

Country Study Summary

Ethiopia

Country context

Ethiopia is the most populous country in Eastern Africa and second populous on the continent, currently numbering more than 86 million¹. With presently more than 2% annual population growth, the number may reach 120 million by 2030 (GoE, 2012). Approximately 85% of people live in rural areas, with 84% of these residing in the highlands as smallholder farmers, and 16% living in the lowlands as pastoralists or agro-pastoralists. Agriculture is not only the main means of livelihoods for both smallholders and pastoralists, but also the mainstay of the national economy, contributing 45% of GDP, 85% employment and 90% of exports.

Map of Ethiopia



Source: Dec. 2011, United Nations, Map No 3727 Rev 3., Department of Field Support

¹ The source of the data presented in this summary is the IFAD-UNESCO Ethiopia draft country study.

Site selection

Using an ethnographic-style approach to examine processes of learning agricultural knowledge and skills and beyond agriculture in rural areas in Ethiopia, two contexts based on geographic and agro-ecological differences were selected for inclusion in this study. One *woreda* from the high land area and another *woreda* from the lowland area represent distinctive differences in geography and livelihood sources. Basona Werana Woreda was selected to represent highland agro-ecology where mixed farming is predominantly the major source of livelihood, and Yabello Woreda was selected as it typically represents lowland areas where pastoralism is a major source of livelihood.

Basona Werana Woreda has *wurch*-2% (afro-alpine), *dega*-50% (temperate) and *woynadega*-48% (subtropical) agro-ecological zones with mean temperatures ranging from 10 to 22°C. It has an altitude range of 1300-3400m above sea level. The *woreda* has 42828 ha arable land with 1597 ha irrigable land. Crops grown in Basona Werana Woreda include tef, barley, wheat, faba bean, field pea, sorghum, lentil, chickpea, onion, potato, temperate fruits, and oil crops. The *woreda* has 144638 heads of cattle, 145785 sheep and goat, 96821 chickens, 39038 horses and donkeys, and 4810 traditional and modern beehives; it has 6828 forest plantation.

Yabello Woreda is on the rangeland of the Borena zone located in the southern part of Oromia region with land area of 5,550 km². The *woreda* is dominated by semi-arid climate with an annual mean temperature varying from 25 to 37°C with little seasonal variation and an altitude ranging between 1450 and 2200 masl. The average annual rainfall of 500-650 ml. Yabello Woreda is predominantly a pastoralist community and the major source of livelihood is livestock production.

Overview of main findings of the country study

Agriculture and rural livelihoods

- Youth perceptions of agriculture vary according to the agro-ecological context. However, in both communities the youth do not have any aspiration to live on agriculture.
- The rural youth perceive agriculture as not a dependable means of livelihood. Yet, agriculture is still the major source of livelihood as other options are limited.
- The youth face a lot of challenges and are uncertain about their future sources of livelihood in mixed farming and pastoral cases. The latter is much more risky and indicates that the level of livelihood crisis for rural youth is highly prevalent in Basona Werana Woreda.
- Rural youth in Basona Werana Woreda have limited livelihood and employment opportunities in agriculture, which induces many to migrate to urban areas in search of jobs and livelihood means.

Learning knowledge and skills

- Almost all youth have the higher aspiration to attend and pursue formal education. Most families have attached higher value to the importance of education and therefore send their children to school. But the inability of farm families to pay for the indirect cost of education, as education is free at this level, their sons and daughters' education has forced rural youth to dropout of school and engage in casual labour work in and around their communities. Drop out cases were also due to the lack of secondary education nearby their residences.
- Informal learning is the dominant mode by which youth acquire agricultural knowledge and skills, and other skills such as cooking, carpentry, masonry, and charcoal making, etc, necessary for improving their livelihood.
- Informal learning, such as that from parents, friends and neighbours, along with trial-and-error attempts are the dominant mode by which youth acquire agricultural knowledge and skills.
- Informal learning interaction with non-formal education is absent due to a lack of prior learning assessment. Recognition of informal knowledge and skills is a missing element in the lifelong learning policy.
- Informal learning is one of the key coping strategies that rural youth use to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for solving livelihood crisis and problems faced where the formal and non-formal system is less responsive.
- Literacy programmes are supply driven and mainly focuses on foundational skills (technical skills of reading and writing).
- Most of the training via non-formal education providers and agricultural extension tends to focus only delivering technical skills. The most important skills, such as soft skills and life skills and problem solving, are lacking inclusion, and this potentially narrows down the success rate of livelihood enterprises run by rural youth.
- Rural youth are less targeted by government-sponsored extension programs and other services that improve livelihoods. Few youth have access to such services.

Natural resources, human and social capital

- In terms of financial (formal credit and savings) and human capital (educated population), Basona Werana Woreda is in a better position than Yabello Woreda. In Yabello, natural resources (pasture and water) are being degraded and the youth have no access to financial capital, and soft-skill training (e.g. livestock marketing) needs improvement. But social capital (social networks of supporting each other during livelihood crisis) is very strong. Thus, as the life histories of most youth indicate, while they are uncertain about the future of pastoralism, they appear very happy about their lives and their future aspirations to go into business. This shows that the existence of strong social capital is hidden in issues of livelihood risk (loss of livestock due to drought and disease, etc.).
- From the perspective of future sustainable livelihoods natural capital (availability of farmland, water, forest) in Basona Werana Woreda, is limited. Social capital appears to be weaker than in Yabello Woreda in some respects.

Since many youth in mixed farming have limited access to plots of farmland, their only option is to attend school and continue to higher-level education to gain employment in the formal sector.

Recommendations

Based on insights from the desk study and field work in the two communities, the country research team makes the following suggestions for policy:

- As the number of landless youth increases in both sites over time, the importance of creating and diversifying livelihood opportunities outside agriculture is becoming more crucial. Non-farm-related enterprises are also an important means to address employment problems of landless youths.
- Strengthening Farmers Training Centers (FTC) to provide skill and knowledge that can help to develop the capacity of youth to engage in self-employment and livelihood activities is crucial. Also, the training has to be diverse enough to include areas other than agriculture.
- Strengthening the integrated adult literacy programme by increasing the number of locations in each *kebele* where the programme is delivered, and making the schedule convenient for farmers both in highland and lowland areas following the crop calendar is very crucial to enhancing rural youth development.
- Training that targets the rural youth to engage in self-employment and income-generating activities need to also include programs offerings such as IFAL.
- Most important skills, such as soft skills and life skills, are often most lacking and need to be integrated in the interventions that target rural youth.

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