of transporting goods: Walking and pack animals

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: --

Marketing strategies and patterns

People in Gobeya mainly go to Haik to do their marketing. Agricultural traders come to this area daily, while livestock traders visit it weekly.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

They get white sorghum, maize, wheat, beans, and red peppers from other areas.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

Families with many children (1), the landless (2), families without oxen (3), and the elderly (4)

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: June to September

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

"This year"; 1989-90 EC [1998] due to "undesirable rainfall"; 1984-85 because of "virag".

Current situation

A severe food shortage exists in Gobeya. There is reportedly an increase in deaths and sickness due to food scarcity and malnutrition. Planting has been minimal due to drought. The women stated that conditions will likely be worse next year.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: selling eucalyptus, dung; selling sheep and calves

Men's focus group: selling eucalyptus for firewood, selling livestock, selling corrugated iron

Changes in coping practices

The men cited the greater availability in the past of food aid through direct assistance and food-for-work. The women felt the coping practices were similar.

Impact of severe food shortages

Both focus groups identified migration out of the community. The women noted increased disease, while the men mentioned deaths due to severe food shortage.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Both groups emphasized the great decline in livestock prices, including for oxen. The men pointed out the increased supply of livestock in the markets. The women observed that grain prices have risen: maize costs Birr 2.20/kg wheat Birr 3/kg white sorghum 2.20/kg. The women stated that grain prices were lower in 1984 due to relief assistance. Livestock prices were lower but traders used to buy substantial numbers to take to Kombolcha. The men said that crop and livestock prices were similar to those in 1984.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

The kebele officials stated that in 1990 the Ministry of Agriculture offered food-for-work amount to 25 kg of sorghum per 8 days of work. Both focus groups said that last year people received one-time assistance of 12.5 kg. of food per individual. Officials said that the kebele received less food aid during this crisis than in past famines.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Natural conditions, such as drought; being without oxen; poor saving culture.

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

Both focus groups identified grain and cash loans, especially to food-deficient households. The women reported that small amounts of cash and grain are contributed for funerals and weddings in Gobeya. The men mentioned loaning oxen, giving cows, and providing labor service.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The women said that people sometimes provide cash loans from daily sales of dung. The men reported that people will give seed and farm instruments to those in need.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

The women observed that repeated crop failures have reduced people's willingness (and presumably ability) to give grain. The men said that the increased problems (such as drought and crop failure) have reduced the size and types of assistance.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Both groups mentioned kire, the funeral assistance society. Besides helping with burials, kire provides a forum for resolving disputes between and within families. It is opened to all. Officials estimated that about 1,000 households in Gobeya belong to it. Senbete and zawya religious organization also operate in the kebele. People are not able to participate in, or contribute to, these communities organizations as much as in the past because of the food shortage. None of the organizations directly help people during severe food shortages.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

No NGOs were reported.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

As a permanent improvement, set up an irrigation system. They have a nearby lake available as a water source. As temporary solutions, provide food-for-work and direct food aid via NGOs and government organizations.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

Both focus groups stressed the need for food-for-work and food aid. The women also emphasized the need for employment opportunities in general. They were worried that next year's conditions will be worse. The men mentioned the need for credit facilities, and they emphasized the severe erosion problems in the kebele.

The Interviews

The key informant interviews were conducted with the kebele chairman, secretary, and economic section head. All of them were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 25, 30, 42, 43, 44, 45, 50, 55) and eight men (no ages recorded) in their focus group.

Kebele/number: Boru Metter or Boru Metro (06)
Wereda: Tehuledere

Date visited: 25 July 1999

Field Researchers: Yared Amare (Male Focus Group), Demeke Deboth (Female Focus Group), and Assefa Akirso (Key Informant)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: 20 gasha

Estimated population: 8,800

Number of households: 1,188 (1,116 taxpayers and 72 non-taxpayers)

Number of female-headed households: 350

Religious Groups as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 88 % (7,880 total)

Christian: 12 % (1,000)

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 99.9% (8,879 total)

Tigrie: 0.1% (1 total)

Distance from all-weather road: 20 km

Distance from seasonal road: 10 km

Distance from motorized transport: 4 km

Distance from Wereda headquarters: 20 km

Distance from nearest bank: 15 km

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 1 (Grades 1-6)

Number of churches and mosques: 1 mosque and 1 church

Demography

Boru Metter's population has grown in the past 10 years due to natural increase and the return of resettled people. Recently, however, some people have moved from the kebele because of drought, declining agricultural production, and the search for better employment opportunities.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Dega

Cropping pattern: The men reported that people practice double cropping; the women said that they only cultivate during the belg rains. Both groups agreed that the belg season is the most important time in the agricultural calendar.

Crops: Barley, wheat, maize, oats, beans, peas, onion, garlic, “local” cabbage, eucalyptus, juniper (*tid*)

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women’s focus group: Barley (1), wheat (2), maize (3)

Men’s focus group: Barley (1), wheat (2), maize (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women’s focus group: “local” cabbage (they reported that women exclusively grow this crop)

Men’s focus group: onion (1), garlic (2)

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women’s focus group: Barley (1), wheat (2), maize (3)

Men’s focus group: Wheat (1), barley (2)

Bartering:

Neither focus group reported bartering.

Production Trend in Boru Metter:

Farm production is decreasing. The men attributed the decline to drought, frost, and worms. The women identified untimely rainfall as the culprit.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Landholding Pattern:

Average household landholding: 5,000 sq. meters

Range of household landholding: 9,000 sq. meters to 900 square meters

Number of landless households: 112

Access to Agricultural Land

People in Boru Metter got access to farmland through land redistribution and sharecropping. The men reported that inheritance is another means of obtaining land. The women stated that communal lands are also used for cropping. Elderly, female-headed, and poor (lacking oxen or seed) households offer their land for sharecropping. People with sufficient oxen and labor are the ones who sharecrop. The harvest is split on a 50-50 basis by the landholder and sharecropper. The men reported that sharecropping is increasing in incidence, but no changes in rates or terms. In contrast, the women’s focus group felt that such land transactions were decreasing because of the shrinking farm size. People get access to pasture through land redistribution, use of communal lands, and land sales. No additional information was collected on the sale of pasture.

Land Redistribution

Land redistribution took place in 1976 EC (1984/85) and again in 1985 EC (1993/94). The initial redistribution benefitted the peasants. The latter redistribution in Boru Metter provided land to those who had been landless, including people returned from resettlements and ex-soldiers.

Female-headed households received land. The land for the second redistribution was taken from households who had sustained the death of a member or who had married off children. Still, the plots are very small, producing only 100 kg of food. The women stated that land redistribution caused household farm production to decrease due to the small farm sizes. They also said that it created land scarcity.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Land scarcity

Men's focus group: Land shortage, land exhaustion, erosion

Water

Both focus groups identified the lack of potable water, the lack of water for livestock, the lack of water for irrigation, the far distance of water supplies, and the drying up of water points as major constraints.

Communal Resources

The focus groups said that local common property resources consisted of grazing grounds and water points. According to the women, the grazing grounds cover a large area. Anyone can get access to it and use it any time. There are no limitations. The water points are an open-access resource. Officials mentioned communal woodland, but no additional information was collected about it.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

The elderly, the sick, and female-headed households face labor shortages in Boru Metter. For example, they often face problems getting their land plowed. Overall, however, the kebele has a surplus of labor due to land shortage.

Hired Labor

No hiring of labor currently takes place. The women reported that it used to occur 20 years ago. Nowadays farmers in Boru Metter are too poor to hire workers.

Reciprocal Labor

Both focus groups reported that all families engage in reciprocal labor. People engage in it to speed up work. For example, reciprocal labor is widely used to harvest crops in June before the rains come and destroy them.

Changes in Access to Labor

Shrinking farm sizes and declining agricultural productivity have reduced the demand for labor.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 520
Number of households receiving farm credit: 520
Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 520

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA furnishes farm credit for purchasing seeds, fertilizer, and other chemicals, as well as extension services in Boru Metter. Fertilizer is used for wheat and other crops. The men estimated that about half the households have been involved in extension activities. People felt that the programs have not been of much benefit due to the drought. Instead, the farm credit program has created a debt burden for households.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The men identified the Amhara Credit and Saving Institution as an additional source of farm credit.

Purposes of farm credit

Farm credit is used to buy farm inputs, oxen, sheep, and goats.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The men stated that there does not appear to be enough credit to reach everyone in Boru Metter. Both focus groups mentioned the lack of assets (land and livestock) to serve as collateral for loans as a constraint. The women said that people needed “to own a couple of oxen and other valuable items.” Both the men and women emphasized the disappointing performance of past loans due to the drought. For example, the men observed that, “Livestock purchased by credit are dying.” The resulting rising debt load now has emerged as an obstacle to obtaining further credit. The key informant interviewees suggested that the Amhara Credit and Savings Institution ought to refund (or forgive) local debt payments. They emphasized the problems caused by the drought, and they also cited the short repayment period – six months.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

The men cited the drought, the area’s hilly land, and the price of inputs as the main constraints on their use. The women stated, “The price of seeds and fertilizer are not in proportion to the benefits they have given.”

Local savings

The women mentioned using savings to pay debts and to cover ceremonial expenses, including weddings. No response regarding the purpose of savings was recorded for the men. Both groups identified storing grain and fattening sheep, oxen, and goats as the main means of accumulating savings.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women’s focus group: handicrafts, such as weaving; food-for-work

Men's focus group: migrant labor, carpentry, and food-for-work

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: None

Men's focus group: None

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

The men stated that a few households and some young people managed to earn money from migrant labor, but only a small amount. About 250 households – the poorest group – participated in food-for-work for three months (they got 12.5 kg). The women said that non-farm sources of income only help on a day-by-day basis, providing about one-third of a household's food requirements.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

Both groups mentioned the lack of demand for local labor. The women observed that there are no government or NGOs activities in the kebele that provide job opportunities.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 4 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 4 km

Number of retail shops: --

Main means of transporting goods: Walking

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: None

Marketing strategies and patterns

People in Boru Metter go to market twice a week – Wednesdays and Saturdays – at the kebele marketplace and the local marketing center. No agricultural traders come to the area, but livestock traders visit regularly. According to the men, they visit once every two weeks; the women said it is weekly during some periods.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

Both groups mentioned sorghum and red pepper (barebare) as commodities obtained from other areas. The women also mentioned millet, teff, and guaya.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, female-headed households, families without livestock, families without oxen, and the elderly.

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages:

Hunger from July to September because failure in belg production, January-June.

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:
1988 EC-1990 EC (July-September) – caused by shortage of rainfall; 1991 – shortage of rainfall.

Current situation

A severe food shortage has existed in Boru Metter since last year. Livestock are dying. The men reported that families possessed only minimal grain supplies when the interview was conducted in late July 1999. Without outside assistance they perceived “no way of surviving in the next few months.” People were unable to plant, and they had no alternative sources of income. Food assistance has been very limited. About 200 to 250 households have been selected to receive assistance, amounting to 12.5 kg per person. The men emphasized that the critical need to provide more assistance, including oxen for plowing, and relief until the next harvest.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women’s focus group: Selling firewood and livestock; reducing consumption, but this was practiced only during the first stage of the famine.

Men’s focus group: Selling eucalyptus and livestock, especially sheep; migrant labor; changing and reducing consumption patterns.

Changes in coping practices

The men felt that more food-for-work was available in the 1984-85 famine. Grain prices were lower then. The women said that the coping practices have remained the same.

Impact of severe food shortages

Both focus groups stated that severe food shortages cause migration. The men said that people went to beg in the towns. They added that people suffer from physical exhaustion. The women noted that sickness increased.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

The supply of agricultural products has decreased, reflected in a substantial rise in grain prices in Boru Metter. The men observed that some grain is available in the kebele market at present, but at very high prices. In contrast, livestock prices have collapsed. The women stressed that previous food shortages were not as bad as the present situation. More grain was available in the market in 1984-85. The men agreed that grain prices were lower at that time. The women also said that livestock prices were not as depressed as at present.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

According to the key informant interview, the Regional RRC Office provided 457 quintals of grain during the most recent times of widespread hunger. The officials stated that 1,000 out of the 8,800 households were provided with 25 kg (it was unclear whether this referred to both 1990 EC and 1991 EC, or the latter date alone). They felt that the level of food aid provided was much smaller than in the past.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Natural conditions – drought; the decreasing size of farm plots due to population increase; frost; and livestock disease.

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

The men identified grain loans during food shortages; loaning of oxen and pack animals; giving milk to neighbors; giving fresh grain; and giving seed for planting. The women mentioned loaning cash in times of need and lending livestock for breeding.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The women said that people in Boru Metter provide short-term and limited relief that those who have been seriously affected by food shortages. The men said that people lend pack animals for selling firewood and other items. They will also lend oxen for plowing. Finally, they share grain when the harvest comes.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Both groups emphasized that the community's increasing impoverishment due to the drought has caused mutual assistance and inter-household exchanges to decline to minimal levels. The women stated that such community assistance is "very weak in all aspects."

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire operates in Boru Metter. It makes the arrangements for funeral ceremonies and contributes towards the economic loss experienced by the family. Kire also helps mediate conflicts within the community. Although kire is open to all, officials estimated that about 180 families are active participants. Religious organizations exist: senbete, maheber, and Muslim feast groups (Mesyid tertib). Officials mentioned local groups, including a women's association, operate to mobilize labor for road construction. All the organization, including the religious ones, have suffered from the drought and widespread food shortage. Participation has decreased greatly. Kire is limiting its activities to helping with burials. Some of the religious groups have temporarily stopped meeting, and the contribution fees to kire have been cut in half.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

None operate in the kebele.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Local officials stressed the need for employment generation. The village needs a wood products industry to create jobs; investors need to be attracted so that jobs can be created in livestock products; and food-for-work needs to be increased. They mentioned the need to pump water from the Borkena River, and also called for building a bridge over the river. The officials also called for introducing NGOs into Boru Metter, providing debt relief to local families, yet increasing the amount of credit available for farm production.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The men emphasize the need to provide immediate food assistance and longer-term assistance in the form of oxen for plowing teams (due to the poor condition of livestock). The women also mentioned the need for direct food assistance and food-for-work to deal with the present situation. They added that the government or any interested party should periodically follow-up on their living situation.

The Interviews

The key informant interview involved 10 members of the kebele executive committee. Except for the chairman, none of their positions were recorded. All of the committee members were men. There were eight women in their focus group (aged 25, 35, 35, 37, 40, 40, 50, 55), and nine men (aged 39, 40, 40, 45, 50, 53, 61, 63, and 71) in their focus group.

Kebele/number: Akesta
Wereda: Legambo

Date visited: July 27, 1999

Field Researchers: Yared Amare (Men's Focus Group), Demeke Deboth (Key Informant and Women's Focus Group)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: --

Estimated population: 5,000

Number of households: 1,705 (1,305 taxpaying and 400 non-taxpaying households)

Number of female-headed households: 500

Religious Groups as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 98 %

Christian: 2 %

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100 %

Distance from all-weather road: 1 km

Distance from seasonal road: --

Distance from motorized transport: 1 km

Distance from Wereda headquarters: 0.5 km

Distance from nearest bank: 100 km

Number of health clinics: 0 (a medium-size hospital is located adjacent to the kebele)

Number of schools: 2

Number of churches and mosques: 1 zawya borders the kebele

Demography

Akesta's population grew during the past decade due to natural increase, the return of resettled people, and migration. The latter category consisted of people seeking to improve their livelihood by moving into the area. Recently, some people have left the kebele because of the severe food shortage.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Woina dega

Cropping pattern: Double cropping. The men said that the belg and meher seasons were equally important, but the women stated that the belg output was higher. The men said that only a little irrigation occurs; it benefits 30 [households?]. The women reported that no irrigation takes place.

Crops: Barley, wheat, beans, horse beans, lentils, oats, peas, onion, potato, carrots, kale (local cabbage), sweet potato, eucalyptus, tid (juniper), girar (hops)

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Barley, lentils, wheat, horse beans

Men's focus group: Barley (1), wheat (2), beans (3), oaths, peas, lentils

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Local cabbage (kale), potato, onion, carrot, sweet potato (the women reported that they exclusively group local cabbage and onion)

Men's focus group: Onions (1), potato (2), carrots (3), kale,

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Lentils (1), barley (2), horse beans (3) and wheat (3)

Men's focus group: Lentils (1), peas (2), wheat (3)

Bartering:

The men stated that a limited amount of bartering takes place in Akesta, mainly to obtain seed. They barter with people from the dega zone, exchanging oats with barley.

Production Trend in Akesta:

It has decreased significantly due to crop disease, excessive rains, and drought.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Landholding Pattern:

Average household landholding: 4 timad

Range of household landholding: 6 timad to 1 timad

Number of landless households: 400

Access to Agricultural Land

People get access to cultivated land in Akesta through land redistribution and sharecropping. The men mentioned inheritance and sales as additional means of acquiring land. As in other communities, those households lacking oxen or seed were the ones that offered their land for sharecropping or rental. The elderly and female-headed households were typically among those who did so. Households with sufficient oxen and seed – seek land. Both focus groups reported that the landholder and sharecropper split the harvest on a 50-50 basis. According to the men's focus group, the "better farmers," along with merchants and those who have livestock for stock, will rent land. They pay Birr 150 for one timad of fertile land or two timads of infertile land. The men stated that "not much" sharecropping occurred before the crisis of last year. Since 1990 EC, however, perhaps up to 50% of households in Akesta are sharecropping-out land due to the food crisis. In contrast, the women stated that land transactions are generally decreasing with no changes in type or rates. The focus groups pointed out that a sizable amount of the community's farmland had been taken for a hospital, schools, and other urban-oriented development.

Land Redistribution

Land distribution took place in 1983 on the basis of family size, but only up to 4 timad. People received a mixture of fertile and infertile plots. Landless and female-headed households got land (officials also identified returnees from resettlements and ex-soldiers as recipients of land). The men stated that the landless and female-head households benefitted economically from the redistribution, but the women said that these groups did not receive enough land to earn a living. Redistribution supposedly “created” (according to the women) or “increased” (according to the men) land scarcity. Farm sizes have not increased with the growth in family size. The women contended that agricultural output “drastically decreased” after redistribution.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women’s focus group: Drought; topography (steep gradient results in land degradation); a substantial part of the kebele’s land was taken for projects

Men’s focus group: land scarcity (including the land taken for project)

Water

The women cited the lack of potable water, the lack of water for livestock, and the drying-up of water points as major constraints in Akesta. The men noted the lack of water for irrigation.

Communal Resources

Both focus groups identified streams, wells, and other water points as communal resources. The women also mentioned a local communal forest. They stated that the management of this communal woodland is “not yet decided.”

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

The men reported that the food shortage made it difficult to carry out ploughing. They also stated that elderly households regularly lack labor for plowing. The women said that no problems existed regarding labor for agricultural activities in Akesta.

Hired Labor

The focus groups stated that in the past prosperous and labor-deficient household hired farm workers. The men stated that people from large families or those with no families sought employment plowing, herding, or other tasks. They received Birr 3 per day for casual farm work. Some laborers worked all year for a particular employer, receiving Birr 300-400 per annum. Both focus groups emphasized that the practice of hiring farm workers has declined in recent years. The men observed that during this time a leveling has occurred in terms of household economic status. The rising cost of labor also reduced the demand for hired workers. The drought has curtailed the demand for labor in the kebele.

Reciprocal Labor

The women reported that 100% of Akesta’s households engaged in reciprocal labor, but the men placed the figure at 30%. As in other places, people in Akesta find that reciprocal labor helps to

speed up work such as plowing and harvesting. The women observed that it is an integral part of local social life.

Changes in Access to Labor

Wage labor is disappearing as farm sizes shrink and the need for additional laborers declines.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

<i>Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer:</i>	125 (last year 150)
<i>Number of households receiving farm credit:</i>	190
<i>Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension:</i>	125

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA furnishes extension services and farm credit. It promotes use of chemical fertilizer, hybrid seeds, poultry improvement, livestock improvement, tree planting, and related activities. Poor farming conditions the past two years have hurt its programs.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

The Rural Bank and the Amhara Credit and Savings Institution.

Purposes of farm credit

People in Akesta use farm credit to purchase livestock, poultry, seeds, fertilizer, and other inputs.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

Both groups complained about the high price of inputs obtained through loans. The women said that the criteria for getting loans set up by the Peasant Association (kebele administration) “are not fair.” The standards are such that many households do not qualify because they lack adequate collateral. They also stated that inputs obtained through loan were not delivered in a timely manner for planting. Both the women and men pointed out that drought had undermined the investments funded by loans. The cattle were dying, and the seeds and fertilizer had been ineffective due to crop failure. The people were left with a debt that they cannot repay. The men spoke out against the practice of group responsibility for loans, since default by one member meant that the others had to pay. They added that interest rates were too high.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

Both groups felt that inputs were too expensive, in Akesta especially in relation to crop yield. The drought had undermined the use of seeds and fertilizer. The men stated that the harvests during the past two years have been especially poor. They complained about the “failure of fertilizer.” Both focus groups said that people with sloping land face difficulties using inputs. Fertilizer is sought by those who possess flatlands. The women also mentioned that hybrid seeds were delivered too late to be planted by them.

Local savings

People accumulate savings for times of need, to pay for health care and education, and to cover household expenditures. They store grain (gudguad, gotera), fatten livestock (sheep, oxen, goats),

and build houses with corrugated iron as means of savings. No community organizations help people acquire savings.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: food-for-work; urban work (construction related); general trading; migration to find work; weaving; pottery

Men's focus group: food for work; migrant labor to Jima and elsewhere; handicrafts such as clay work

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: pottery

Men's focus group: pottery

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

The women stated that such sources of income help them survive during food shortages. The men said that migrant work does not provide much benefit – too few jobs and the high risk of sickness. Food-for-work is limited. Only 150 households received it, getting 12.5 kg per person. Such assistance helps them only to a certain extent.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

The focus groups cited the lack of employment opportunities, including industrial ones, near the kebele. The women also noted that people lacked the resources in Akesta to initiate non-farm and off-farm income activities.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 1 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 1 km

Number of retail shops: 0

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals and walking

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 0

Marketing strategies and patterns

People go to the nearby market center in Akesta. Agricultural traders only come to the kebele during the harvest time, about two times a year. The men stated that livestock traders come in October, December, and April (mainly during Christmas and Easter). In contrast, the women said that livestock traders visit the kebele every week..

Agricultural commodities from other areas

Both focus groups stated that the kebele gets sorghum and teff from other areas. The women also identified maize, chickpeas, and guaya (*Lathyrus sativus*) as commodities imported into the area.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The elderly, the landless, families without livestock, poor female-headed households, female-headed households, and families with many children

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages: April-May and September-October. But food shortages have been experienced every month of this year.

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1984 EC – due to shortage of rainfall; 1987 EC – due to heavy rainfall destroying crops; 1989 EC – due to shortage of rainfall; 1990-91 – due to drought.

Current situation

Akesta has been especially vulnerable to shortfalls in agricultural production since 1983 EC, when a substantial amount of land was taken for different projects. The community was experiencing a very severe food shortage when the interview took place. Widespread hunger existed, with families curtailing food consumption, selling livestock, and similar measures. Some famine-related death reportedly occurred, especially among the elderly. They also reported a substantial number of livestock deaths. This sad situation emerged last year due to poor rainfall, and it intensified so that all families were feeling threatened. The interviews indicated that people had experienced hunger every month of this year (field work took place in late July 1999). Some food assistance had been provided by the government, focusing on the poorest of the poor, but hunger is reportedly widespread in the community. The long-term outlook was not good. The kebele officials stated, “Our valuable property such as oxen, cows, sheep, goats, donkeys, mules, and horses have died, so we are left with nothing to do our next farming activities.”

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women’s focus group: Selling livestock; changing food habits; seeking off-farm income; reducing daily household food consumption;

Men’s focus group: Rationing of food consumption; selling livestock; slaughtering of livestock; selling wood taken from one’s house

Changes in coping practices

The men stated that the present situation is worse than in 1984-85. During that famine people in Akesta could still find wild plants to feed themselves and their animals. It was still possible to obtain milk from cows. They sold livestock at that time, but received a fair price. People were even able to plant their gardens. None of that is possible at this time. The women agreed that the range of coping practices has narrowed due to the decline in living standards

Impact of severe food shortages

Both groups agreed that famine-related deaths have occurred. The men stated that the elderly and young people have been victims. But they observed that children have been relatively protected so far. The men's focus group pointed out that hunger has increased physical exhaustion. The women added that it has generated out-migration and has "forced us to sell our wealth."

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

The focus groups observed that grain supplies were dwindling, while food prices increased. Meanwhile, livestock prices have sunk, reflecting the lack of demand for animals. Many people no longer bothered to bring their animals to market. In contrast, livestock prices were higher in 1984-85, and more animals could be seen in the marketplace. The women reported that more food (including a larger range of items) was available in 1984-85, so people had good access. The men claimed that grain was unavailable at times in the market during 1984-85. The present situation in Akesta differs in that grain can usually still be found, but the people lack the income to buy it (they face an entitlement problem).

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Kebele officials stated that some households received up to 50 kg of maize and 50 kg of wheat per family of four. They were asked to identify very needy households to receive this assistance. They contrasted this the relief aid provided in the past: people not only got grain, but butter, cooking oil, and even clothes; no distinctions were made between rich and poor, all received the same; and grain distributions totaled 250 kg per five-member family. The men's focus group stated that 150 households received this food assistance.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought, land scarcity (small parcel size), large family size, and the topography of the kebele

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

The focus groups observed that people helped each other in a number of ways: giving food gifts; providing cash loans; sharing oxen for plowing; lending livestock for breeding; and contributing to marriage ceremonies.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The men stated that people shared grain and other food during such times. But the women said that such exchanges were not significant because everyone was affected by the famine.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

Both focus groups agreed that the food shortage caused community and kin-based assistance to decline.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, the funeral society, exists in Akesta. Officials stated that kire only focuses on burial-related activities. Membership was opened to everyone, and officials estimated that all 1,705 households

participated. The range of contributions, including grain, and their quantity have decreased. The men reported that maheber and senbete also operate in the kebele. Their activities have similarly declined during the recent food shortage. None of these organization directly contribute to household survival during famines.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

None operate in the kebele.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

“We need government support in all aspects; decreasing family size; we need someone to understand us properly.” The officials also emphasized the community’s severe land shortage and the problem of future agricultural productivity because of the death of so much livestock.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

Both groups drew attention to the severity of their food situation. The women called for the creation of off-farm income opportunities near their kebele. They asked for the establishment of a local cooperative service enterprise. They also stated: “Government should take into account our severe land shortage and give us a solution.” The women also wanted a clinic and more food assistance. The men also emphasized the need to expand food aid. Only the most destitute had been helped at the time of the interview, yet many families (such as those owning only one oxen) remain in desperate circumstances. In addition, the men said that the problem of land shortage must be addressed. Much land has been lost to urbanization. The government needs to consider the redistribution of land from one kebele to another – inter-kebele land reform. Finally, they asked for assistance to extend irrigation in the community.

The Interviews

The key informant interview took place with the mobilization head, the social sector head, the cashier, the secretary, and the security head. All five were men. There were four women in their focus group (aged 30, 50, 55, 60) and eight men (aged 28, 31, 31, 38, 41, 42, 45, 50) in their focus group.

Kebele/number: Aremfema (024)
Wereda: Wereilu

Date visited: 29 July 1999

Field Researchers: Yared Amare (Men's Focus Group), Demeke Deboch (Key Informants and Women's Focus Group)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: Not recorded

Estimated population: 5,500

Number of households: 1,230 + 500 (non-taxpayers)

Number of female-headed households: 401 + 230 (non-taxpayers)

Religious Groups as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 96 %

Christian: 4 %

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100 %

Distance from all-weather road: 50 km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 6 km

Distance from Wereda headquarters: 30 km

Distance from nearest bank: 30 km

Number of health clinics: 0

Number of schools: 0

Number of churches and mosques: 1

Demography

Aremfema's population has expanded during the past decade due to natural increase and the return of resettled families and ex-soldiers. Some people also moved into the kebele to get food from relatives or because of marriage. Recently, some people have moved out of Aremfema because of drought or to seek work.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Dega

Cropping pattern: The women identified only one growing season – the belg. The men acknowledged that the belg was the main season, but they stated that some cultivation occurs during the meher season as well. No irrigation was reported.

Crops: Barley, peas, lentils, wheat, local cabbage (kale), tid (juniper), eucalyptus

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Barley (1), lentils ("not significant")

Men's focus group: Barley (1), peas (2), lentils (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Local cabbage (kale) (the women reported that they grow it exclusively)

Men's focus group: None

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Only barley

Men's focus group: Barley (1), lentils (2)

Bartering:

The men stated that local families barter with kola and woina dega households. They trade barley for beans and peas, especially during December and January.

Production Trend in Aremfema:

Decreasing due to the changing climatic conditions of the area (according to the women), excessive rain, crop disease, and drought (according to the men)

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Landholding Pattern:

Average household landholding: 2 timad

Range of household landholding: Not clear ["Timad"] to 0.5 timad

Number of landless households: 500

Access to Agricultural Land

People obtain farmland through land redistribution and sharecropping. Sharecropping is done by better-off farmers who possess at least a pair of oxen. They obtain land people who lack seed or oxen, as well as from households experiencing difficulties in farming due to a lack of resources and labor – the elderly, the sick, female-headed families, or the poor. The harvest is split on a 50-50 basis. Both focus groups reported that sharecropping decreased in recent years, attributing its decline to poor harvests due to drought and other "changes in natural conditions." People get access to pasture through land redistribution. The men also reported that some households purchase fodder grass.

Land Redistribution

Redistribution took place in Aremfema around 1983 EC, during the war between the EPRDF and the Derg. The men claimed that the redistribution was not carried out in an equitable manner because of the wartime conditions. The women's focus group said that the allocation of fertile land was done in an unfair manner. Overall, landless and land deficient households, including

female-headed ones, received some land based on their family size. But repeated drought and numerous crop failures have undermined agricultural productivity. Ex-soldiers and returned resettlers also got land, but their parcels were very small.

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's Focus Group: Drought, increasing population, and shrinking farm size

Men's Focus Group: Land shortages, waterlogged land, soil erosion

Water

The women cited the drying up of water points, the lack of water for irrigation, and the lack of water for livestock as major constraints. The men mentioned the lack of potable water and the lack of access to water for livestock, but they stressed the role of the drought in intensifying the problem.

Communal Resources

The men identified rivers and springs as the only communal resources in Aremfema. The women cited grazing grounds. These resources were said to be available to all.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

As in other communities, poor agricultural conditions and hunger have depressed the demand for farm labor. Before the current crisis, elderly and female-headed households often experienced labor shortages.

Hired Labor

Both focus groups stated that the hiring of farm workers used to occur in the past. The men blamed its disappearance on the repeated crop failures of recent years. The women said that the practice of hiring farm workers faded during the 1970s EC. Workers were hired for Birr 3 per day, and some worked on an annual basis for up to Birr 100. These wage levels were on the rise when hired labor declined. People from large families with little land often worked as casual farm laborers.

Reciprocal Labor

The women estimated that half the families engaged in reciprocal labor, but the men put the figure at only 10%. People find the practice useful to complete tasks in a timely manner. It is also an easy way to obtain help during times of labor scarcity, such as during good harvests.

Changes in Access to Labor

Poor farming conditions have reduced overall employment opportunities, resulting in the decline in wage labor.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 100

Number of households receiving farm credit: 100

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 250

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA carries out activities related to soil conservation (including promotion of tree planting), agricultural production, and the extension of knowledge related to farming. It also furnishes farm credit and input such as hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizer.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

Kebele officials cited the Amhara Credit and Savings Institution. No other agency was mentioned by the focus groups.

Purposes of farm credit

The men stated that only a small number of people in Aremfema use farm credit. They do so mainly to purchase fertilizer and sheep. The women said that no credit is used.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

Very little credit is available to local households in Aremfema. The men claimed that repeated drought and local impoverishment constrained the community's access to credit. People are not very interested in obtaining credit for farm inputs because they are not cost-effective. For example, some families got farm credit in 1998, but it generated only enough income to repay the loan. People are interested in loans to buy livestock for fattening; however, credit was unavailable.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

Only a small percentage of the kebele's households use fertilizer, herbicide, other chemicals, or hybrid seeds. According to the men, such inputs generally yield poorly due to the community's high altitude and the prevalence of frost. They are also not appropriate for barley, the staple crop. The inputs do seem to work in the kebele's flatlands, but not in those areas that get waterlogged. The women said that their lands are sufficiently fertile and do not require chemical fertilizer. They also reported preferring to use their own barley seeds, instead of relying on a supply from outsiders.

Local savings

People try to accumulate savings in Aremfema to cover various future expenses, to build houses with corrugated iron, to cover the costs of weddings, and to survive bad times such as food shortages. People mainly use the gudguad to store grain. Breeding and fattening livestock offers another avenue for savings. No community organizations play a role in mobilizing local savings.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Pottery, weaving, urban work such as construction, and food-for-work
Men's focus group: Wage labor, road construction, food-for-work, but generally very little work is available

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Pottery

Men's focus group: None

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

The men stated that wage labor in road construction and food-for-work substantially improved food security for the poorest households. They received up to 60 kg per household for road construction. The women said that such sources of income sometimes helps with food expenses.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

Both groups cited the lack of employment and income-generating opportunities (including the resources to do so). The women also cited "cultural influence" as a constraint in obtaining such income.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 10 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 10-15 km

Number of retail shops: 0

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals and walking

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 0

Marketing strategies and patterns

People purchase food and other items in the two nearby market centers, in town, and the kebele's own small market. Officials estimated that only about 30-40 households participate in the Aremfema's marketplace each week. Agricultural traders visit each of these markets weekly. Livestock traders also pay weekly visits, but their trading activities are not too extensive.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

Both groups identified sorghum, teff, wheat, and beans, with the women adding lentils, horse beans, and millet.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, female-headed households, the landless, the elderly, families with many children, families without oxen, and families without livestock.

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages:

February to December

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:
1989 EC and 1990 EC – due to drought

Current situation

Aremfema was suffering from a prolonged and severe food shortage. Several crop failures have occurred in recent years. The current crisis emerged over the past year or so, but each focus group thought the roots actually extended even further in the past. The men cited 1996 as the onset of the present difficulties, while the women thought it began earlier in 1986 EC. Over 300 families received food aid during the past three-four months. This severe food shortage has eroded traditional self-help grain and cash loans, as well as similar practices.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling livestock, migration, reduction of consumption

Men's focus group: Livestock sales, eucalyptus sales, and sale of wood dismantled from one's house

Changes in coping practices

The women felt that the incidence of labor migration has decreased in Aremfema, but the other strategies have remained the same. The men claimed that in 1983-84 they were able to eat wild leaves because it rained at the time. Barley could be purchased at that time because the dega had received rain in some. People find it difficult to purchase grain presently because the drought and food shortage are widespread.

Impact of severe food shortages

Both groups identified increased human mortality, with the men suggesting that large families were especially vulnerable. The women also mentioned livestock deaths. The men cited increased sickness, including skin disease and diarrhea, as well as physical exhaustion. The women said that severe food shortages force some people to become beggars.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

The prices of grain and other food greatly increased in Aremfema, while livestock prices dropped (for example, from Birr 150 to Birr 50 according to the men). Both groups that food prices were lower during the 1984-85 because food was available from other areas. The men said that grain prices at that time were fair – Birr 3 per kg. Today it has doubled in price. But a problem in both cases (1984-85 and the present) is that people lack income to purchase grain.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Officials stated that some wheat and other grain amounting to 150 kg for a family of five, along with some cooking oil, had been distributed to poor families. The women stated that 75 kg of wheat and a similar amount of grain had been issued. The men stated that the provision of food assistance allowed the poorest families to survive last year. This year they estimated that 300-360 poor households were given food for about 3-4 months. The men felt that larger and more speedy assistance was required. According to them, the logistics of food assistance could be improved. Grain relief was reportedly handled from distant Wereilu township, the wereda headquarters,

instead of the closer town of Kobe. They also contended that the DPPC lacked sufficient personnel to handle grain distributions.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought and soil erosion.

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

The women said that in the past “a sort of lending system” existed “between neighbors and among community members in Aremfema. The men agreed, highlighting the importance of grain and cash loans in times of food shortage, cash loans for livestock sales, and the lending of oxen for farm work.

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

The men stated that grain loans occurred until food shortages became too severe last year and this year.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

The severe food shortage has eroded local capacity for sharing and self-help. Even stores of grain held by kire have been distributed to the poor.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire (eder), the funeral association, operates in Aremfema, along with meheber and senbete religious organizations. Their memberships are open to all interested parties. Officials estimated that all families belonged to kire. Due to the food crisis, participation in, and contributions to, these community organizations have declined.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

None.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:

Food aid from the government until we can overcome this situation; teach the people about family planning; do more work related to soil erosion to enhance farm production. There is land scarcity and landless in the kebele that requires addressing. They also added that the kebele needs a health clinic, a school, and potable water.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The women cited the lack of drinking water, the lack of health facilities and schools. “Our children walk a long distance everyday to get an education.” The men called for greater food assistance. They also mentioned the need for oxen so that work can take place for the next

planting season. Finally, the men expressed appreciation for a child-feeding program in the local school.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with Aremfema's kebele chairman, secretary, economic sector head, and the social sector head. They were all men. There were eight women in their focus group, aged 35, 35, 37, 40, 42, 55, 55, 62. Eight men participated in their focus group, aged 24, 29, 30, 30, 39, 48, 49, 63.

Kebele/number: Chisa/Kaya
Wereda: Wereilu

Date visited: 30 July 1999

Field Researchers: Yared Amare (Men's Focus Group), Demeke Deboch (Key Informants and Women's Focus Group)

I. Community Characteristics

Area: 25 gasha

Estimated population: 9,000

Number of households: 2,300 (1,600 taxpayer + 700 non-taxpayers)

Number of female-headed households: 900 (600 taxpayers + 300 non-taxpayers)

Religious Groups as a percentage of the population:

Muslim: 99 %

Christian: 1 %

Ethnic Group as a percentage of the population:

Amhara: 100 %

Distance from all-weather road: -- km

Distance from seasonal road: 0 km

Distance from motorized transport: 0 km

Distance from Wereda headquarters: 15 km

Distance from nearest bank: 15 km

Number of health clinics: 1

Number of schools: 1

Number of churches and mosques: 1 zawyas

Demography

The kebele's population has grown during the past decade due to natural increase and the return of resettled people and ex-soldiers. In the past few years, however, a few people left the area in search of employment. The drought has also caused some movement out Chisa/Kaya.

II. Agriculture

Agroecological zone: Woina dega

Cropping pattern: Farming only during the meher rains (but the men's focus group response to the barter question refers to some "belg harvests"). No irrigation reported.

Crops: Wheat, teff, lentils, beans, horse beans, guaya (*Lathyrus sativus*)¹⁸, fenugreek, barley, peas, flax (tilba), oats, onion, kale (local cabbage), eucalyptus,

Top 3 field crops for local livelihood as ranked by:

Women's focus group: Wheat (1), teff (2), lentils (3), guaya (4), horse beans (5)

Men's focus group: Wheat (1), teff (2), lentils (3)

Main garden vegetables (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Onions, kale (local cabbage) (the women reported that they exclusively grow these crops)

Men's focus group: Onions (1), kale (2)

Main cash crops (with rankings) according to:

Women's focus group: Wheat (1), teff (2), lentils (3), guaya (4) (the women noted, "These are the most important cash-generating crops at the time of a good season")

Men's focus group: Wheat (1), teff (2), lentils (3), beans

Bartering:

The men reported that bartering occurs – guaya and beans are exchange for barley and oats provided by dega households. This occurs during Ramadan and June (during the belg harvest). People do so to get seed and food. The women said that no barter occurs.

Production Trend in Chisa/Kaya:

Decreasing due to problems such as drought, excessive rainfall, and waterlogged land.

III. Land, Water, and Communal Resources

Landholding Pattern:

Average household landholding: 6 timad

Range of household landholding: 10 timad to 1 timad

Number of landless households: 700

Access to Agricultural Land

Households obtain access to farmland in Chisa/Kaya through land redistribution and sharecropping. The men also mentioned that land rental occurs. As in other areas, people who are unable to farm (the elderly, the sick, female-headed households, families without oxen) offered their land to those who possessed sufficient oxen, seed, and labor. Sharecropping arrangements involve a 50-50 splitting of the harvest. The rental rate for land is Birr 100-200 per timad, depending on its quality. Families that are food insecure seek cash rentals for their land. The men claimed that both sharecropping and rentals have increased in frequency due to drought and rising food insecurity. Land rents have also gone up. In 1991 one could rent land for Birr 30; now one can pay up to Birr 200. In contrast, the women contended that land transactions have decreased due to the small parcel sizes. Land redistribution provided people with access to pasture.

¹⁸ *Lathyrus sativus* is a field crop, pulse, and fodder crop.

According to the women's focus group, people also herd their animals on land obtained through sharecropping.

Land Redistribution

Land redistribution took place in Chisa/Kaya during 1983 EC, in the midst of the conflict between the Derg and the EPRDF. The men stated, "Those who took the redistribution seriously benefitted." The officials distributed land according to three categories based on its fertility in order to promote greater equity among households. Landless and female-headed households got land, and the men contended that it had "a positive impact on their economic condition." Resettlers, returnees, and ex-soldiers only received small parcels. The women stated that local people have "a fear of land scarcity in the future since their family size has grown more and more from year to year."

Farmland constraints reported by:

Women's focus group: Drought and too much wetland (their lands absorb too much water during the meher/kiremet season)

Men's focus group: Land scarcity, flooding, soil erosion, and land exhaustion

Water

The men reported that the lack of potable water is a severe problem in Chisa/Kaya. They also identified the lack of access to water for livestock and too-distant water supplies as major constraints. The women agreed some families in the kebele suffer from having to go too far to fetch water. They also called for water pumps to help with irrigation, since the area has so many wetlands which could be used for irrigation.

Communal Resources

Local springs and water pipes are communal resources, and they are available to all. The kebele officials reported conflict over the use of piped water. They called for regular maintenance of damaged and improperly placed pipes.

IV. Agricultural Labor

Labor Availability

The men stated that elderly and female-headed households often lack sufficient labor. Families that don't have oxen also face problems because they cannot fully utilize their household labor for farming. The women reported no farm labor supply problems in Chisa/Kaya.

Hired Labor

The women stated that the practice of hiring farm workers used to exist in the community, but it disappeared about 30 years ago. The men noted that elderly households still sometimes hire workers, with poor households seeking such jobs. The pay ranges from Birr 3 (plus lunch) for a day's work to Birr 200 for annual employment. The men claimed that the incidence of wage labor is increasing but wages are decreasing due to the decline in local living conditions.

Reciprocal Labor

The women estimated that half the kebele's households engaged in reciprocal labor. The men reported that 30% of the households do so. People engage in it to complete tasks in a timely manner; for example, it speeds up harvesting before hailstorms have a chance to destroy the crop. The women observed that the practice protects people and promotes the sharing of output.

Changes in Access to Labor

The men and women are divided on the issue of whether wage labor in Chisa/Kaya is increasing or decreasing.

V. Agricultural Inputs, Credit, and Local Savings

Number of households using purchased inputs such as fertilizer: 750

Number of households receiving farm credit: 20

Number of households actively involved with agricultural extension: 50

Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) activities

The MOA provides extension services and credit for fertilizer, hybrid seeds, and livestock improvement.

Additional sources of credit for farming or other purposes

None reported.

Purposes of farm credit

People get loans to buy hybrid seeds, fertilizer, and, to purchase livestock.

Constraints regarding agricultural credit

The men stated that only a very limited amount of credit is available in Chisa/Kaya. Both groups complained about the selection criteria. The men claimed that "favoritism" is practiced. In addition, only those with sufficient landholdings get credit for livestock purchases. Credit is seen as being expensive and troublesome in the prevailing agricultural system. When drought or excessive rains occur, they undermine the productivity of the inputs. If a good harvest occurs, then grain prices are too low to easily pay back the loan. Either way, people end up with a debt that is difficult to repay. The men also said that fertilizer credit repayment is demanded in December, forcing widespread sale of grain and a depressing of prices. They asked that repayment be allowed to take place in May-June, when farmers can get higher prices for their crop.

Constraints regarding agricultural inputs

Both focus groups complained about the high price of hybrid seeds and fertilizer. As noted above, the inputs are often rendered ineffective because of bad weather. In heavy rain the fertilizer just washes away. Drought has caused crop failure. Inputs create a debt burden.

Local savings

People seek savings to use as a buffer against unexpected household expenditures such as food purchases or children's schooling. They also do so to make everyday purchases in the market, to pay for ceremonies such as weddings, and to serve as a buffer against hard times. Families try to practice multiyear storage of grain, using gotera. The people of Chisa/Kaya also breed and fatten livestock as a form of savings accumulation.

VI. Non-Agricultural and Off-Farm Income Earning

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources identified by:

Women's focus group: Blacksmithing, weaving, pottery, sewing, hairdressing

Men's focus group: Limited pottery making, wage labor for road construction

Types of non-agricultural/off-farm income sources important to women as reported by:

Women's focus group: Sewing and hairdressing

Men's focus group: None

The role of these income sources during periods of severe food shortage

The women reported that these activities only generated a very low and insignificant amount of income. The men stated that road construction helped poor households survive the present period of food shortage.

Constraints regarding non-agricultural and off-farm income sources

Both groups emphasized the dearth of job opportunities in Chisa/Kaya. The men cited a lack of cash and of permits to engage in trading. The women stated that it is difficult to find a market for non-farm activities because of the drought. They added that it is too far to go to urban areas to find work.

VII. Marketing

Distance from main daily market used by local residents: 3 km

Distance from the main weekly market: 15 km (and 3 km)

Number of retail shops: 1

Main means of transporting goods: Pack animals and walking

Proportion of local households reportedly using vehicles for transporting goods: 0

Marketing strategies and patterns

Households purchase food and other items at the local service cooperative shop in the kebele, at the kebele's marketplace, and at the nearby weekly market center. Agricultural and livestock traders visit the markets on a regular basis. The men reported that the traders come weekly, but the women stated that agricultural traders visit every two weeks while the livestock traders visit once a month. The women added that usually only one or two traders show up.

Agricultural commodities from other areas

Maize, sorghum, millet, barley, and nug.

VIII. Food Security

Types of families identified by kebele officials as the first vulnerable to famine:

The poor, female-head households, the landless, the elderly, families with many children, families without oxen, families without livestock, and families with difficult access to markets

Time of year when large numbers of families experience chronic food shortages:

June to December (half of the month)

Recent years when crop failure or threat of hunger was a widespread local concern:

1989 EC – due to heavy rainfall and crop diseases; 1990 EC – due to heavy rainfall; the present year due to drought.

Current situation

Chisa/Kaya is suffering from a severe food shortage due to repeated crop failures and the current drought. There is widespread hunger, increased sickness, livestock deaths, and a growing impoverishment. School has been discontinued. Some relief has been provided to the poorest families, but, according to the men's focus group, others need immediate assistance as well. The entire community is experiencing a disinvestment of its wealth. People may be unable to plant because of the lack of seed.

Coping practices for surviving severe food shortage or famine as reported by:

Women's focus group: Selling livestock; limiting themselves to one meal a day; becoming dependent on food aid for survival

Men's focus group: Sale of livestock; leasing off land; traveling long distance to bring grain to sell in the local market.

Changes in coping practices

The women reported, "Our coping practices have become weak." They said that due to growing impoverishment, they lack buffers and items of value. The men said that during 1984-85 a greater number of households had the ability to lease land from the poor and to provide grain loans.

Impact of severe food shortages

The women mentioned livestock deaths, increased sickness, and the discontinuation of school.

The men cited widespread hunger, growing poverty, land leases, and the inability to plant because of the lack of seed.

Market reaction during the most recent food shortage and its comparison to the past

Both groups agreed that grain prices had greatly increased in Chisa/Kaya due to decreased supply. Meanwhile, livestock prices have collapsed. They also agreed that during the 1984-85 famine

more food was available in local markets, and at lower prices. But the men pointed out that people often lacked the cash to purchase it.

Outside assistance during the most recent time of widespread food shortage

Direct food aid and food-for-work have been introduced. Rations of wheat, maize, and sorghum (50 kg each month per family of five) have been distributed, according to kebele officials. The men's focus group estimated that about 200 families have been recipients. The kebele officials observed that in the past the type and quantity of food aid was greater, but a large number of people were severely affected at that time.

What kebele officials perceive as the biggest threats to local food security:

Drought; heavy rainfall since 1989 EC; land scarcity due to the large family size

IX. Community Relations and Community-Based Associations

Typical economic assistance and exchanges among people

The women said, "In the previous times there was cooperation between neighbors – and between community members – by giving crops and cash to those who had nothing, or were sick or old, or were female heads of household." The men observed that people contributed cash and grain to weddings and funerals, amounting to Birr 2-10 and 20 kg, respectively. They also lent oxen and pack animals (donkeys).

Role of community relations in helping people survive severe food shortages

According to the women, if people could, they would provide food to the hungry. They also took care of the children of the very needy. The men pointed out that people are unable to help one another today because of the severe conditions.

Changes in kin- and community assistance

A decline in practice due to the drought and food shortages.

Community-based organizations (CBO)

Kire, for funeral assistance, operates in the Chisa/Kaya, but it has declined because of the severe food shortage. Although kire is opened to all, officials estimate that about 600 households participate. Under present conditions, people find it difficult to contribute or to participate. Poor families are especially hard-hit, and in some cases they have stopped contributing. Other families are switching from grain to cash contributions. In general, Kire's activities have been curtailed. The men reported that maheber operates in the kebele as well, though no additional information was collected.

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

None.

X. Additional Local Views and Priorities

What kebele officials think could be done to reduce the prevalence of local hunger:
Establishing an easily accessible credit scheme in Chisa/Kaya.

Comments by the focus groups about their communities

The women sought greater government help in addressing soil erosion. The men questioned why assistance is limited only to the very poor. They said that people who have one oxen should be assisted so that they don't get impoverished. In addition, land should not be taken from salaried government officials like agricultural officers or police; they are former farmers who get employed. There is a substantial need for the provision of credit in the rainy season and in December. The government needs to address the community's lack of potable water. Fertilizer credit repayment should not be demanded in December to force sale of grain cheaply. Repayment should be delayed until May or June.

The Interviews

The key informant interview was conducted with the kebele's economic sector head, social sector head, and capacity building head. All three officials were men. There were six women in their focus group (aged 30, 45, 48, 50, 50, 50) and eight men in their focus group (aged 33, 35, 38, 45, 50, 55, 68, 78).

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