

**LONG TERM PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS
IN RURAL ETHIOPIA: STAGE 1**

COMMUNITY SITUATION 2010

GEBLEN, TIGRAY REGION

STAGE 1 FINAL REPORT EVIDENCE BASE 1 – VOLUME 6



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This report is one of six Community Situation 2010 reports representing a part of the Evidence Base used in the Final Report for the Stage One of the ‘*Long Term Perspectives on Development Impacts in Rural Ethiopia*’ research project (WIDE3). It describes the situation of the community of Geblen in Eastern Tigray in 2010 using a number of different perspectives. The fieldwork which produced the database from which the report was written was undertaken in January/February 2010. The Research Officers were guided by Protocols which are described in the Methodology Annex of the Stage One Final Report. Our methodology ensures that all statements in the reports are connected to interviews in the database so that in case of queries we can go back to the sources of the statements. These sources are a multitude of interviews with wereda officials, kebele officials, other community leaders and notables, rich-to-poor farmers and their wives, young-to-old dependent adults, and young people between the ages of 11 and 19. (Random initials have been used to refer to information related to individual respondents wherever the case occurs). The Community Situation reports are also informed by earlier research in the sites in 1995 when village studies were produced (WIDE 1), and during the Wellbeing in Developing Studies research in 2003 (WIDE 2) and in-depth research in 2005 (DEEP) for some of them. Comparisons of the trajectories of change are addressed in separate parts of the Stage One Final Report documentation. Further information on this and other sites in this research can be found on www.ethiopiawide.net. For Geblen there was also fieldwork done in 2007 in the context of a research on food security and local governance.

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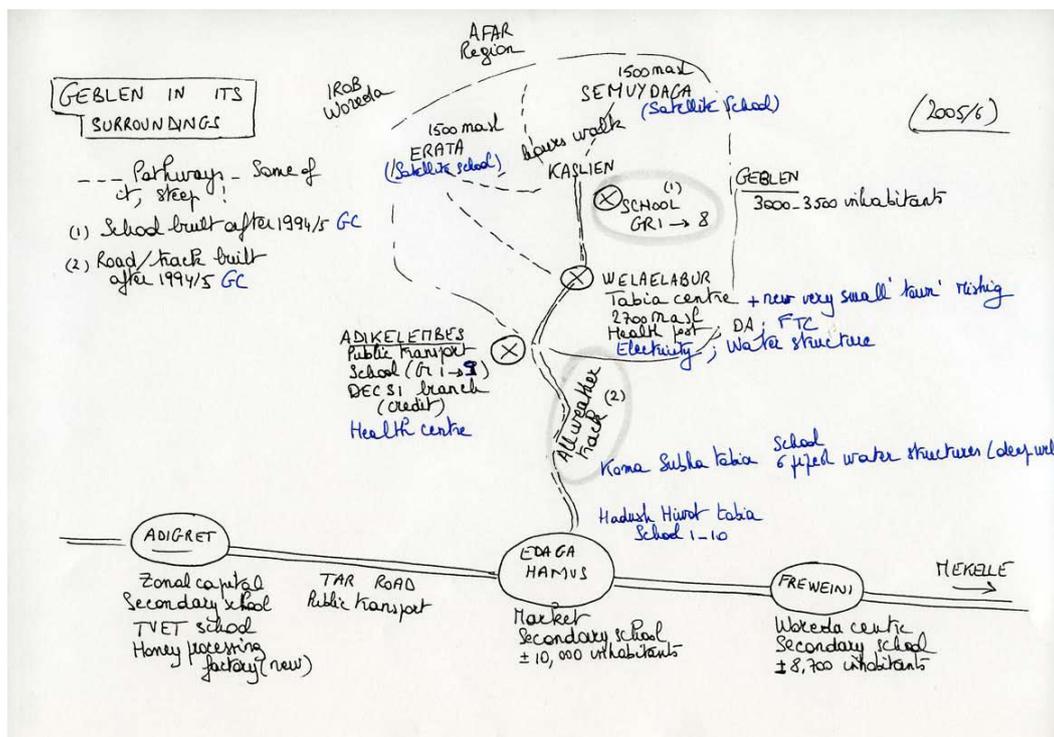
Community as a whole in 2010¹

Community parts

Geblen is one of 27 kebeles of the Saesa Tsaeda Emba wereda in Eastern Tigray. It lays on the plateau and the slopes of a steep cliff looking over the Afar Region. It comprises four fairly distinct kushets. *Welaalabur* and *Kaslen* lay mostly on the plateau. *Welaalabur* is the most accessible and includes a small but growing somewhat urbanised centre ('almost a small town') called *Mishig*. *Irata* and *Semui Daga*, remoter, lay mostly on the slopes and in the complex network of gorges and small valleys going down the cliff. Except in *Mishig*, homesteads are far apart.

The all-weather track to Geblen was constructed in 1997 GC and is regularly maintained since then through FFW financed by the Adigrat Diocese Catholic Secretariat (ADCS). It passes through *Welaalabur/Mishig* and serves a part of *Kaslen*. The two remote kushets are linked by footpaths; one path has recently been upgraded so that donkeys can be used. It may take two or three hours of hard walk up and down the gorges and valleys for people living in the outer areas of the tabia to come to *Mishig*. (See map 1). *Geblen's* health post, FTC, tabia office, and wireless phone service are found in *Mishig*, which is also connected to the electric grid since just about two years. Public transport (privately operated minibuses) reaches *Mishig* three times a week. There are three schools, located in *Welaalabur* (this is the oldest and main school, serving *Welaalabur* and *Kaslen* mainly), *Irata* and *Semui Daga*, which further facilitates what has been a spectacular increase in enrolment in the tabia over the past ten years.

Map 1: Geblen in its surroundings (2005/6)



Source: Catherine Dom (2007) + WIDE1 + WIDE3

¹ In this report we use both the Ethiopian calendar (EC) and the Gregorian calendar (GC). We also use kebele and *tabia* interchangeably (the Tigrinya *tabia* is taken as equivalent for kebele although the history which led to the establishment of *tabia* in Tigray – based on the TPLF elected baito system in the liberated parts of the Region – is quite different from that which established the kebele as the heirs of the Derg's PAs. Sub-kebele structures are commonly called *kushets* in Tigray.

In 2000 EC Geblen's population was 2,998 according to the wereda statistics (1,483 male and 1,515 female), 3,507 people according to the DAs (fieldwork 2007 GC). There were 725 households (750 according to the DAs) of which 316 female-headed, and a high and continuously growing number of landless households - landlessness is a very serious issue in the tabia. Geblen is comparatively more mixed than is usual in Tigray on average. People are Irob or Tigreans, and Orthodox Christians or Muslims as well as a few Catholics.

The weather and its effect on livelihoods and livestock diseases are seen as the two most influential factors shaping the community's fate. Between 2002 and 2009, except in 2007 when there was sufficient rain and the harvest was better, drought affected Geblen in all years. In particular, the year 2008 was so bad that even cactus were destroyed (cactus grow wild but are also cultivated by people on their non-farm land, for the fruits as food item, and the leaves for livestock feed). Many cattle died. Before this, crop had totally failed in 2003 and 2004. In 2005 drought was accompanied by a goat disease, though thanks to veterinary services sent by the wereda many goats were treated. But in 2006, severe drought and epidemics killed 801 animals. In 2009 there was better rainfall but a new crisis was the very long delay to start implementing the PSNP hence for people participating in the PSNP to receive their rations (7 months when the research team was in the field).

The tabia is included in the Productive Safety Net Programme since 2005; efforts to strengthen households' livelihoods through the 'household package programme' had started even ahead of this. These two interventions are prominent in the daily lives of many households but stories of success are scarce. No household did graduate, though a few households benefiting from the PSNP in the first phase were excluded from the Phase Two just started. Those households say that they have been 'excluded'. In bad years the tabia needs and gets additional assistance through the 'emergency programme'. 40% of the under-5 children get supplementary feeding.

From the wereda's perspective, Geblen is developing but this is slow. It has some potentials, including its comparatively wide non-cultivable land suitable to bee-keeping, harvesting of animal fodder and tree plantation; people's good knowledge in herding (they are more of pastoralists according to wereda officials); potential to harvest water through rock catchment. But Geblen's poor soil means that the tabia doesn't have potential for agriculture. It lacks ample cultivable land (less than 10% of the tabia land area is farm land).

Moreover, due to persistent drought and the topology and ecology of the area the tabia is hampered by acute lack of water, worse than average in the wereda. There is no ground water potential. Recurrent drought affects other water development efforts (the structures built do not hold for the full year and some years for as few as 3 or 4 months). So it has very limited irrigation potential and severe problems of access to drinking water. The lack of water is a major issue for most (farming-oriented) livelihood packages.

Most households (have to) complement the household's income through non-farm activities self-initiated (e.g. daily labour) or, for a few and more recently, through accessing non-farm package options in the government programme –the potential of these options is yet to be proven. The PSNP is a source of employment but it pays poorly, and in many ways is not as reliable as it should be in theory. Other local non-farm opportunities are few and occasional (e.g. NGO development projects needing labour). People thus migrate for variably long periods of time in different places including abroad. There is no inward investment in Geblen beyond three mills, and a few shops, teashops and bars in Mishig.

Wereda officials appreciate the community's motivation and say that it is easily mobilised for developmental activities; there is a strong community tradition of supporting the poor; the community is enthusiastic in contributing cash and labour, leading in terms of paying taxes, and committed to repay debts. However, people in Geblen are reluctant to participate in various extension programmes and packages, and to borrow money from the government credit institutions and invest it. People in Geblen are 'extravagant'.

Geblen is said to have a strong administration and council and the kebele administration to have strong acceptance from the community.

Geblen is thus a drought-prone, vulnerable site. It is a mixed community in which the different ethnic and religious groups are said to live peacefully. For people who live in Mishig, the new and growing 'almost small town' in the kebele, it is not/no longer 'remote' but other parts of the tabia are still much less well connected. It is not strongly 'integrated to the market' in terms of agricultural production, but has some links with the labour market (it is difficult to assess whether these increase, or evolve in new directions).

Community in context

Geblen is located at 39 kms from Freweini (also called Senkata), the capital of Saesa Tsaeda Emba wereda situated on the road connecting Mekele to Adigrat and further to Adwa and Axum. The other town in the wereda, called Edaga Hamus, is closer to Geblen and people have to pass there to go to Freweini in one direction, or Adigrat, the zonal capital, in the opposite direction. (See map 1). Edaga Hamus used to be the centre of a smaller wereda some ten years back. The merge of the two weredas and decision to locate the capital in Freweini, much farther away from Geblen, was a source of strong dissatisfaction (fieldwork 2007 GC).

Saesa Tsaeda Emba wereda is considered to be 'medium' among the nine weredas of Eastern Tigray in terms of development. It is more urbanised (two towns), has a good road network and good access to markets thanks to its location on the Mekele-Axum road, and some irrigation potential. It has comparatively better health and education coverage and is not much affected by malaria. There is no major industry or investment in Freweini or Edaga Hamus but an important market in the latter. Adigrat has had some investment (e.g. a large pharmaceutical production plant and more recently a honey production factory). But the economy of the whole area has been severely affected by the war with Eritrea (the border is less than 30 kms from Adigrat) and investment prospects and economic growth more generally remain hampered by the border closing, which prevents what used to be a vibrant cross-border economy. The border closing has also direct effects on people from Geblen as it closes off what used to be an important destination for temporary migration.

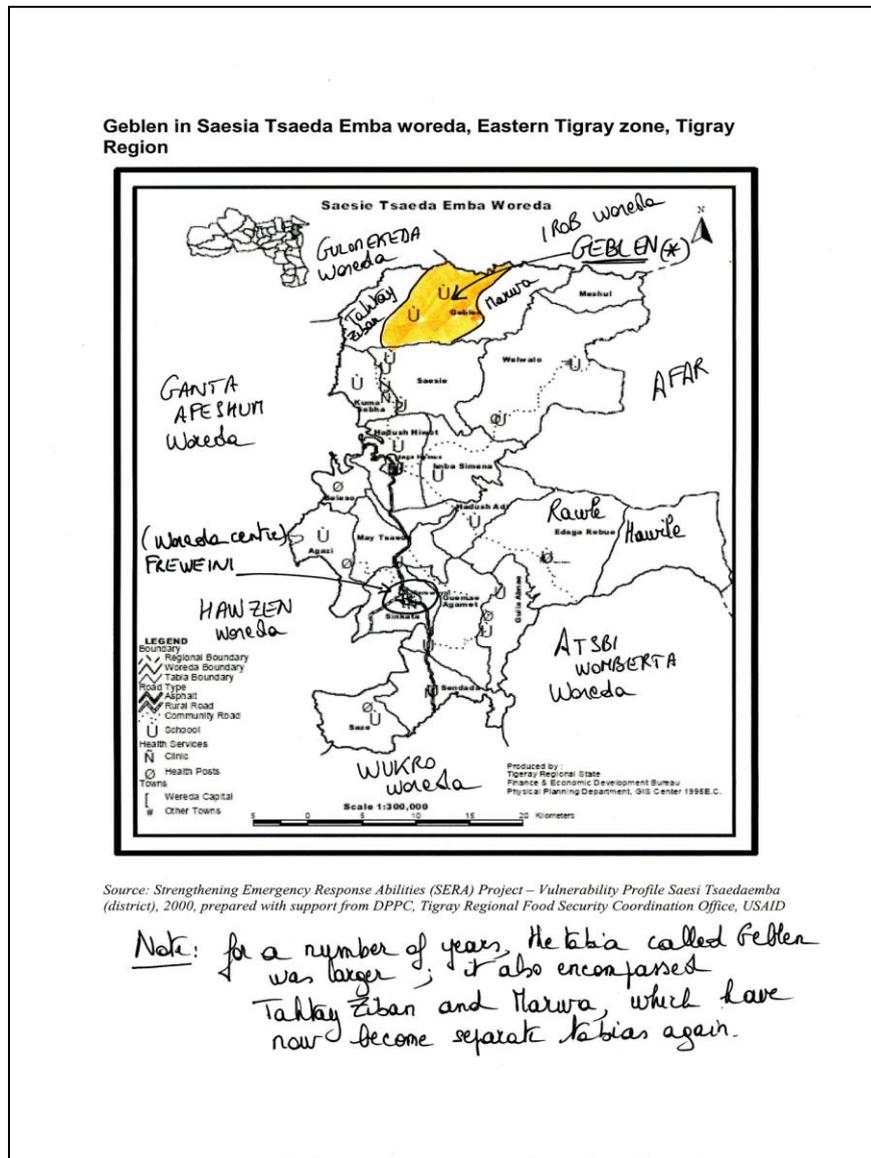
Geblen is one of the five poorest tabias in the wereda (all five found in the northern part of the wereda, see map 2 on next page), compared to economically stronger ones that have better soil fertility and access to irrigation (like May Megelta for instance). It is also one of the most food insecure, and landlessness is also comparatively very high. Whilst it is less easily accessible than the tabias located alongside the Mekele-Adigrat road, Geblen has better access to public transport than three of the other poorest tabias (found at 50 km of the wereda centre and with no road) hence to markets.

Geblen is one of the kebeles with good access to education (it has one full primary school near the tabia's centre, and two satellites, and since one year, access to secondary education just started in Adikelembes) whilst it is average in relation to health (it has one health post, also in the tabia's centre, and access to a health centre in Adikelembes). The kebele is seen by wereda officials as doing better than average in the wereda in terms of peace and security, notably thanks to the existence of a strong tradition of calling on customary mediators. For instance, a man from Geblen who has a long experience of being a mediator in the community has been appointed on a wereda level committee of elders charged to solve conflicts between the wereda and in particular, a neighbouring kebele and the Afar Region.

The community frequently links to the outside world as follows (from the nearest to the farthest): with Adi-kelembes (small town in neighbouring kebele on the road to Edaga Hamus) for the health centre (built between 1994/5 and 2003 GC), a recently opened market and secondary school (2009 GC), and daily public transport to Edaga Hamus and from there to Freweini; with Edaga Hamus for market and secondary school/TVET (20-25 km depending from where in Geblen, and less than an

hour by public transport); with Freweini (39 km) for administrative matters; with Adigrat (25 kms on footpaths, 35-40 by road through Edaga Hamus) for secondary school/TVET, work, hospital and purchase of commodities. In many households there are people migrating for different lengths of time elsewhere in the zone, Region and country, and abroad.

Map 2: Geblen in Saesia Tsaeda Emba wereda (2006/7)



Source: Catherine Dom (2007) and wereda Finance and Economic Development office map

Key sub-systems: households in 2010

Household structures

Households are key social systems, embedded in the community as a wider social system, and with three economic functions: produce livelihoods, reproduce household members on a daily basis and, at certain stages in the household development cycle, produce and raise children to work in the future. In some communities in Amhara it is possible to outline an 'ideal-type' household development cycle (new household, young/small nuclear family, mature nuclear family, emptying nest, dependent old household), which real households' cycles follow to varying extents. Generally

this ideal-type is applicable in Geblen too. However, the community has a very high proportion of female-headed households and an increasing number of landless households (in the past these would have been considered as 'dependents' on their way to get access to land whereas for some of them today this may never be the case).

Stories of individual households and dependent adults show substantial differences in wealth status and ability to recover from crises (that affect them individually or the community as a whole). Households are organised around the nuclear family but sizes and dependency configurations vary a lot (number of children, assistance to/inclusion of relatives, migration, education of children etc.), and continuously evolve over time as each household 'travels' on the development cycle. Decisions are made by the household head but in some cases household members show autonomy (e.g. one unmarried daughter keeping her baby, one son migrating against her mother's hope). The weather has an enormous influence over families' well/ill-being, and drought like 2008 are devastating for many. Families can also be severely affected by health shocks and death. Among the stories below the very poor household appears to be less connected with government-initiated community management structures and also with the outside world. It is also the only household where children are said not to like going to school because of their poverty (discrimination, hunger).

Within households, adult dependents are people of various ages and statuses, ranging from young men and women not yet married to elderly parents having come to live with one of their children or a relative, divorced women having done the same and yet other life circumstances. As many government/donor development interventions take the household as a unit we wanted to find out whether adult dependents had access to those interventions relevant to their individual needs and aspirations. This is in the second sub-section.

Examples of households

One large household (all children still in the nest), richer than most

DK, an ex-soldier demobilised in 1996 EC, and his wife UM, had started growing irrigated vegetable in 1998 (GC) and saw their income increase, to the point of being identified as a rich household in 2004 (GC). According to DK, the head, the household's wealth status went down in 2001 EC (2007/8 GC) (from 'among the richest' to 'richer than most'): they lost animals for a value of 8,900 birr and their bees stopped reproducing because of the drought. This was aggravated by high input and commodity prices since 2000. In addition, the interest rate for credit went up from 9% to 18% in the same year (2000). To compensate the effects of the drought DK migrated to Humera for two months, and he came back with 1,200 birrs which he used for grains and a suit for one of his daughters. He is planning to restore his status in four years, using the animals he still has (5 goats, 1 bee colony, an ox and 2 cows), making money in different ways (e.g. he is using his donkey for transport and making 1,500 birrs with this) and trying different things (e.g. in 2002 he bought fertiliser – cash, not on credit – whilst he had always used compost before, and he had better production).

So one major challenge was the loss of his animals in 2001 (veterinaries came to Geblen and vaccinated them but that could not save them). In addition he was forced to borrow for bee hives twice in two years and because of the zero-grazing programme decided by the kebele council (of which he is a member) he lacks grazing land and is forced to plan to reduce the number of his animals. He was on the PSNP and this was useful to prevent him to have to sell his animals to purchase food; but for the second phase they are excluded as the selection committee said they are rich now. He has a strong view that officials should stop pressurizing people to take credit. He even thinks the government should abandon its credit programme as it has no benefit at all.

His children are getting educated and one of his daughters passed the Grade 10 exam and joined a senior secondary school in Adigrat, in 2000. But this is hard to afford and so, their 6-year old hasn't started yet and the 7-year old dropped out because of their economic problems. They want their

children 'to be clever' – but it clearly will be a challenge to support eight children (one yet to be borne) to be educated.

They already have 7 children and UM, DK's wife, is pregnant. She says it was her fault as she didn't use contraceptives (and they also were taught but didn't practise birth spacing), but from now on she will. She always gave birth at home and never had problems. On the other hand, she thinks that the HEW work is very important and she says they do put it in practice. In her views there hasn't been any change in terms of curative health services. They have become very expensive (at least 50 birrs) and so the main issue is economic hardships preventing access. This is wrong: *'a person shouldn't die just because she/he doesn't have money'*. But DK had a very good experience with the health centre. DK and his wife appreciate the access to public transport, but she thinks that government should pay more attention to the water problem they face.

They explain that regular cooperation with other households is abandoned but there is still a practice of labour and cash contribution in times of wedding and mourning and assistance from relations in times of crisis, and members of religious groups prepare feasts annually (DK spends 300 birrs for this).

UM is a member of the Women Association and whilst she used to hate meetings she now participates on different affairs when it is connected with women, to learn more and promote women's rights and duties. DK is a member of the kebele council, of the militia and of the party. But he criticizes the kebele administration for lack of commitment to good governance, citing the pressure on people to take credit as a case in point. He explains that kebele officials never report people's concern to the wereda if they feel that this could bring something wrong on them. Specifically, he wanted to put his dissatisfaction with packages being forced onto people in writing, in the minutes of the meeting of the Council (that go to wereda level) – but the tabia officials threatened him with imprisonment for *'anti-developmental outlook'*, so he finally kept quiet.

DK was recruited several times to attend training programmes and this was useful new knowledge. But he doesn't rely on the DAs who lack knowledge so *'he has nothing to learn from them'*, and he also hasn't learnt anything from government's models/champions. He is inventive and says he has a talent for finding how to do things – like his pairing of an ox and a donkey to plough his land, which he has done now for several years. Generally he gets ideas about development from meetings organised by the kebele administrator, and also from his children from their schools, not the models. He has strong opinions on what doesn't work like the package programme (DK is an ex-soldier). His idea of development is to educate one's children and get a better income (from irrigation and bee-keeping).

One middle wealth, large household (one daughter out of the nest and helping)

GM and his wife MU were considered to be middle wealth status in 2004 GC, but they lost bee colonies, goats and one cow in 2001 EC (2007/8 GC). He was forced to stop helping his disabled sister. On the other hand, that year his son stood first among the wereda Grade 8 students. He inherited land from his mother in 2001 EC so he now has ½ ha and he ploughs pairing an ox and a bull that he owns. He also has a daughter who migrated and successfully resettled in Saudi Arabia in 2000, and another daughter who (after an episode of illness which stopped her temporarily and costed GM 500 birrs) has joined university (Arba Minch in SNNP). In 2002, another son failed his Grade 10 exam and migrated to Humera but he came back sick with malaria and GM had to help with 200 birrs for his treatment – as he had spent some of his money on a suit and other unnecessary things.

On the whole, in the past five years their status didn't go up due to drought and loss of animals, the zero-grazing programme which is a very big concern (he says it is unfair that all private land is put under the programme, and that his family loses four months of food because they cannot harvest their cactus fruits), increasing pest attacks, and his lack of investment in more profitable vegetables;

but it also didn't go down thanks to his daughter's remittances (she sends 1,000 birrs annually, which GM appreciates much), some income (500 birrs) from vegetable from his irrigated garden (that he started through building a canal from a spring newly developed, from his own initiative and pocket, in 1999), and his employment as a semi-skilled worker on NGO-funded construction activities (now paid 25 birrs a day up from 10 birrs previously; he made 700 birr and 560 birrs in 1997 and 2001 respectively). They also participate in the PSNP (6 members of the household) including in the 2nd phase and this is the most important programme in helping people in Geblen.

GM was also pressurised to buy bee hives, but he didn't yet place bees in them because of the drought so he had to use other sources of money to repay the credit. He isn't against the credit programme but believes that it should be done when there is enough rain, and it should not be forced on people.

Good things include: the new market in Adikelembes where he can sell his tomato and not get them spoiled in the transport to farther places; transport services that he and his family use regularly including their son who is at school in Adigrat; the phone service as he can talk to his daughter abroad. As they don't live in the centre they don't have electricity and this is a constraint especially for their children who cannot study at night. MU would like to resettle in the urban centre (Mishig) and her children even more because they don't appreciate the change that has already happened for the family.

The family had a mixed experience with curative health services. Their daughter was treated for all sorts of things at high cost before they found out in another hospital that she had malaria (from Arba Minch). MU says that women benefit from preventive health services and the family did what they were taught (toilet, separate shelter etc.). She appreciates food aid (better than famine) but officials are corrupt – though not all (the chairman is a good person).

The family makes a lot of sacrifice for their children and make sure they get educated. They have one daughter at university and one son in secondary school in Adigrat, and all their school age children are enrolled in primary school. They are very ambitious for their children and the children are ambitious too.

They were taught on family planning but didn't practise it. In 1997 she gave birth but even though she had regularly undertaken check-ups this child died. Since then they have decided not to have more children *'from their own initiative'*. She says

I don't want to complain about the number of children I have (six and they would have had seven). But one thing, I don't really need to get birth any more. My husband has agreed upon this. He clearly knows that the advantage is for both of us. I never had to face fertility problems. I didn't use contraceptive.

Sanitation is better than before because they are taught, but lack of water is a big issue and the government is not serious about it. MU explains that it takes them an hour and a half to get water, from the river, which causes water borne diseases. Previously she was the one to fetch water with a traditional pot but they bought a jerrican and now *'everybody in the household takes her/his turn to fetch water, including my husband'*.

More generally, MU says that there is progress in sharing domestic tasks. They became aware of doing this 'by their own life experience' and government education and so these days, when she is doing something, her husband is doing some other thing. She says that more progress is needed and they want to see their children doing this. But this time is good already. There is a big change concerning gender issues, with less violence against women, and government laws and regulations helping in this. For instance, abduction is now punished while previously there was no attention at all to the issue. *'Had this programme been started in our time, everything would be alright now'*.

But for youth, she says, there is a big gap between government policies and the reality. The big issue is failure at Grade 10 exam because there are not enough places in further education institutions and Government has to restrict access and 'narrow' many youth's options, which leads them to bad behaviours out of despair once they see that they will fail in their great hope of getting hold of a job. ZWG insisted that youth's stealing and burglary have become very serious, and these are terrible actions, completely out of the community's custom.

GM also believes that cooperation mechanisms disappear because of increasingly individualistic behaviours that people develop. Competition for the scarce job opportunities created by government and NGO programmes leads to conflicts and this reinforces this individualistic trend. They contribute 20 birrs annually for the school which is fair, GM is member of the co-operative but that is useless. He also is a member of the party and it would be better with fewer meetings. They are content with the 40 day free community labour. But GM highlights that the increasing amount of cash that they have to pay as contributions to various government undertakings 'and private fund raising' negatively affects the household's efforts to build its assets.

He learned useful things from government-organised training programmes (e.g. on bee-keeping and fallow farming), although he could not put them all into practice (e.g. bee-keeping). He was awarded a model in soil and water conservation at sub-kebele level but believes that models should be rewarded. The household gets ideas about development from wereda and kebele officials in meetings and MU from her husband. Their children see development as coming from education and they are not interested in development for farming/livelihood activities, but they are 'foolish' because it's only through these activities that the family is able to educate them. GM and his wife support government ideas like that people should spend less on celebrations etc. – yet recently GM contributed an ox to a close relative's Teskar and he does this regularly.

One poor large household (with all children still firmly in the nest)

AC and his wife DE have eight children, all of school age so still firmly 'in the nest'. They suffered seriously from the 2001 EC drought. With no production at all they had to rely entirely on the PSNP. In 2002 their cow gave birth and this helps them give their children better food – but in 2001 they had lost two calves from that cow which he bought on credit in 1996. In 2002 he made 150 birrs from selling eggs 1 birr piece (it was 0.5 birrs before). He usually supplements his income through off farm jobs on NGO projects and makes around 300 birrs annually in this way. Very high grain price is an issue as he has to buy food. On the other hand he was able to sell two goats very well in 2002 (and got 620 birrs in this way). He doesn't have an ox but uses his parents' to plough. In 2000 he was awarded a hoe and shovel for best land and compost preparation at sub-kebele level and both have been very useful to him. He had to purchase one modern hive in 2002 – he was told that he otherwise would not have access to any government opportunity. He has a colony in a traditional hive but hasn't yet transferred it. He too lost his non-farm land to the zero-grazing programme but thinks it's a good programme – and he is feeding his cow through cut-and-carry.

Six members of the family participate in the PSNP, the maximum allowed by the kebele administration and two other members are on the Emergency Food Aid programme. They also get nutrient food for one child but share it for them all. Getting this aid is useful but it should be scheduled so that it lasts longer, it doesn't bring long term solution, and DE thinks that officials are corrupt. AC doesn't agree and think the delay (in getting the PSNP rations, especially long in 2002) is not the officials' fault.

Curative services depend on the money you have – but they did have good service from the health centre last year for one child. As for sanitation, they try but soap is expensive. They have a large family and appear to have unclear thoughts about it, partly under the influence of their religious beliefs and leader and partly, it seems, because none of the two wants to be the one to make the decision.

She says: *'I don't want to have babies. We never talked about family planning with my husband. I never know what he thinks about. But I don't agree though he wants me to do so. I did not use any contraception because I believe that children are a gift from God. And I have an ambiguity whether using such artificial methods are fighting with the natural word of God or not.'* And yet later in the interview, he explains that both he and his wife acquired *'knowledge about the use of family planning from the health workers. But, they were unable to put it in to practice'*. He explains that they now are informed about the availability of a better contraceptive, useful for three years (Norplant) and his wife agreed to use it. He explains that *'the fokarun [Islamic religious leaders] and the kadi [Islamic religious judge] are against the use of contraceptives though not denouncing it baldly'*. But she says that she was ready to take this new method, but *'my husband was afraid of his religion. In Islam using human made contraceptive method is forbidden by Allah.'*

On the other hand they took the VCT test several times each of them and want their children to do the same. Their four primary school age children attend school even though it is very far (four hours walk). Her Gr6 daughter had to stop as she gave birth and she isn't sure whether she can continue. They also have a son who is in Grade 9 in Adikelembes. They and their children think similarly that they want to get good jobs once they are educated.

Things do change for women. Her husband has started taking some part in looking after the children, and girls get educated along the boys. She also goes to training and meetings with her husband and they *'make decisions by agreement'* (although not with regard to family planning as we have just seen). AC explains that he helps his wife in the hard FFW works.

Mutual support continues to happen, as much as people can. AC's brother is sending remittances from Saudi Arabia. The household contributes to the school (30 birrs annually) which is reasonable. He is a member of the co-operative which he decided to join in 2000, from his own initiative. But that is not useful. He was a militia member until 1999 then applied to leave as it's time consuming and not paid. He is also a kebele council member, which isn't very useful to the family but is useful for the community. He is a member of the party, which harms him because of the payment; there is no other harm but it also is not useful otherwise.

The family appreciates and uses the public transport (both say so) and phone services (only AC says this; he calls his brother-in-law who lives in Mekelle).

They get ideas about development from kebele officials in meetings and also training. AC was a model, and he thinks they should be rewarded to be encouraged. But he doesn't know whether others learned from him.

One very poor household with six children

MZ and his wife AF became *'among the poorest households'* in 1994 EC, with the loss of his cow and his ox due to the drought. Their status further deteriorated to being the poorest household of the community in 2001 EC with the drought: he had no production at all, he also lost 5 goats; he now has only one goat left, and a puppy. In 2002 he was injured whilst working on terracing for the community work. The delay in PSNP this year (7 months) is affecting them very severely; their children don't attend school regularly and he fears his children could die of hunger if the PSNP rations are not delivered very soon.

They don't use the PSNP rations in full for themselves. In 2001 he was forced to sell part of it to repay the credit that he had had to take in the package programme (he took goats in 1997 then was forced to take a modern bee hive – which he doesn't use as he doesn't have a colony). The money from the PSNP rations was not enough and he feared he would be arrested. He borrowed 1,100 birrs from his father and father-in-law so he could repay the credit. But now he will have to use part of the PSNP rations again to repay them (they were willing to lend him with no interest because they knew that he would get the PSNP rations). And he will borrow again from the government to compensate the possible food shortage created in this way. So the credit programme has never

been useful for him to build any asset, even though he was the first man in the kebele to borrow, in 1986 EC – but already then it was mainly to cover their food gap. However, he is grateful to the kebele officials who never prevented him from borrowing money from the government even though personally he doesn't have land.

They also trade the cooking oil they get from the Emergency Food Programme against coffee and sugar – when the programme is active. They share the nutritious food that they get from World Vision for one child among all family members too as they all are malnourished.

They have 1/8 ha farmland which belongs to her as he was in Asmara when land was distributed. It is suitable for corn, but very small, and corn is prone to attacks from baboons and he can't have a gun to chase them away (it's strictly forbidden by the kebele administration).

They have six children and AF didn't want them to be so many as she cannot even feed them and says that it is a miracle that they are alive (*'I give them a cup of milk and that is their only meal'*). Her husband had agreed with her on this, but she was 'lazy' and didn't take contraception. When pregnant she used to visit the health post every month but delivered at home. The oldest two of their children go to school although they find it hard because they are discriminated (due to poverty they do not have proper clothes and in particular, sport wear and so are not active participants in some school activities) and have to go without food. Three of them don't attend even though they are of school age but they could not enrol them because of their economic situation (one, a nine year old boy, had attended up to 2nd grade and is not enrolled now; the other two are younger and never attended yet).

At home they made a toilet as ordered by the HEW, and AF says it helps them to keep their surrounding clean. She doesn't think there is any change for women and for instance, *'it is me who always look after all the domestic sphere.'* She is bitter because of her husband's illness which, she says, prevents him from contributing anything to the family and left them in deep poverty, even though she also recognises that he cannot escape this condition.

They cannot afford the public transport so when MZ goes to Edaga Hamus it's on foot. Transportation is *'a luxury'*. The community of Irata where they live built a gravel road with tools from the wereda. It took a very long time (from 1984 to 2001 EC) but it makes it possible to use a donkey (which they have) to go to the grinding mill. There has been no water intervention. MZ said he had never made a phone call of his life and his wife said the same, and electricity doesn't reach their kushet.

In addition to the help from his father and father-in-law he also has an uncle who helps with coffee and sugar from time to time but doesn't have anyone abroad. They have not organised ceremonies for the past five or seven years. They contribute to the school (25 birrs) which they are content to do. He is a member of the co-operative which is useless for him. He is a militia, not paid - he thinks that militia should be paid. AF is a member of the party but she doesn't have any interest in this and hates the government *'because he doesn't care about his people. He doesn't respect the poor.'* She thinks there is no good governance. *'Our government runs after the rich – he doesn't care about the poor and powerless.'* There exemptions like for the elderly and pregnant/lactating women on the PSNP but *'it doesn't work for the poor'*.

MZ's dream is to migrate long term in the US or Middle East but he cannot as he suffers from epilepsy.

MZ says he gets ideas about development from friends who have a radio, especially when they are together in militia patrols, and AF from her husband and children, and observing the environment. MZ knows about development models but so far *'was unable to understand it'*.

One female headed household – An elderly woman on her own

HK says she is 85 with a son of 70; she probably is a little older and her son between 65 and 70. She

is household head since 1996 EC when her husband died. She feels lonely (her children don't visit her) and excluded from social relationship due to what she calls her poverty. She has mostly daughters and one son. She is retired from work. She used to be among the richest in the community when her husband was alive. In 1997 and 1998 things were still ok. After this her status deteriorated and she became poorer than most in 1999 because she had no production. She became older and unable to work, and her son didn't manage well the responsibility she gave him. Things deteriorated further and she says she became among the poorest in 2000 and 2001 because of the drought, in addition to her son's irresponsibility. The zero-grazing programme of the government also harms because livestock don't have anything to eat. She doesn't know what to do with her two cows. She cannot send them in the fields with children any longer and she is too old to feed them in-house. She plans to sell them soon. They used to have a lot of livestock, but *'they have all gone'* and she is *'left with two cows and two oxen'*.

She now lives on the PSNP – and is exempted from work since 2001. But this is usually late and also not enough because she takes care of her sister who lives with her and *'needs help more than me'* (she is bed-ridden and incontinent since the death of one son three years ago). HK has mostly daughters and they live with their husbands and don't really care about her. She has help from a grand-daughter who fetches water for her before school and cooks for her after school. She doesn't have children living in town, and doesn't have any social network left. But she gets help from the HEW, *'a very nice person'* who teaches her a lot.

Her husband's land was taken by the government three years ago, but she didn't complain because she has her own (1 ha) and this would be enough if there was rain.

She sees some positive changes brought by the government: water harvesting for animal drinking, transportation, phone and electricity. She uses electricity even though it is very expensive (she pays 20 birrs a month). She was taken by her son to the health centre in 2001 and got very good services and was cured. She doesn't have anyone from her family who is educated but now her grand-children go to school – and *'even those kids who cannot speak properly are going to school'*. They are given pens and exercise books, and some go to Adikelembes. *'I don't know what's going on there'*. But the lack of any intervention on drinking water is a problem. However on the whole, *'there is a bit of change which is (due to the) effort of government'*. She doesn't get told by anyone about development but *'I am seeing it, we have roads, electricity now. That's development'*.

She contributes to the school (35 birrs), and pays 35 birrs tax on her land – which she never complained about. She went on a training five years ago at the FTC, on modern farming. This was good but *'in Geblen we have bad environment'*. She is a party member and there is *'no use no harm'* from this.

One female-headed, poor household

GD is a middle age woman (49) heading her household. She has five children and no husband. She used to be a little poorer than most in the community but has now become among the poorest, from 1999 EC onward. This decline seems to be linked to loss of her livestock. She had taken a 1,280 birr credit from the package programme in 1997 and bought one cow but it died immediately. She lost another cow in 1998. In 2000 she was forced to take fertiliser by the farmers' association (told that she wouldn't be allowed to be on the PSNP otherwise), which was useless because there is not enough rain and *'it damages the seeds'*, and that year she also lost her bees. There are no work opportunities other than the PSNP. The very long delay this year is a big issue, she has to borrow money/ food, and sell assets – for instance she recently had to sell two goats to cover her children school costs.

Her (five) children are students. She has a daughter who graduated from Adama university since one year (in 2002) but she doesn't have an income yet: *'if she got a job education would have a meaning in our life'* but *'it is chance not education that works to get a job'*. Her children like school and she

thinks it is nicely run. She contributes 47 birrs. She follows the advice of the HEW and health promoter on sanitation etc. But she got the training on family planning after she had had her five children. She is no longer fertile now.

She is a member of the credit association, the WA, and the Farmers' Association (FA) and took various loans from these but the FA loan (for fertilizer) was forced on her and useless. She is a member of the party and this has no harm and no benefit to her; she is also a member of the wereda council but not of the kebele council. This is not very attractive as the payment is minimal (6 birrs/year), but there also is no harm. She teaches about health prevention and sanitation and distributes nutritious food for children.

There are exemptions for the poor and old age but this is not transparently handled. Administrators do as they like. Things are changing for women. For instance, her own son was accused and imprisoned for rape for two years and three months. There wasn't such serious punishment before. Whereas for the youth, *'there are many laws and I don't differentiate whether it is for youth or else.'*

Dependent adults

Male dependents

One rich young man living with his grandparents and new wife

RH, 27, from a rich family, lives with his paternal grand-parents since the death of his father. His mother took him there so that he could take care of them as they were elderly and their children had migrated to Humera and Saudi Arabia. He dropped school after 6th grade, in 1997 EC and since then has been working on the farm and as unskilled labourer on various government construction projects, and on the PSNP. He married in 2002 EC which was otherwise a bad year as the family lost 21 sheep and 7 hens and the crop harvest was totally failed. RH explains that the family saw ups and downs since 1997 EC, linked to rainfall and production, but he was able to engage 11,500 birrs for his wedding (including the bride wealth of more than 5,000 birrs). However, he is now facing a shortage of capital. Financially he doesn't get any help from anyone, but neighbours contributed labour to his farm in 2000 when he had contracted pneumonia, and for his wedding.

Like everyone else they contribute for the school (30 birrs per year), and he also contributes to the Red Cross since the tabia decided to do this (2 birrs). He has learned from the HEW, to some extent (e.g. he built a toilet and a shelf in the house), and has good experience with the health centre where for instance, he took his grandparents twice this month for their eyes. They also get drinking water from a spring developed by ACDS, for which he contributes 10 birrs annually. They use water from the river for other usages. He participates to the PSNP with a quota of three family members.

The DAs work closely with him: he was mobilised by the kebele administration to use selected seeds and was able to increase his harvest of maize from ½ to 1 quintal. He used fertiliser and this was good too, but he fears the lack of rain. He dug a water reservoir and planted seedlings of fruits and vegetables and got an income of 150 and 250 birrs last year and this year respectively. This is good, though he has had to use water very carefully as it is not sufficient. He also bought a hybrid cow last year. He took credit (2,000 birrs) in 1999 EC for the cow, one modern hive and hens. He was successful with the cow and the goats he also took, but not the hens and bee hive because of drought. He is the chairman of the youth association co-operative since 2000 EC, which undertook to produce honey with modern hives. He appreciates the efforts of the administrators to organise and give credit to the youth, but the big issue is lack of access to farm land for the young households.

He is a member of the TPLF *'out of his own initiative'* (6 birr annually) and was elected as leader of a development group. Party members are important *'brokers between the wereda administration and the public'*. Engaging in sub-kebele structures to organise around specific goals is important for the public to exercise their rights to participate. He is also a member of the YA (4 birrs) but this has no

benefit. Apart from the issue of land, he believes that government performance with regard to peace, democracy and justice is good. But more should be done for women.

He does not have his own land, and if the option to resettle was offered again he would go. Above all he would like to migrate to Saudi Arabia to get capital to start a business in Ethiopia. Second would be to resettle in Humera; third, to engage in trade in the towns around. In this, his marriage is important as it will protect him from living a bad life and also, his wife can take care of his elderly parents while he takes the opportunity to improve the family's living standards. He thinks that the government should give up to 50,000 birrs credit for young people, with good conditions, so that they could start a lucrative business in their own country and not have to migrate in dangerous conditions.

One poor young man living with his mother

GB, 30 and poor, studied to 2nd grade then dropped out and went to work in Irob wereda as unskilled labourer on construction projects for three years. He came back in 1997 EC and since then lives with his mother. As she has a large plot of land his request to get a plot of residential land was rejected (he also is not married – and other respondents explain that access to residential is given in priority to landless young households with children). The kebele administration proposed that he should give a part of his mother's land in exchange but *'he rejected their unlawful proposal'*. He is farming her land but the soil is unfertile, so he is also working in quarry work as a stone chiseller. In 1998 EC he also went three months in Afar to work and had a relatively better income. His income from the quarry work varies depending on the construction market. It was good from 1997 to 1999 - then down in 2000 and 2001 which was hard as buying grain was also very expensive. In such conditions, even with cash he couldn't feed the family. The PSNP food ration was their only chance. He mentioned that at times PSNP is paid in cash but this is much less good. But when it is food, the quantity may vary because there are losses during the transport and this is not compensated. The market for his quarry work picked up again in 2002 EC. One problem is the many holy days.

He contributes 17 birrs per year for the school, 10 for his mother and 7 for him, which he finds a large payment as his income is limited and also, they don't know what this is used for. He has no involvement with the HEWs but is a user of the health centre: he took the HIV test in 2000 and 2001 EC, and received medical treatment there. He has no involvement with the DAs. In 1999 EC he took credit and bought sheep and one cow. Half of the sheep died of disease. The cow gave birth and he sold some of the breed. He put the income on an account in Adigrat, keeps the remaining livestock, and pays his loan with his income from the quarry work.

He was mobilised to be a member of the YA in 1994 EC though he does not see any benefit from this. In addition to his issue with the request for a residential land, he had another negative experience with the kebele when he asked for an ID card in 1996 EC. They made him prepare the land of an official as a pre-condition, then lost his photographs twice (one of which was found five years later in the church compound) and he finally gave up. He got an ID from the sub-kebele as this is now possible. He believes that it is because he is poor that the kebele officials mishandled his case. He had another issue when they were asked to leave his mother's land, which the kebele intended to distribute as residential land. He petitioned and the first official he met in Edaga Hamus was not willing to solve the problem. Finally the wereda court in Senkata resolved it properly – although because of the time spent there he lost cattle (sick in his absence) worth 500 birrs. He thinks that to get good governance the government should pay strict attention to all structures from regional to sub-kebele level.

He seems to be a bit of a quarrelling character. He got in a row with youngsters who had allegedly insulted him after he had notified them not to damage his harvest by passing through his farm. The local police wanted him to settle this amicably but he refused, went to the militiamen who asked him to pay 18 birrs for the service (which happens to be the amount that militiamen should receive as allowance but they don't) and when he did this, they arrested some of the youth but not those

who were relatives of one of the militia. The social court asked him to get this settled through the elders but he then dropped the whole case, as his intention was just to give them a lesson and stop such bad behaviour.

His aim is to migrate abroad and if this fails to engage in trade.

One middle-age middle wealth man depending on his mother

NA is 52, married with nine children, the last one born in 1999 EC. He and his family live in his mother's residence. He works on the farm (he has ¼ ha of farm land which can produce between 4 and 7 months of food for the family, in average to good years) but this has not been good since 1997 EC except for one year. The PSNP ration gives so little that it's 3 to 4 days of food. He has non-farm land but in a very sloppy area and so it's of little use.

In 2002 he worked in Mekele as supervisor mason as he is trained foreman. His wife helps with the farming, and she plants some vegetables for household consumption and sometimes sells some to get some income. In 2001 EC he had to sell an ox and a donkey to purchase food – there was severe drought and he had no harvest and lost 15 of his 20 goats. He sold an ox in 2002 at a good price.

He was mobilised to be member of the co-operative (4 birrs annually) but this is useless to him and other farmers. He was selected as a model farmer and got training on modern agriculture in Edaga Hamus by wereda experts. They got 105 birrs per diem and encouragements but were not awarded. The DAs explain to farmers the plans sent by the wereda to the kebele. He was pressurised to dig a water reservoir but the government failed to provide cement so he wasted his energy for nothing as the reservoir is useless. He usually purchases fertiliser and improved seeds through the extension package programme. But this is harmful as there is not enough rain. The bee hives (2) and hybrid cow he bought were also not beneficial: he could not put bees in the hives because of drought and does not have enough feed for the cow – hybrids need more feed and this is problematic. Yet even if this is problematic in the short term he appreciates the zero-grazing programme because they have started to see results and so it should be implemented widely.

Five of their children go to Geblen school which is not a long walk. That is good as they can spend time and energy to study. He has children out of home to attend secondary school but he provides for their food (50 birrs/month). He used the health centre services for himself, in Edaga Hamus or Adigrat: for instance in 2001 EC he was treated for amoeba, but says that members of the family do not use it frequently as the distance is too much. . In his view the health post does not function properly. He was mobilised to dig a latrine then also built a separate room for animals and a shelf and dug wells for waste. They got health prevention education in 2001 EC too.

He says that he strongly supports the government work on gender equality.

Men must change their attitude. He is committed to send all her female children to school and thanks to the gender education he is able to recognise his wife's right and unlike before, he now consults her when he makes economic decisions like selling oxen, cows or goats.

Yet, he did not let his wife, who suffers from skin rash, see a health worker. He took her to a traditional healer who gave some herbs but this has not cured her and she suffers much including psychologically – he says that he doesn't think the health workers will be able to help. He also explains that he and his wife had the information about family planning but never put it into practice because this is a sinful act and in addition birth control injections give HIV/AIDS. That is why they have nine children even though it is beyond their financial capacity. His wife used to suffer a lot when she was pregnant and delivering but as there was no medical service, he used to kill a goat as a sacrifice (he is Orthodox Christian).

He is a member of the party since 1973 EC and believes that the party contributes a lot to the development of the kebele. He thinks that there is good governance as there are regular opportunities to evaluate the work of the kebele officials/*those people participating in election to*

represent the people'. However, wereda and kebele officials abuse of their authority for instance with the PSNP, excluding many poor people saying they are rich, to benefit their own relatives (he is not harmed by this directly as he is included). So, strong follow up mechanisms should be put in place. Security, policing and justice are fine too. But the land tax is too much as there is permanent drought in the area.

He plans to move to Adigrat where he inherited a house, and to hand over his mother's residence and land to the kebele when he does this. But in the meantime he will continue to use it.

One poor young man living with an uncle

BK, 21, lives with his uncle since his mother went to Adigrat in 1992 EC, leaving him behind. He used to study and herd his uncle's goats. Since this year (2002 EC) he stays in Adikelembes to attend his secondary education. It was very lucky that the school opened grade 9 right at the time he was completing his 8th grade.

The household faces food shortage and the situation is really bad since 2001 EC. Now that he stays in Adikelembes his uncle gives him 20 kgs flour per month but that is not enough and he is hungry and lonely.

He got free medical treatment (through a letter from the kebele administration, though the health centre staff initially were not cooperative and made him return to get minor corrections before they accepted to treat him) when he was ill in 2000 EC and was referred by the HEW to the health centre, after having been unwell for two weeks. He was cured. He is given food aid '*under the category of family members of sacrificed soldiers*' though he says there are irregularities in the delivery of the food. He gets the PSNP ration as a member of his uncle's household, and that has been contributing much to his food consumption.

He was mobilised by the kebele administration and other members to join the YA in 2000 EC. There were lots of promises but he can see nothing of this. He appreciates the government efforts to expand opportunities for education for poor people, but he believes that the wereda and kebele administrations are not committed to improve the status of young people in the locality. Apart from false promises nothing has been done, the YA is not creating job opportunities, and in the kebele many young people completing secondary education remain jobless and therefore migrate elsewhere.

He wants to complete his education, join a university and get a job in government, to have a safe life and be able to help his uncle financially.

Female dependents

One very poor young woman with a young child, living with her mother

MZ studied to her 9th grade which she was attending in Adigrat when she got pregnant, kept the baby, and returned to live with her mother in Geblen, in 2000 EC. Her family initially was unhappy with her decision to keep the baby but they have now accepted. She is working on the PSNP since then. She doesn't have anything, but is happy to have her daughter and as she is still young, her daughter will be '*a friend to her when she grows up*'. She knew about family planning and made the mistake of not taking contraceptive. Now she has '*started to live according to the lesson*'.

Life is hard and for the last three years she had to borrow from neighbours for her food and sometimes some money. She says people in their culture help one another and it is usual for someone who is poor like her to call on someone who is better off.

She benefited from the HEW training and so they have a latrine, dry and liquid waste place, compost and kitchen. They use water from the river, which is far away and not proper for drinking, provoking water borne disease - but they do not have any other option. She also benefits from the health centre services - although she usually starts by using traditional medicine and goes to the centre only

if it looks serious. She also had training at the FTC. She would like some land and chicken. Chicken are good because they don't cost much, are not taxed, and don't require much food and much land. Yet in 2002 she took a package for 2,200 birrs on credit but nothing else as she fears debt. She didn't take an agricultural package: she has no land and her mother's land is not fertile.

She was 'elected' as a member of the WA since 2002 and so does not have much information as this is very recent. She is also a member of the TPLF and says it is '*not good not bad*'. She thinks there is improvement for women: before they would be the only ones to look after the children and spend their time serving food, but now they go to meetings and can even be appointed as administrators while fathers take care of their children. To some extent things are better for the youth too: they can take technical education if they fail to join university, or get self-employed, though those who don't have any capacity or talent will just stay home which is not good. But she thinks there are some problems with governance – for instance, the way the credit is managed it does not benefit the community. She doesn't have dealings with the police; militia '*at least don't (do) harm*' to her and may be useful in protecting the community.

She dreams of continuing her education and completing university '*to get her own work and money to be independent*' and a good life; and she wants to raise her daughter well.

One poor woman who is married, has children and stays with her parents

EM, 30, is married since 1988 EC and has four children. She used to work for the PSNP in 1997 EC but from 1998 EC she also opened a retailer shop in her parents' home – while continuing to benefit from the PSNP for four family members. She got married by family arrangement and didn't like it as it stopped her in her studies. She was 6th grade and a very clever student. So she can read and write, but she failed to meet her dreams. She is living with her parents as her husband cannot provide at all for the family needs.

She got the HEW training and they have applied it (latrine, separate room for animals, dry waste place). She is using traditional medicine for herself, but went to the centre when she was seriously sick and she got herself checked again when she went to the centre for her son who was sick the same year, in 2001. They both were cured. Their main problem is, her father was diagnosed with diabetes and was very sick. They raised 1,200 birr and took him to Adigrat for treatment; of this she contributed 400 birrs which was all she had and since then life is very hard, also because her father was the only breadwinner. She took the family planning lessons but hardly used them; she rather used the traditional method to have three years gap between births, but she says that from now on she is using it.

She said she got training at the FTC on modern farming and appreciated it. She does not have land; her family has a very small land and they had taken fertiliser, but this had no benefit, though no harm either. She had livestock but sold it and in this way was able to build her own home, for which she took credit as well (she used part of the loan to help her father, and other loan money to buy livestock which died rapidly). The credit service is not reasonable, the interest rate has doubled from 9% to 18% and this is unaffordable. Yet she finished her home in 2001 EC, this is her only asset but she makes 100 birrs monthly by renting her two rooms.

She is a member of the WA and thinks it has no harm. But the YA should work better and focus on the basic problems of the youth. The main issue is unemployment, so they need to create work for them. Extension workers can be useful, for instance the health package is very important. But the livestock package is not beneficial and DAs don't benefit the community. Kebele officials are also not responding rapidly when there is any problem. Militia, police and justice services are important, they protect the community.

She would like to bring up her children well, and move to the city to have a better life.

One rich mature woman, married and with children

WK, 37, is married and has two children. She used to be a midwife but since 2000 EC is working in her husband's clothes shop in Edaga Hamus. The good things in her life are that her father was hard working and so they were better off than their neighbours and also, her marriage and her children are happy events. She doesn't have land and resettled in Edaga Hamus since 1995 EC. Her husband has been taking loans for agriculture and she took loans for livestock and also took government credit to start their business. She doesn't say more for themselves but explain that her sister had to take beehives against her interest.

She benefited from the sanitation teaching and health services and also, the reason why she has only two children is that she is using family planning. The role of the HEW is very great.

She is a member of the WA and thinks they are good to make women's rights to be respected and give every woman a voice. She is also a member of TPLF but *'they are not working like it is expected from them.'* There is some improvement with regard to governance but *'some of them (administrators) are still very corrupt'*.

Her aim is to bring up her children well.

One rich middle-aged woman, married and with children

FK, 46, is married and has six children. She lives of agriculture, livestock and the PSNP. She does not have land but uses that of her father – who is a model farmer for their kushet. They have their own irrigation, which is her father's. They cultivate oranges, onions, tomatoes, cabbages and potatoes and get between 150 and 200 birrs from this, which is *'good benefit'*. They took fertiliser and improved seeds and also cow, sheep and goats from the package programme – which is *'important to them but sometimes they force us to take without our interest.'* She got training at the FTC on compost preparation, to increase production. *'I don't know whether there is a change but I think it's a good strategy'*.

Her children go to school and so she is happy to contribute for this, moreover as the school is nearby *'they are not drifting across the hills'* as used to be the case (they live in a kushet where a new primary school was recently built). She has benefited from the sanitation services (latrine, separate rooms) and has been tested for HIV/AIDS *'about five times'*. She wants her children to be tested. Her children were vaccinated and when sick she took them to the health centre. She acquired knowledge about family planning from the HEW. *'But the training reached me lately that means after I already got an unplanned family'*. Still they took the training and it is helpful to the community.

She is a member of the TPLF: she was recruited by the kebele officials. She thinks kebele officials give good and speedy services and there is no corruption around PSNP. The rations are very late this year in particular but this is not the problem of the kebele officials. She is not sure where the problem is, but it seems to be a problem of the system as a whole, and that the wereda administrator may be one of the responsible persons. The community gets very important services from the extension workers. The government is also trying hard with the youth but there are many unemployed youngsters because they lost their chance of education after 10th grade. This is a big burden to the society as a whole, as the youth are left without any positive vision and lack motivation to use their potential to create or engage in productive activities.

Household development cycle, shocks and trajectories

The box below presents snapshots of a few of these stories to illustrate the points made earlier on household development cycle, the effects of shocks, and the differential capacities of households to cope with them.

Box 1: Household development cycles – Selected examples

DK and his wife UM faced big losses in 2001 EC but as a fairly rich household, had resources left to start rebuilding their economic status. DK is an inventive ex-soldier, and he also went to Humera in 2001 EC to make some money. The packages are definitely not helping them. They also have been excluded from the second phase of the PSNP. One of their challenges will be the education of their seven and soon eight children, with the older one, a girl, having just joined secondary school in Adigrat.

GM and his wife MU faced big losses too (allegedly mainly due to the implementation of the zero-grazing programme) and had to stop supporting GM's sister. On the whole they managed to keep their 'middle wealth' economic status by further diversifying their activities, and also, they have one daughter who has recently started to send regular remittance from Saudi. They struggle with the packages too. They have five other children to educate, of whom one has just joined university. They won't have more children (her last baby died when she delivered). For them too, educating their children will be tough.

AC and his wife DE are poor, with nine dependent children. The oldest is in 8th grade; one daughter has just given birth (she was 6th grade). They lost cattle to the drought and kept just one cow that has given birth again. They too were forced to take a bee hive that they don't use (no colony). They get the PSNP for six family members and when this is available, emergency food aid for some more, as well as supplement for one child, which is shared with all. It is hard to see how they could move up. It is going to be very hard to educate their nine children, let alone educate them.

MZ and his wife AF have only six children but are very poor. They have one goat left after 2001. They are in a cycle of debts (and use part of the PSNP ration to repay at one point in the cycle) which was initiated by their inability to cover their food needs years back, and aggravated by the growing number of children, all still young (two in primary schools the others younger). This cycle was likely compounded by the fact that they had to take a package which failed them (he lost most of the goats he took and doesn't use the hive because he has no colony). It also is hard to see how they could move up, and one has to hope that they will not have more children.

RH, a newly wed young man from a rich family, explains that the family saw ups and downs since 1997, linked to rainfall and production, but he was able to engage 11,500 birrs for his wedding in 2002 (though he now faces a financial shortage).

Although he is poor, GB seems to be moderately affected by the weather vagaries: he cultivates his mother's land but he depends more on his income from quarry work. This can vary too depending on the construction market. It has lately picked up after two years.

NA has nine children. Of middle wealth, he is dependent from his mother but has farmland (maybe hers). He was affected by the 2001 drought (he lost 15 goats) and had to sell an ox and a donkey to cope with food shortage; but he seems to have been able to recover as in 2002 he worked as a semi-skilled worker (supervisor mason) for the construction of a church in Mekele, the rainfall was better and production increased, and he sold one of his two oxen at a very good price.

BK, a poor young man 21 year old, is living with his uncle since his mother left for Adigrat. He is a student (for which he gets support from his uncle) and herds his uncle's goats. He explains that the drought in 2001 left them very impoverished and this is still bad in 2002.

EM, 30 year-old and living with her parents even though she is married, contributed to her father's treatment in Adigrat when he was diagnosed with diabetes and became very ill. In 2001 the family raised 1200 birrs, to which she contributed 400 birrs which was all she had. Yet she was able to complete a house of her own and rents two rooms – selling a cow and an ox and using part of a package loan for this.

Structures of inequality in 2010

Genderage

In 2000 EC there were 316 female-headed households in Geblen, out of 725 (43.5%). Among them 35% are said to be widows, 30% are divorcees and the rest women abandoned by their partners. People in the community give different explanations for this large proportion of female-headed households, which were all confirmed by one or several cases reported in the interviews: many men

died during wars against the Derg or Eritrea more recently; unmarried young women have babies outside of wedlock and are abandoned by their partners; men (especially young) abandon their families to migrate and seek better opportunities; men have several partners and only one is the official spouse. This situation certainly influences the way both officials and community people think about genderage and gender equality.

Growing up male in Geblen

One major issue about growing up as a male in Geblen is access to land or rather, lack thereof. Boys are now going to schools and few of the families interviewed did not have plans for their children, both male and female, to go as far as they could in their education. But whether or not this then offers them an alternative to being a farmer is far from clear. Many parents lament the lack of options for 'unemployed youth' (see below). While these issues affect in principle children of both sexes the interviews give one's the feeling that this is seen as particularly problematic for boys growing up to manhood. Boys and youngsters are concerned by these issues, as shown in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) of groups of 11-14 and 15-19 old.

So because of these shifts (growing landlessness, education opportunities but no/few local job opportunities) growing up male in Geblen means contemplating a number of possibilities, ranging from becoming a farmer like one's father, perhaps with modern aspects like investing in a mill and a teashop for one's wife or in a water reservoir for irrigated horticulture and in improved short season seeds, to migrating, to becoming an employed person as some 'children from Geblen' did. All of these routes present their own challenges.

A decade ago young men were dropping out more or less early (like RH and GB, dropping at grade 6 and grade 2 respectively, see above) for economic or family reasons, often combined. It is difficult to be sure but from parents' and children's intentions this appears now to be a least preferable option. Among the interviews of young male adult dependents the story of BK shows that the desire to get an education may be very strong: at 21, he has just started his secondary education after having spent several years as a primary school student also herding his uncle's goats. On the other hand, there are also cases in which parents would want to see their child continue but he decides not to – like this woman who explains that her son dropped out after grade 8 and decided to migrate to Humera, much to her unhappiness.

Young men are said to be customers of the bars open in Mishig, and some community members appreciate the fact that there now are militia night patrols to avoid that this degenerates in violent quarrels. In somewhat of a contrast, growing up as a male in Geblen also means 'being mobilised' to join the Youth Association – which many did; or being 'organised' into co-operatives – though this has been very limited so far.

Growing up female in Geblen

EM, who is 30, explains how she got married through family arrangements when she was in Grade 6 in 1988 EC and how she disliked her marriage as it stopped her from going far yet she was a very clever student and always ranked number one. Now, she says, things are better, and girls are free to learn. Girls' **education** is indeed a reality in Geblen – and there are several families reporting that they have daughters at or having graduated from university, or in secondary and with plans to continue. One man says he is committed to send all his female children to school. School staff do not mention particular obstacles to girls' enrolment and presence at school. Drop outs are mainly due to economic stress and children from both sexes are affected, it seems. And several parents mentioned that the proximity of the (primary) schools was beneficial as it meant that '*children were not drifting across the hills*', which presumably is important for girls in particular.

But teachers do say that girls have less time for study as **domestic chores** still fall a lot more on them. A group of girls (15-19) says that there is a difference from the previous time (that they hear about in their family) when women had no rights. This is better now. It's not yet good, as they still

are supposed to do all the domestic work while boys play. But there begins to be changes with boys going to fetch water and collect wood. Younger girls (11-14) also say that there is some change but not considerable as their burden is not much reduced.

As they are at school and so out of home, girls are vulnerable to **unwanted pregnancies** and in the two cases revealed in the interviews, they then stopped their education – and the mother of one said she was not sure that she could continue. Unwanted pregnancies may happen more when girls attend education far from home although one of the cases is a 6th grade girl and she was likely attending school in Geblen. The young 9th Grade woman who got pregnant while she was in Adigrat explains that as she was in grade 9 she was reluctant to take the family planning lesson and she didn't get contraception, which was a mistake. It is not clear whether younger girls, still in primary school but having reached puberty, are given any family planning education. The number of girls becoming pregnant outside of wedlock is said to be one of the reasons for the increasing number of female-headed households.

Female Genital Mutilations (FGM) and early marriages are said to have been abandoned long ago, under the TPLF. But the girls interviewed in an FGD explain that marriages are still commonly arranged by families and the choice of boys, and the idea of **mutual consent** is fairly new. However, the young generation and educated women resist the tradition. Unlike in Girar for instance, these issues do not feature prominently in the discussions about gender equality. Whether this means that this is changing 'de facto' – driven by more girls being more educated – is not clear from the data we have, but seems plausible.

Being a man in Geblen

Men who live in Geblen are engaged in farming but this seems to be only one of several activities for most of them. Among the seven adult/working male respondents in the in depth interviews, all have off-/non-farm activities and just one of the seven relies only on the PSNP. The others work for the PSNP as well as other paid work (on 'various government construction projects', NGO projects, quarry work, supervisor mason in Mekele, or renting one's donkey for transport, for instance), as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers, or they migrate temporarily. Some combine farming and businesses like having a grain mill. The balance of the time that men spend on farming and off-/non-farm activities varies over time (from one year to the next and within one year) depending on the circumstances (weather, education, job opportunities, decision to migrate or not etc.). Competition for local job opportunities is said to be stiff.

Farming is also calling for continuous decisions to be made about what to invest scarce resources in, like potatoes that may be better in terms of income but prone to attacks by baboons vs. tomatoes that are attacked less but more perishable; or using or not using fertiliser considering the rainfall pattern; and when to sell livestock to be able to buy food. It is not clear to what extent these decisions are taken jointly with their wives, for those who are married. Some say that they do so now thanks to government education on gender equality.

More generally, among the men interviewed most expressed support for the government policy for gender equality, and gave other examples of their willingness to implement it (one said for instance that he was sharing the PSNP workload of his wife). But there are examples which reveal that in some households, in spite of the discourse of the husband, women are treated 'differently' – one striking example is this man who goes to the health centre for himself but will not let his wife see a health worker (although he says that it's because he doesn't believe that they could help her, he seems more confident when it comes to himself).

Men themselves say that they are not good with money and so, that they prefer that the PSNP, when it is paid cash, is given to women. Some men frequent the bars in Mishig and can spend a lot of money on beer. It is said to be common for men to have several partners.

Many men in Geblen are involved one way or another in tasks beyond their household (and in

addition to the 20 or 40 days of unpaid community works that all able-bodied adults provide as well). Just the militia count seventy men. There is a seemingly well organised network of sub-tabia structures (kushets, development teams) that involves leadership functions for a number of men too. Younger men may have leadership responsibilities in the Youth Association. Men may also have responsibilities in the party's 'basic organisation'. Among those interviewed, most if not all mentioned that they were members of the party.

Being a woman in Geblen

On the one hand, the tabia leader, now appointed to work at the wereda level and who therefore will be away most of the time except week-ends, says that this is not an issue as his wife is a strong woman and in their household, he may be the President but she is the Prime Minister. On the other hand, one man will not allow his wife to be seen by a health worker even though, he says himself, she is suffering a lot.

Livelihoods

Community members, male, female, old and young alike, note that in Geblen women's right to equality is respected since when the area was liberated under the TPLF. So, women had equal **access to land** when it was redistributed by the locally elected *baitos*. In addition, they are supposed to have priority in getting land when they do not have some: since before 1995 EC there is a rule that women, demobilised soldiers and youth should have priority access to any land becoming free. The only reason why this was not implemented is the overall shortage of land in Geblen. When land was certified (which was done earlier in Tigray than in the other Regions) the land of women was certified under their names as individuals. However, when women are married the land of the two spouses is usually farmed jointly. As traditionally women cannot plough – and this has not changed to this day - they anyway have to rely on male labour for a critical part of the farming cycle.

Community members, men included, recognise that being a woman means having to **combine livelihood and re/production activities** in a way that men don't have to do. Women have a 'heavy workload', combining house cleaning, food preparation, child minding and other domestic tasks with mostly the same farming activities as men except ploughing (but so they build terraces, sew, weed, winnow, husk and harvest) and now with the PSNP works. Women are said to work more outside of their home than in the past and this is partly related to new activities such as the PSNP, but in the interviews of community members there is not the same emphasis as in some other research sites on the importance of recognising the rights of women to 'go out'.

Tabia officials and community members explain that all women in Geblen were '*given the opportunity to participate in the **Productive Safety Net Programme***'. But there is some awareness that whilst this is an 'opportunity' it also adds to women's workload: if they are 'adult and able-bodied' they have to work in the same way as men, except when they are pregnant/lactating. So, one poor farmer thinks that the period of time for which they are exempted for pregnancy should be expanded. The WA leader and the kebele leader presented a report to the wereda arguing that the PSNP programme should take women's additional workload into account more generally, and not ask from women the same tasks as for men in the PSNP public works.

The tradition that most hampers women's economic empowerment as **farmers** is the fact that they cannot plough as noted above. So female-headed households have to sharecrop or hire labourers to plough their land when they cannot get support from relatives. This is always a risk if the work is not done well or if they cannot find people at the right time. Having one's land ploughed or farmed by relatives may also not always work well, like in the case of the elderly HK who basically thinks that her son is not a very good farmer.

Other activities like most of the construction jobs and bee-keeping are seen as male activities. This traditional attitude deterred young women from joining the bee-keeping youth association co-operative, and the community at large is said not to have encouraged them. On the other hand,

female-headed households have access to packages and credit in the same way as male-headed ones – and are pressurised all the same to take credit even when they are not interested. The DAs say that male farmers understand (the new technologies) better than female, though women are better in repaying the money. The interviews of community members suggest that while women heading households have access to training at the FTC and advice from the DAs, it is not clear that this is the case for wives in independent male-headed households. Similarly, it is not clear that wives have access to packages in their own name (as opposed to perhaps being the ones to take care of e.g. shoats taken on credit by their husbands).

With regard to **off-/non-farm activities**, the women living in Geblen do not seem to seek labour employment beyond the PSNP, unlike men. Arguably if they have to take time to work on the PSNP it would be just as feasible for them to work on some of the other opportunities, usually better paid, that men report working for. Some women indeed note that they would like this. However, such opportunities are scarce in the first instance, and many are said to be ‘heavy work’ so more suitable for men, like construction and related work. Because of increased workload on other things women are said to no longer have the time for some traditional activities like making handicrafts for the household or for sale on the market. On the other hand, women ‘*control the whole business*’ of shops, teashops and bars, offering breakfast and selling traditional drinks, ‘soft drinks’ and beer and offering entertainment like TV, in the area of Mishig (the new ‘small town’ of the kebele). But these options, and generally activities enabling women to earn some income, are less easily available in the other areas of the tabia as there is less demand and access to market is more difficult.

Some of the women who established these businesses took **credit** to do so. The tabia leader explains that in particular, there should be a bigger budget and women should be encouraged to participate more in credit-financed income-generating activities, but he refers mainly to the youth in saying so. The data we have is not conclusive, but again these seem to be opportunities reserved for women who live without a husband (and so don’t have him having taken credit for an agricultural/livestock package).

Migration has become an option for both male and female youth. Women, and even professionals like one female teacher who left her husband and one year old daughter behind, are migrating to ‘look for a better life’. They migrate abroad, or in towns as housemaids or even commercial sex workers. The participants to an FGD on migration explained that some women are migrating abroad leaving their children behind with their parents. Others migrate in towns, like a woman who left her son with his uncle for whom he is herding goats whilst the uncle feeds him and supports his education. Migration can be very risky and fail, for women as for men. One woman paid 10,000 birrs, made a long, tiring and very dangerous journey on foot and by boat through Djibouti and Yemen and spent 20 days in prison in Saudi Arabia before being flown back to Addis. Yet she wants to try again. Another is successfully settled in Saudi Arabia and regularly sending remittances to her parents and thanks to the phone in Geblen they talk at least three times in a year. Women are said to be better than men at sending remittances.

There are a few women from Geblen who made it through **education** and getting a **wage job** – like two young women who work as teachers elsewhere. There may be more of those in the future as more girls from Geblen go further in being educated. But like boys they may face unemployment, as is the case for the daughter of one of the respondents.

Re/productive work

The HEP is supposed to have brought changes in the way **houses** are organised and better **sanitation**, which in many instances under the still largely prevailing division of labour in the household, should benefit women most – shelves to put clothes and utensils and keep them cleaner, separate rooms for animals also keeping the house cleaner, healthier family members etc. But there are also aspects of the packages that are unpractical. For instance, many households drink water from rivers and few apply the advice of boiling the water, which would require more fuel and more

time from women to do this. Using soap, which several women mentioned, is also expensive, and washing one's hands regularly means using more water, which is scarce and hard to get. Yet generally, even if implementation may not match the theory, many women say that they appreciate the role of the HEW and that she teaches important things. Some men say this too.

The researchers observed that tasks and responsibilities in households are still quite strictly demarcated according to gender and age. In two large households, domestic activities (as opposed to activities 'outside of the home') like food preparation, child care and laundry would be done by the mother, while water fetching, collecting firewood, transporting grains to and from the market and the grind mill plant, building fences, maintaining the house would be done by the father. Children would assist with food preparation, cleaning the house and assisting the mother in various other tasks.

Several households mentioned that they were no longer using firewood as **fuel** but kerosene - as it is forbidden to cut wood in all land put under the zero-grazing programme (see below). Also, **water fetching** seemed to be more of a task for the wife/mother in other households, with girls giving a hand, and sometimes very young children walking up to an hour in the early morning to get water. Some community members said that water shortage had become more acute since 1997 EC and women had to walk longer and longer distances to fetch water. Various water developments completed since then have improved things for those households dwelling not too far from these developments but for the others, fetching water remains a heavy burden on women – like for this woman who walks more than two hours to Marwa – the neighbouring kebele – and is sometimes refused water there.

There are several **grind mills** in Geblen and for one of the remoter kushets a good path that donkeys can use has been completed in 2001 EC, thus making it possible to bring grain to the mill and back home on a donkey's rather than one's back.

As more girls go to school this means less help for mothers. Several women said that domestic chores are shared a bit more (e.g. husband looking after children, or 'doing another thing' when his wife is doing something). But one of them said there was no change and she was the one '*who always looked after all the domestic sphere*'. As said earlier, the girls interviewed in the female FGDs seem to think that yes, there is change (boys fetching water for instance), but not yet a lot. The in-depth interviews provide other hints suggesting that men still rarely if ever engage in the domestic chores (except maintaining the home and doing some gardening in the backyard) and that in this respect there is little change in the traditional division of labour between sexes in Geblen (e.g. this man noting that why would he ever wash cloth as he married his wife for her to do this, or this other man explaining that as he married his wife would be able to take care of his elderly parents whilst he would perhaps migrate to find better opportunities).

There are changes in relation to **family planning, pregnancy and delivery services** (see in the 'health' section below) though this is slow. The HEW and tabia officials mention among others husbands' resistance and religious and other beliefs. Indeed there are cases of women deciding to adopt contraception without the knowledge of their spouse (actually only 1/3rd of the women taking contraceptives do so with their spouse's consent). But also, out interviews reveal and women themselves recognise that they don't apply what they are taught, for various reasons. Complications during delivery can still be fatal – this is a big concern for the HEW who says that she doesn't have sufficient ANC skills and would like more training.

As might be expected in a highly food insecure community, discussions on **nutrition** revolves around whether there is enough food or not, and there is no mention of things like having a balanced diet etc. Several women explain that it has never been as bad as during the famine of 1984 GC, but food shortage is recurrent in their household. Food aid is very important, yet according to some it is managed in a corrupt manner. For the same reason – that is, the first concern is to have enough food - there is no change in the way children are fed. The only change mentioned with regard to

child care is that children now go to school. In one of the poor households interviewed, the mother said that she thinks children in their culture are *'treated very carelessly'*. Another, in a poor household too, said that children grow up *'by opportunity, not by our care'*. Yet one better off mother highlighted that she and her husband are literally living for their children, ready to sacrifice everything so that they have what they need.

Political involvement

Kebele officials and community members interviewed on gender equality think alike that the establishment of women's affairs at village level and as member of the tabia Cabinet (in 1997 EC) was beneficial for gender equality. It helped representing women better and in this way, better addressing their issues and making all interventions gender sensitive.

There was also a deliberate effort to recruit more women into the TPLF grassroots structures, especially since 1999 EC. As a result, 35% of the party members are now women, and in the last local elections (2008 GC) women took 35% of the seats on the kebele Council. This also leads to better representation of women, and enables them to participate better in all development interventions. It makes it easier to mobilise the community as a whole and to represent women and ensure respect of women's right to equality.

So, women are better represented and are said to raise women issues in the meetings, yet kebele notables and women themselves recognise that it cannot be said that they have equal decision-making power to men. Many more women are party members, but many female respondents are quite indifferent to this – saying it doesn't harm but also doesn't bring any particular benefit. One woman *'hates the government'*, although this is because of its alleged attitude to poor people and not in relation to women issues.

Women's rights

Since the **TPLF** era women have equal access to land and have equal inheritance rights, right to division of properties in divorce, and political representation. This has *'remained intact to this day'*. Several respondents, including the **Women Association** leader, say that they are very happy with the relentless efforts of the kebele chairman to protect women's rights. However one woman (a young divorcee after her husband abandoned her on his return from migration abroad) criticizes the lack of commitment of the kebele and wereda administrations as well as the WA. Last year the administration had collected lists and promised to send the young women in Mekele to learn skills such as woodwork and pottery but nothing of the like ever happens. Some women appreciate the Women Association's work in terms of promoting women's rights and making them aware of them. But some seem to have been recruited to increase the number of members and without necessarily thinking about why they might become member (like the young MZ).

There are divergent views among community members as to whether 'things are changing' for women. There are signs that the message that it needs to change is heard, but not necessarily heeded in all cases. E.g. this man (52, medium poor) who says that the government awareness campaign has positively influenced him – so he is committed to send all his daughters to school, and now recognises his wife's right to be consulted for economic decisions on their properties, such as when to sell livestock, as well as on other issues. Yet the same man denies his wife the most basic right to consult for her health.

In the same way, in spite of the talk about women's rights in Gebelen it remains common for men to have several partners. Youngsters are said to have unsafe sex and the rule that marriage should not take place before the partners would be HIV tested is hardly applied, according to the tabia leader.

On the women's side too it is frequent and not necessarily frowned upon to have several sex partners and to be 'off' the ideal-type household cycle in other ways. So this woman, heading her household and who has given birth to five children from different men and lives from selling beer

and tella in her newly built house in Mishig, is actively participating in the kebele administration and the WA, is a member of the social court, and one of the health promoters. All her children attend school, and she participates in the PSNP. In contrast, this younger woman, who got a child without being married and while she was studying, seems to be a lot less self-confident. She faced criticism from her family, from whom she depends. Her dream would be to return to her education, she doesn't seem to think that this is feasible. She says she has a strong sense of insecurity (and so would not take credit as advised by the kebele administration as she fears that she might put her parents in trouble if she fails).

Male violence

The picture with regard to male violence is similarly mixed. One of the women interviewed says that the law against abduction and violence against women makes a difference as before there was no attention at all to these issues. Rape is said to be frequent and that cases, presented to the kebele administration, don't usually attract legal measures but are solved by traditional mediation. However, one woman interviewed on other issues reported that her son who had been accused of rape had been imprisoned for more than two years and such severe punishments were not applied before.

New trends in social life in Geblen bring new threat: a group of girls say that one man (civil servant) made them violence in trying to show them a pornographic film.

Policies and programmes for the youth

Lack of access to land is a major issue for the young people. A group of boys (15-19) explains that the prevailing pattern of land ownership hinders reaching better food security in the community. Most young people, who would be better able to get good production if they had land, don't. On the other hand, there are people with large land and access to water/irrigation facilities nearby and they don't use the land they have effectively. The youth requested change many times, and there even was a meeting at the zonal level where the administration informed them about a plan to redistribute land for the young, but so far there have been promises only. One of the youth said '*Our parents are our enemies*', and in this situation most youth lose hope and want to migrate.

An elderly man asked about inequality also notes that youth of Geblen '*become hopeless*' because they lack farmland. If they want to engage in farming or herding they have to do it on the land of their parents or of others as share-croppers. When the kebele administration explained its plan to redistribute non-cultivable land for the youth in a public meeting, this was opposed by those elderly people owning the land. It was solved through discussion in one instance (land given to bee-keeping co-operative) – which, in the opinion of the group of boys mentioned above, shows that the community needs more awareness-raising to see the benefits of this plan for the community as a whole.

The kebele administration has started giving small plots of non-farm land to young families to build residential houses in Mishig (the small 'urban centre' of the kebele). But this is not available for all and therefore, as a group of 15 to 19 year old girls interviewed in an FGD explain, most of the youth who don't have that chance live with their parents even with their wife and their own children. On the other hand, not all those given land managed to build a house so by 2000, a total of 107 youth had been given a residential plot (50 in 1996, 12 in 1999 and 45 in 2000) but only 65 had constructed a house.

The tabia leader explains that following the wereda policy they are organising youth in co-operatives and providing them with credit to undertake various activities. In 2000 they organised twenty youth in a honey production co-operative. However, thus far this was not successful because of drought. In 2002 other youth started in various activities like shops, trade, house construction, also on credit. This was successful in that 80% of the youth in Geblen benefited from this option. But there needs to be a bigger budget and more awareness creation, greater commitment from the youth to engage in

income-generating activities and more efforts to make sure women participate more. He also believes that there are risks with young people using the money to migrate abroad.

In the opinion of the YA leader, those who took credit for non-farm package (trade, business) were not profitable but at least they did not get bankrupt like those who took a livestock/bee-keeping package. He thinks that very few borrowers will become rich. One member of the youth bee-keeping co-operative is of the view that there must be greater commitment to rehabilitate the environment to make such activities profitable. With regard to non-farm activities, one young man who took a credit to start a barber shop in Mishig found it not profitable and wants to change business but it's not easy and *'it is better for the young in Geblen to search jobs outside of the kebele'*. The tabia leader believes that non-farm employment should be assessed and created, taking into account drought and the actual conditions in the kebele. Also, TVET skill training is needed to equip the youth who want to engage in non-farm activities.

Basically, some say, young people are *'not interested to live in Geblen'*. Community informants (youth and others) explain that increased access to credit led to increased youth migration. Migration or resettlement arise as the only options as the youth in Geblen don't have access to land and there is no hope that this might change in future; many won't make it through education (because quality is low, they or their families can't afford the costs of them pursuing higher education, and/or there is no employment prospects). So the young people pressurise their parents to take credit for them to migrate – the more so as resettlement is no longer available as an option (see below).

Not everyone agrees with this analysis of the options for the youth, e.g. the kebele chairman who himself is still quite young (37) explains that this is because young people 'hallucinate' that they will earn lots of money in a short period of time abroad, which is an illusion, and they lack commitment to rather work hard with what they have in the kebele. Another person (rich elderly) gives the example of young men engaging in business and making good profit or improving their livelihoods through the credit programme put in place for the youth category. E.g. one young man (27 year old) has even built a house in Edaga Hamus. This man, who is cited as one of the local notables in spite of his young age, previously worked for 5 years in a grinding mill, earning 300 birrs/month. With his savings he bought his own mill and installed it in Geblen. His wife is running a tea shop. He also has a store for the oranges from Gunda Gundo waiting for the lorries to come and pick them up and earn money from this.

Another young man, the chairman of the YA co-operative, is trying his best – and says he benefited from some of the credit he took (like the cow and goats but not the hives and chicken) and from other activities from his own initiative (e.g. he started irrigated agriculture with his hand-dug pond). But he doesn't have land and if there was an option for resettlement again he would go for it. He thinks that the government is trying to help the youth but the only problem is land distribution.

The number of youngsters migrating has jumped in 2002 EC, according to the statistics of the Youth Association (that they keep and pass onto the wereda level, and the YA leader is then responsible to 'recruit new members'). There were 185 members of the YA in 2002, of which 70 are 'members of the PSNP', and 115 are dependent on their parents. In 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, the number of young people who migrated, (many to Saudi Arabia and all male) was 17, 21, 20 and 20 respectively. In 2002 this jumped to 56 male and 1 female. These statistics do not include all cases of migration as not everyone is a member of the YA (in particular, female migration is probably largely not captured in these statistics as young women are less likely to be members of the YA than young men; also, these statistics are quite subjective, as the YA leader does not count as migrants the people who have left Geblen since quite a while and found an occupation elsewhere, but he knows their whereabouts and they keep in contact). The number of cases that were found through interviews with community members indeed suggests that these statistics are underestimates.

Not all parents are happy with this. Some are grateful, like this man whose daughter sends

remittances of up to 1,000 birrs annually. But one soldier's widow said she gave up the hope that her eldest son was going to support her and his siblings when he decided to terminate his education (he was a Gr8 student) and migrate.

Box 2 below concludes by presenting the aspirations of some of the young people interviewed.

Box 2: The aspirations of some young people

A young rich man – Grade 6 leaver, chairman of the YA co-operative, landless, just married – would like to migrate to Saudi Arabia to make money as start-up capital to start a business in Ethiopia; or resettle in Humera; or engage in trade in the towns around – and he believes that his marriage is important as it will protect him from living a bad life and also, his wife can take care of his elderly parents while he takes the opportunity to improve the family's living standards.

A poor young man – who dropped out in Grade 2 to engage in construction work in a neighbouring wereda and after his return in Geblen (in 1997 EC), engaged in farming activities and quarry work as stone chiseller, also wants to migrate – and if this fails, engage in trade.

A young man of 21, the son of a soldier killed at the war, left behind with his uncle when his mother went to Adigrat, and who is currently in Grade 9 in Adikelembes (a small town in the neighbouring kebele) thanks to his uncle whose goats he is herding, plans to join university, find a good job, and help his uncle financially after he has become a salaried government employee.

A young woman of 21, who was studying in Gr9 in Adigrat but got pregnant from her boyfriend, got the baby against her family's will but is very happy about it, and now lives with her mother, participates in the PSNP and has engaged in various activities including through credit from the package programme, would like to continue her education, join university, and lead a successful professional life, and also raise her daughter better. More pragmatically, she would like some farmland and would raise chicken as they don't require a large land area.

The FGDs show that for younger and older boys and girls, making something out of their education is a big concern. For this there needs to be quality in the schools that they attend, and they don't think this is sufficiently the case and so, there are risks of reaching 10th grade and not succeeding to go further, like many in the community and the wereda as a whole. At the same time, land is also a salient issue, in particular for the 15-19 year old boys.

Elderly people

On one hand, elderly people are said to be highly respected, and associated with 'elite-ness' (they own the land) and community leadership (notably due to their important role in conflict mediation even in serious cases like murder and abduction). The community is said to be keen on their wellbeing. One respondent gives the example of young people of Geblen working to dig latrines for 40 households headed by elderly people in 1997 EC. Interviews also reveal various other ways in which elderly people are helped – e.g. this old woman who has her grand-daughter fetching water and cooking for her; or a young man who explains that his newly married wife will be able to take care of his parents while he seeks opportunities to improve the household's living standards.

On the other hand elderly people are also associated with vulnerability. Community members explain that there are many of them in Geblen and some say an increasing number as young people leave the community. There are interventions for categories of elderly people, but these are part of broader programmes like the PSNP. So for instance, elderly people are given priority for exemption from work under the PSNP. But they are also excluded from the credit programme by the kebele administration which has to make sure that it selects people who will be able to repay, following government policy about this – and some community informants don't find this fair.

So on the one hand, there is no systematic 'pro-elder' attention from the government – and for instance, the WA leader explains that the association lacks financial resources to help very poor women including the many elderly women who are very vulnerable. On the other hand, there is some concern among members of the community that with the many youngsters migrating or

wanting to do so or going away to study, the family and community mechanisms that have been the only ways of providing support to elderly people in Geblen may get under stress.

Wealth and poverty

The kebele administration says that Geblen as a whole is a poor community mainly because the land is un-productive – this is incomparably more severe than in many other areas and defeats people's hard work. But people living in Irata and Semui Daga kushets are said to be very poor and this is linked to their lack of or poorer access to the centre of the kebele, and to road, telephone and electricity services.

In relation to poverty and **food aid and eligibility for the PSNP** in particular, there are people saying (and even young boys and girls of 11-14) that there are no rich households: they are comparatively better off but not rich. Yet, the interviews suggest that there are households with a considerably larger asset and income bases than others and better coping/recovery capacities (see box 1 above). Drought severely affected the rich households with large numbers of livestock, but at least for some this didn't leave them with nothing. For instance DK who lost at least 8,900 birrs in 2001 still had 5 goats, 1 bee colony, an ox and two cows and was made excluded from the PSNP in 2002; an old woman who says she has become very poor still has two cows and two oxen, and she didn't mind the land of her husband to be taken away because she still had one ha of land which would be fertile with enough rain. In contrast, a very poor household with six children and 1/8 ha of land belonging to the wife had just one goat left after the 2001 drought.

Some people who are poor/er are of the opinion that there is no attention to poor people. Exemptions don't work, the government doesn't care (*'it runs after the rich'*), or kebele officials are negligent. Others mention that they benefited from some attention. For instance as we saw earlier the son of a soldier killed during the war got free medical treatment in the health centre of Adikelembes on recommendation from the sub-kebele leader, who sent him to get a letter from the kebele administration. However, exemptions and special attention relate to specific categories of people (female-headed households, malnourished under-five children, families of killed soldiers/veterans, elderly) and it is not necessarily the case that all people in these categories are poor. On the other hand, poor and very poor households are not exempted from contributions such as for the school (in cash and labour) and the 'free' (unpaid) community works.

Categorical exemptions also don't always work well. A group of 11-14 year old boys say that TPLF veterans are not treated properly when they go to the health centre or Adigrat hospital for free treatment and that they are made to pay to renew their certificates of free medical services. When the young man mentioned above went to the health centre, the staff there was not cooperative. They first asked him to 'update' the letter so he had to return to the kebele office and get the paper corrected. With these small corrections he then got the services needed. The tabia leader explains that there is actually free medical service for five very poor people selected by the kebele administration every month. But this is not successful because in final they are made to pay for the service (health workers don't treat them properly, they force them to pay for drugs in their private pharmacy even if drugs are available at the centre). It should be expanded to more people to include orphans in particular, and health workers should be forced to give the services freely.

Ethnicities and religions

In Geblen there are Irob and Tigreans, and Orthodox Christians, Muslims, as well as a few Catholics. Wereda officials mention that Protestantism has appeared in the urban areas of the wereda and this is frowned upon by the rural people – this was not mentioned by anyone in Geblen. The Catholic presence is also notably less strong in Geblen than in some neighbouring kebeles like Tahtay Ziban, with only three Catholic households in Geblen. People find it difficult to estimate, but believe that Muslims could represent one third of the community and certainly less than 50%.

Fieldwork carried out in 2007 GC suggested that it would be simplistic to think about Irob as Muslims (because of their alleged links with Afar in some accounts) and Tigreans as Orthodox Christians. The links between ethnic and religious identities in Geblen are far more complex, as they are more generally in the area around Geblen. Muslims are said to be descendants of Afar but Irob are not seeing themselves as Afar-related; their language, Saho, is not Afarigna. They think of themselves as mainly Christians even though a few of them are Muslims. Irob people are also said to have a 'democratic' (less hierarchical) outlook in terms of relationships between generations and attitude to women, which doesn't necessarily fit with the usual attitude to women in many Muslim societies. The harmonious relationships between groups in Geblen also reflect a wider and historical pattern in the area around Adigrat.

Fieldwork and an analysis of the ERHS data available in 2007 (GC) suggest that Irobs in Geblen are not marginalised politically. For instance, there is no talk about Irob and Tigreans when it comes to positions of leadership in the tabia; a good number of the notables, including in government positions, were Irob, and this did not seem to be linked to any affirmative action but reflecting the nature of the community. It is unlikely to have changed drastically since then.

Economically, as Irob people mainly live in remoter parts of the tabia they benefit less from the general development of services. This is an issue which the tabia leadership appears to be aware of and addresses as much as possible (e.g. expansion of schools in Irata and Semuidaga). Some of what is needed (e.g. investment in water structures and in gravel roads) would require greater wereda technical and financial support than has been available. Patterns of residence also change in Geblen (urbanisation in Mishig, in Welaalabur kushet) and we do not have data allowing assessing whether this concerns equally all groups in the community.

Socially/culturally the picture is complex, as is the Irob identity itself. In 1995 GC the language of the Irob people, Saho, was said to be dominant in Geblen. In 2007 GC an elderly Irob man was deploring the lack of interest of the young generation in learning Saho. While he recognised that Amharic or English, preferred by the young ones, are important, he explained that *"if people don't learn their language they will lose their identity and will become unable to communicate with their roots"*. So the Irob people of Geblen seemed to be somewhat 'searching their soul'. Today there is a sense that ethnic identity has become 'fuzzier': adults speak both languages, and several people interviewed said they could not clearly identify to which group they belong. None of the informants raised the issue of the language of instruction in schools, yet it is likely that, as children are taught in Tigrinya as elsewhere in the Region the expansion of schooling will reinforce the trend deplored by the elderly man met in 2007. These trends are unlikely to be specific to Geblen.

The WIDE3 research suggests that religion is not more of a dividing factor than in 1995 (GC). But issues have emerged or have taken more prominence for both the Orthodox Christian and the Muslim communities, arising from aspects of the government 'model': the reduction of non-working holy days is still not fully accepted among Orthodox Christians (although there are people strongly in favour of it as, they say, this will help them better run their business); the credit programme is strongly upsetting Muslim religious leaders and wereda officials put the 'resistance' of Geblen people on account of the fact that part of the community is Muslim; the ban on the hijab at school for girls having reached puberty is said to have upset Muslim leaders – though the issue didn't arise in interviews of Muslim households. It is not clear whether contraception is more readily accepted by one community than another. Religious leaders of both congregations seemed equally reluctant to discuss the issue, although perhaps Muslim leaders are more overtly against family planning.

Occupational castes

Occupational castes and other forms of marginalisation are said not to be relevant to Geblen.

Fields of action /domains of power in 2010

Livelihoods

Landlessness and the degraded environment are big challenges in Geblen, as well as increasingly erratic rains (in people's view) and poor access to water for irrigation and livestock. There is a sense of decline in the community's livelihood status over the 1995-2002 EC period as drought became recurrent leading to successive years of poor or even completely failed harvest. This combined with the loss of many animals in 1999 (epidemics), with more animal losses in 2001 due to particularly severe drought. Community members explain that in Geblen they don't produce agricultural surplus and therefore, are not sellers of grain, even in good years. In a very bad year production can fail totally (e.g. there was no grain at all in 2001). Input prices sky-rocketed in 2000 and have continued to increase. Output prices increased too but Geblen's households have to buy grains and so, from 2000 onward they had to spend more money for this and to buy other basic commodities, because of inflation. They got better prices when they sold animals but generally have few to sell, so, on the whole they are *'losers rather than beneficiaries'* from these combined trends.

For landless people options include non-farm packages, resettlement, migration and daily labour. For those who have land, they keep trying to produce some crop and there are packages for this. A few households have small plots of land that they irrigate. Drip irrigation would have potential according to wereda officials, though livestock and honey production are the main potential. The Productive Safety Net programme has become important in many households' livelihoods.

Land and environment

Geblen has a very difficult **environment** (sloppy and unfertile/degraded soil, lack of ground water). Much effort is exerted to try and address this, but not all are met with success. Charcoal making is banned and wood cutting too according to some, forcing households to use kerosene which is expensive². There have been large-scale tree plantation activities but only 15% of the eucalyptus planted in 1996 EC and very few of the trees planted in 2000 grew (even though the latter were indigenous trees). The 2001 drought destroyed 95% of the seedlings (that year even cactus died). Some people are of the opinion that efforts are beginning to show results and a new 'Zero-Grazing programme' has been introduced to accelerate progress (see below). Some believe that the free community work programme will also make a difference, and in 2001 people were asked to work 40 days (up from 20 previously). The DAs and kebele administration are organising experience-sharing events among the sub-kebeles to share best environmental protection practices.

A new **land** administration proclamation was issued by the Regional government in 2000 EC. In line with it, a kebele land management committee was established in Geblen. One of the objectives of the proclamation is to redistribute some land to landless people (from deceased people without heirs and from civil servants). But in Geblen according to wereda and kebele officials this couldn't be achieved as there is no such land and so, landlessness continues to increase: *'this is due to the physical structure of the village and there is no solution to this'*. There were complaints about this in the kebele. One man who inherited a house in Adigrat as well as land and a house in Geblen explains that he has the plan to move to Adigrat and when he does this he would hand over his land to the kebele administration. But until he does this, he says, he is keeping the land. The policy of redistribution of farmland can be beneficial (e.g. one woman's land was taken for school expansion and she was compensated with more fertile land from a deceased) but can also harm if no account is taken of land fertility and if people are not around to claim their inheritance right (as is the case for another woman).

² The wereda agricultural office is promoting improved stove that are said to decrease fuel consumption. At the time of the fieldwork a number of stoves had been transported to Geblen and were ready to be distributed.

Land registration was carried out much earlier than in other Regions in Tigray so is not a new thing. People in the community think that it is useful. However, it can also be harmful like in the case of a man who lost part of his land for the school expansion and he was not compensated because he had no land certificate even though he had witnesses. In Geblen and in the Region as a whole **women's rights over land** is not an issue as this was done under the TPLF and has continued to this day. Women own individually the land they were given at the time even when they have married since. People in Geblen lease and rent land. This is advantageous when the owner would otherwise not cultivate the land, but it is a loss when the lessee does not manage the land properly. This is always a risk for female-headed households, many of whom rent out their land as they do not have the labour to plough the land.

Farmland is extremely scarce, covering only 245.5 ha out of the 4,027.5 ha of the tabia. In the past two years in Geblen some **communal land** was given to **landless youth** for building houses, which some also use as a way of starting some economic activities. People from the community have mixed views on this. It can harm people used to graze their livestock on that land. Moreover, so far the youth co-operative which was given the land hasn't been able to produce honey. But one of the youth (with previous business experience) is convinced that if they work hard and more land is put under zero-grazing to revive the environment they can succeed.

Views are even more mixed about the recently initiated (2001 EC) programme of conservation of natural resources under which all non-cultivable land (communal and private) is supposed to be protected and people can't cut anything on it and can't graze their animals (hence many call it the '**zero-grazing programme**'). According to tabia officials this was discussed with everyone in the tabia before being adopted. A law enforcing a penalty was passed. For officials (wereda official, tabia leader, DA) and some community members (e.g. the chairman of the YA bee-keeping co-operative), this is indispensable to improve the environment and to, in turn, ensure that packages become profitable (e.g. this will improve fodder for the bees, and livestock can be fed in-door through the 'cut-and-carry' technique). People may feel harmed in the short term but they will benefit in the long run when the environment will revive and there are early signs of this happening.

For others this is disastrous and has led them to have to reduce the number of their animals. One household explain that they lose four months of food for themselves as they can't collect their cactus fruits, and also lose the leaves as fodder for their livestock. Some farmers explain that it is not proper for their (private non-farm) land to be '*taken by the government*' and some even accuse kebele officials to use for their own benefit the land from which they excluded the farmers. The girls interviewed in the two FGDs have strong views about this too (*'it is not legal to take it away from the community control and conserve it for the government use because it is the community's own property'*), presumably reflecting those of their parents. The kebele leader explains that the administration is trying to generate some revenues from the sale of grass harvested from communal land as livestock fodder.

There is a trend toward '**urbanisation**' in the tabia. Small plots of communal/non-arable land are also given to young households (mainly), as **residential land** to build a house in Mishig, the small 'urbanising' part of the tabia. This also offers opportunities for them to start non-farm activities such as tea shops, shops, and bars (some of them offering entertainment like TV as there is electricity since 2000), many of which are undertaken by women or youth. In 1997 EC there was only one woman who was selling tea and local drinks in Geblen; in 2000 there were six tea shops/bars run by household head women in Mishig only (others are found in other kushets). A young returnee from Humera opened a barber shop – though he was planning to change his business as he said it was not profitable. The construction of houses and start of these activities are facilitated by loans taken by the concerned people. Some people in the community explain that actually these non-farm activities are more successful than the other packages, including livestock and bee-keeping because drought is defeating people's efforts. People having houses in Mishig can also rent them for others to open a business or as accommodation. E.g. one woman, EM, used part of the loan she took for

business to build her house in Mishig. This is her most precious asset and she rents rooms to two teachers and gets a regular income from this (100 birrs a month). Rent prices in Mishig range from 30-35 birrs to 50 birrs/month for a room.

Water for agriculture and irrigation

In fieldwork in 2007 GC lack of water was said to be the single most acute challenge hampering all other development efforts in Geblen, by tabia officials and community members alike.

In 1995/6 EC (2003 GC) there was a wereda-led campaign of **construction of household ponds**. Initial resistance was overcome by making this compulsory. Wereda officials recognise that this was not successful as without cover the water evaporates quickly. In Geblen it was least successful because of the small rains in the area. Kebele officials note that not more than 2% households in Geblen actually completed their pond. It is very hard work, and the wereda didn't fulfil the promise of giving cement which led to *'construction of poor quality ponds with low water holding capacity'*. Indeed among our respondents one man explained that the reservoir was useless to him and he had actually wasted his energy, because the wereda had failed to provide cement. A number of other community members see 'no harm' from the water harvesting programme and there are even some farmers benefiting. One farmer planted orange seedlings (part of which he bought and part of which he was given) and is earning 400 birrs annually from this and 100-160 birrs from tomato and onions and he is producing more grain. The YA co-operative chairman also irrigated some vegetables and fruits and found this profitable though he said he had to be very careful with water as there is little of it. One woman household head, whose pond was dug under the PSNP, is also able to grow vegetables. But as rains are scarce there generally is little benefit as the water doesn't last long. Marketing is also not easy, especially for those living in the remote kushets, and for more perishable items like tomatoes.

So people say that the wereda should involve much more in spring diversion and other water development work, and start a new water harvesting programme where they provide cement to farmers. Wereda officials say that in Geblen wells (that in 2002 EC they tried to construct on a large-scale elsewhere) cannot work because ground water is very deep. There is a plan to construct earth dams (a plan which was already on the table in 2007 GC three years ago). For now, irrigated land is very small.

A number of small-scale **spring developments** were carried out, done through community work with NGO support, and a few **rock catchments** were built. E.g. one such project in Welaaelabur serves 70 households who use it for cleaning, animal drink and some irrigation. These developments benefit the households that live nearby (as they produce more grain and some vegetables so have better diet and a few can sell surpluses), but those who don't have farm land nearby or who lack labour don't benefit. Others have too small land and/or lack interest – like a young woman who *'transferred her land to her father'*.

Kebele officials are of the view that more and larger water development projects should be implemented but that this should be managed by the local people entirely (and funds go to them) rather than trying to coordinate this under FFW or give the work to outside contractors. They and community members also note that even in existing structures, water gets contaminated because people are careless – e.g. the people living in Mishig throw waste and this contaminates one of the catchments so people can't use the water to drink and continue to have to walk long distances for this. People carelessness should be addressed. The community also want chlorine tablets to purify the water, and that water reservoirs to be properly protected.

Agriculture, extension and packages

Community members recall the introduction of improved seeds (barley, wheat and maize in 1995 EC), of compost preparation technique and use (which several informants report having used with a preference over fertiliser) and of irrigation from household ponds and other water developments as

the main initiatives in relation to local agriculture. Today there are 120-135 farmers who reportedly have started some irrigated agriculture but on very small plots of land (5m x 5m for many of them). They plant vegetables, fruits like oranges and lemons, and grain crop. This is both for consumption and sale when the production is sufficient, and in this, the establishment of a market in Adikelembes (45 min walk from Mishig, in the neighbouring kebele and on the way to the tarred road to Adigrat or Freweini) is said to be very useful. People can sell fragile produces (like tomato) there and avoid them to get wasted during transportation to farther places.

Though not mentioned by wereda officials, people in Geblen (including the Women Association head) explain that farmers are forced to take **fertiliser on credit** and this is harmful for most. Some few farmers with fertile land or access to irrigation might benefit, although even they are in debt now because of the price increase and lack of sufficient rain. E.g. one woman's family was forced to take fertilizer on credit but they didn't get a good harvest because their land is infertile, and they were forced to sell their ox to repay. A man in the same situation had to sell his ox and two goats and he has become a participant to the PSNP which he wasn't earlier on. Even landless people are forced to take fertiliser (one young woman explains that she did and gave it to her father). People were threatened otherwise to lose access to the PSNP if they did not. So lots of people ended up in debt as drought meant there was very little/no production.

Kebele officials and DAs know that this is an issue. The tabia leader explains that nobody is a '*wanter of extension services*'. On the contrary, usually quotas for the kebele are much higher than the number of people interested. One of the DAs recognises that 90% of the agricultural packages failed. People, including DAs, suggest that farmers should not be made to repay when there is drought.

Kebele officials also note that in 1996 EC there was an attempt at introducing improved seeds, which was useful as these were '**short season**' seeds. About 30% farmers adopted them but not all have the financial capacity to do so. Moreover, the seeds must be delivered timely and they need care as they are more susceptible to pests. Wereda officials mention **drip irrigation**, which they say would have good potential in Geblen because it doesn't require much water. But people in Geblen are reluctant to invest so much on credit. For them to adopt it the price of the drips should be reduced and cement provided as promised. Currently there is resistance even though the wereda tried experience sharing visits.

Besides the innovations promoted by the government, people in Geblen try things on their own – e.g. a man pairing a donkey and an ox to plough, or constructing a canal from the newly developed source to a plot of his land to irrigate it, or another farmer constructing a canal from the household's toilet to his field to use human waste as organic fertiliser.

Livestock including bee-keeping

The DAs and wereda officials agree about Geblen's **potential for livestock**, particularly shoats, and bee-keeping. In the area this is the main focus of the **family package programme** introduced in 1996 EC. According to wereda officials the programme was first unsuccessful because it was not voluntary but it was made voluntary in 1998 – an account which does not fit what that from the community.

According to wereda officials Geblen is a very suitable area for **bee-keeping and honey production**, but farmers must bring supplementary feed to the bees as they suffer because of drought and environmental degradation. There is resistance in the community due to fear of lack of feed. They also recognise that bee-keeping is a risky activity, so farmers need more training (e.g. on supplementary feed etc.).

The community, tabia officials and even DAs have a quite different opinion, and in our interviews there are indeed numerous reports of lack of success for farmers taking **modern bee hives** on credit. People explain that they had to take them and they even had to take more of them in 2002 EC while they had not yet repaid back those taken in 2000 and 2001, or were still in debt for other items (such

as goats taken on credit earlier and that had died), or didn't have colonies to put in the hives. Many farmers couldn't place a bee colony in the hive or didn't want to transfer their bee colonies from their traditional hives that to the modern hives, fearing that this would kill the bees during a drought year. In other cases, the bee colonies absconded or were destroyed because of the drought (the tabia leader says that 500 colonies died in 2001 EC). Tabia officials explain that 50 to 60% farmers tried since the programme started, and almost all of them failed. DAs recognise that most of the 518 households that had taken modern bee hives were harmed or drew no benefit at all. A group of 20 youth (from Geblen and Marwa, a remoter neighbouring tabia) were organised in 2000 into a co-operative and given communal land to start bee-keeping and honey production; they took more than 40 bee hives on credit (from World Vision) but couldn't yet start producing either.

People are pushed to sell other assets to repay their debt back for bee hives of which they don't get any income. Some try to sell the hives at low price. Others had to sell a part of their PSNP ration to repay the debt contracted for bee hives that they didn't want in the first instance. Out of the four household heads interviewed on this topic, only one had had a good honey production and only in 2002 EC (although he could not repay his debt as he has 11 children and his earnings were used to buy food for the family). DAs agree that drought is a big issue but explain that farmers should provide supplementary feed and it will work better when the environment will be rehabilitated thanks to the zero-grazing programme. The tabia leader says there needs to be more progress with environmental conservation first, more training for farmers, as well as changes in the credit modalities (see below).

About 30% households in Geblen also tried the **goat and sheep breeding package** according to tabia officials. Women are reportedly more successful because they are careful in managing money. Still, because of drought on the whole this was not successful: as noted earlier, in 2001 EC in Geblen 810 animals died. This is seen as a big issue, but not as big as the issue of the coercion exerted on people for them to take modern beehives on credit whilst, they say, there has never been a strong tradition of beekeeping in Geblen, and most people don't have faith that this can work for them, in contrast with sheep and goat rearing which they are familiar with.

Selected species of hens were introduced in 1996 EC but could not reproduce well. People also explain that hybrid cattle, that some have tried, require more feed - which is problematic.

There is no regular **veterinary service** in Geblen or nearby. A post was built in 1996 EC but there is no permanent skilled staff and no medicine. Except in 1998 EC when the wereda sent veterinary services and drugs and many goats were cured, epidemics and drought led to massive losses over the past five years.

The Productive Safety Net programme and other food aid

The introduction of the **Productive Safety Net Programme** in 1997 has considerably influenced the livelihood field (*'most people in Geblen participate to the PSNP'*). Tabia officials say that it is very successful and critical for the community, and all women participate. They explain that there were some complaints during the selection in 2002 (for the second phase): some people thinking that they had been unfairly treated by the selection committee appealed (community members speak about corruption and people on the selection committee favouring their relatives), the kebele appeal committee actually agreed with the selection committee but people took their case to the wereda which finally decided against the two kebele committees.

In addition, in some years people not participating to the PSNP were given food aid under the **emergency programme**. People in the community call the emergency programme *'food aid for the rich'* because people who have two oxen and more (who are usually excluded from PSNP) receive assistance – as it is given during very bad years (1997, 1999 and 2001 EC, years of drought). Wereda officials explain that the programme is similar to the PSNP in its approach and objectives but quotas

(of people who can be selected for assistance) are too small compared to actual needs on the ground.

There is evidence that the assistance (PSNP and other food aid including under the nutrition programmes) is shared in various ways. It is shared between households by limiting to six the number of members of any household allowed to benefit from the PSNP; and so some households have members on the PSNP and other members on the emergency programme in bad years. Within households the nutritious food for young malnourished children is shared with all family members. Sharing is accepted norm: even young boys (11-14 years old) explain that *'so called rich households should not be excluded from PSNP because they are not rich'*. Fieldwork in 2007 GC revealed that wereda officials were well aware of this practice and although this was against policy, said it was important to have *'socially acceptable solutions'*.

The interviews suggest that people in quite diverse situations get to participate on the PSNP. Some don't seem to have any other opportunity. Others less so, like this young man, said to be poor, landless but cultivating his mother's land (which he says is unfertile) and who can earn 40 birr/day from quarry work. Yet he also gets to participate in the PSNP and so does his mother. Among community members, some see immediate benefits to the programme (it helps going over the drought period, buying one's children stationary for school, for the richer ones; it feeds the family for the poorer ones). Most of those interviewed see no harm, but one richer woman and the tabia leader explain that in the long run regular food aid (which PSNP somewhat institutionalises) is harmful as *'those who had been industrious and self-sufficient people are now developing a culture of dependency'*.

Triangulating interviews and their own observations the research officers are of the opinion that overall, the regular food aid and credit-related food security interventions have failed thus far to increase the asset basis of the community. The PSNP doesn't bring significant change in people's life, although it helps them sustain their lives. For the 'better off' PSNP helps them to maintain their asset basis i.e. they don't have to sell assets or borrow money to purchase food. But the interviews reveal cases of poorer households who, because they are in a cycle of debt in which they have entered for various reasons (including, for some, because of the pressure to take packages on credit), don't use fully their rations to feed the family but use part of it to repay debt. The main issue seems to be that the package and credit programme accompanying the PSNP is failing most people (as noted earlier and also see below).

Credit

There is no culture of equb in Gebelen, and no local savings and credit association.

Since 1995 EC, credit for the regular agricultural package is no longer given by the wereda but by the **micro-finance institution Dedebit** (also called DECSI, largely owned by the regional government). Dedebit also has a group-based lending programme extending loans for any purpose. Dedebit was given the family package programme credit to administer when this was initiated in 1997 EC, as a separate, dedicated scheme, thus expanding access to credit. The group-based modality for regular credit is said to act as a constraint for people who don't have land as those who own land usually don't want to associate with them, and poor people who don't find others to associate with (there is overlap between these two groups of people 'de facto' excluded from the service). In contrast, land as collateral is not needed for the package programme for those who have 'good reputation' and that the kebele administration therefore agrees to let take credit. However, those who take credit under the package or regular agricultural/ livestock extension programmes cannot participate in other micro-credit services. Elderly people are excluded from the package programme.

DECSI is also providing credit for an urban-focused package programme implemented by the wereda Urban Development Office. The programme, quite new, is experiencing difficulties because of low repayment rates. The office is currently working to create model MSEs. This was not mentioned by

anyone in Geblen and it is unlikely that people would have had access to the programme, even though wereda officials explain that it is available for people from rural villages too.

Geblen co-operative also provides credit but many (except the leader) explain that the co-operative is useless/doesn't give service to its members (see below). Yet apparently, at some point people were forced to take fertiliser on credit and this was provided by the co-operative (and related to a big push to get farmers using more fertiliser, provided by a party-related company, in the Region as a whole). A young landless woman was forced to do so – she was threatened to otherwise lose her access to the PSNP – and gave the fertiliser that she couldn't use to her parents.

Tabia officials say that generally the Muslim community in Geblen has become more reluctant to take credit, not because of religious leaders who recognise the economic hardships that everyone faces, but due to the influence of young migrants coming back from Arab countries. However, one Muslim leader interviewed was strongly against the credit policy, saying that it forces people to make sinful acts and should be stopped.

The coercion exercised on people for them to take packages hence credit is deeply resented. Even 11-14 year-old girls (interviewed in a FGD) talked about how taking beehives harmed farmers because of the drought and that the extension agents forced them without considering this. Personal stories show that some people manage to benefit from the loans they take (for instance, very rich households or women household heads had some success with the non-farm activities, engaging in trade or petty trade). Success may require picking and mixing various activities – and the outcome is never guaranteed. For instance one woman (EM) explains that she used the credit partly to buy and rear shoats and partly (including her first earnings from these) to build a 'better house' in Mishig. She was able to repay her loan, is left with only three goats as the others died, but is happy because she has the house (she rents rooms as we saw earlier). Things could have looked quite different if more of her goats had died for instance.

On the whole success seems the exception rather than the rule. For many people, being forced to take credit in years of almost continuous drought was problematic, sometimes disastrous, and at best, not helping. Some comparatively better off people (e.g. one rich and one medium rich male farmers interviewed) explain that they refused to take credit and consider themselves as lucky as they are '*safe from debt*'. In their view '*there will never be a chance for borrowers to be profitable*' because of drought, so people shouldn't borrow. One farmer (DK) is of the very strong view that the package programme must stop otherwise all people in the community will be impoverished. Tabia officials note that bad payments have reached a total of 11 million birrs for the wereda as a whole, and that if the government continues to force packages onto people the whole kebele will end up being unable to repay its debt. They explain that so far Geblen has been good at repayment but this cannot continue. Yet, as reaching the targets for packages is high on the party's priorities tabia officials find it impossible to go against the pressure, even though they privately recognise that they don't believe in the effectiveness of the packages in many cases.

One of the DAs does not agree with this and gives examples of people who benefited from taking credit. But he recognises that this is not the case for everyone (in other meetings with the researchers DAs acknowledged the problems with the packages evoked earlier). In their view, one big issue is when people, particularly youth, migrate with the money that they/their family borrowed and the family is harmed as it cannot repay. The DAs and others in the community believe that the package programme aggravated the migration trend by expanding access to credit, and that as officials realised this they changed the modality for the package programme so that from 2001 onwards the credit was no longer given in cash but in-kind.

Those who are less opposed to the programme explain that it should be redesigned in various ways: lower interest rate, longer repayment/grace period, waiving repayment when there is drought etc.

Co-operatives in Geblen

There is one **multipurpose (Farmers' Association) co-operative** in Geblen, which was res-established in 1996 EC, but according to the wereda officials it is not functional. The reasons are lack of business skills and awareness, and to some extent resistance to working in group. The co-operative leader in Geblen says that they provide their members (249 household members) with sugar, coffee etc., or grain, cement and fertiliser on credit. They get credit with no interest from the government and can help their members with fair prices. However, he explains that it is risky for it to lend to members because they don't repay easily, and the co-operative needs more support from NGOs and the government.

Members of the community say that the co-operative is not successful as it lacks financial power. There are conflicts between members indebted to the co-operative, and the co-operative leaders. In the in-depth interviews most farmers found the co-operative useless. Members pay but it is bankrupt. One farmer said he heard that someone stole the money, so it was only a loss to them. He explained that this cannot change except if the kebele chairman makes it to be audited and the wereda follows up effectively how it functions. The DA suggests that it could be successful if it used its capital (12,000 birrs) to engage into profitable business like transporting and distributing oranges.

In the wereda as a whole various types of co-operatives (70, multiservice and focusing on various production activities) have been established since 1995 EC, with varying success. In Geblen at this time only one production co-operative exists, the youth honey production co-operative established in 2000. But it was not successful thus far because of drought. Women were offered to participate but refused because beekeeping is considered to be male work and they could not go against norms acceptable to the community, and the kebele administration also did not encourage them. Some farmers complained because they could no longer use the communal land given for this, for grazing.

Farmers' Training Centre, models, and Development Agents

Some farmers explain that they benefited from various training given at the FTC. DAs explain that the FTC is not fully functional and it needs materials, a showroom, a workshop and a water tank. Also the wereda should deliver on their promises like cement for the household ponds. But the main issue in relation to the introduction of new technologies is the lack of water and of rain.

On their side wereda officials explain that people in Geblen are reluctant not due to lack of understanding but lack of commitment, and this is partly due to the weakness of the DAs in this kebele (which in turn and as we explain later, may be linked to their lack of motivation – both are in Geblen as the result of being demoted from elsewhere). Resistance to credit is increasing. Another challenge is the youth lack of skills to engage in non-farm income generating activities.

More is said on models and DAs in the 'field of ideas' section.

Non-farm activities

Other livelihood options in Geblen (or strategies combined with the farming ones and PSNP evoked above) include non-/off-farm activities, resettlement, migration, and daily labour.

Some people borrowing for **non-farm projects** benefit, others not. A rich man says he became richer – he doesn't say how exactly, but he already had a good income from his grinding mill. A woman of middle wealth took money to open a tea shop and doesn't complain. But another woman who took credit to start selling tella and was in a group with a defaulter and was made to pay for this had to sell her goats to repay for the defaulter. A man who gave money to his son was in trouble as he spent it on unnecessary things. Some people in the community believe that non-farm packages are more successful as noted earlier, but it also is very early to tell as in most cases people have established these activities fairly recently.

Resettlement to Humera was offered as an option to people from the wereda between 1995 and 1997 EC. After this the programme was stopped as regional authorities indicated that the land had become over-exploited. Geblen was allocated a quota of 100 households that could opt to resettle. Wereda and kebele officials explain that very few people went. There was high resistance because, according to tabia leader, people feared malaria and there was no tradition of migrating eastward/in lowlands (people used to go southward in the Region or even in other Regions). So finally, only 9 households registered and from these only 3 actually went. They did well, but still come back half of the year and keep their land in Geblen. So the other potential benefit from the resettlement programme has also not materialised: land from the farmers who resettled has been redistributed yet - although the kebele chairman said they have a plan to do this.

Many people say today that they regret that they didn't take their chance in 1997 EC, like this respondent who had resettled in 1977 EC, came back under family pressure but did not find land in Geblen, and yet did not want to move again in 1997. He was hoping that conditions in Geblen might improve but that didn't happen and now he would go if the option was offered again. Other interviewees said that they would go now too, if they were offered the chance – for similar reasons: lack of progress in trying to 'make it' in Geblen.

Migration is said to be on the increase (see above, in relation to the youth) and individual stories vary a lot. Motivations include drought and people giving up hope on agricultural activities, failure in one's education, lack of gainful employment opportunities and of land for the youth. Even government employees are dissatisfied with their living conditions and may resort to migrate, like one female teacher whose husband is still teaching in Geblen. She migrated to the United Arab Emirates leaving her daughter with her husband, paid 10,000 birrs to the agents facilitating the migration, successfully settled and began to send remittances.

Young men used to migrate to Eritrea where they could learn better skills (e.g. as construction workers) and also were better paid. Since the war with Eritrea and the closure of the border, migration to Humera for seasonal work and to Arab countries for longer periods of time has become more common. For Humera, some people say that it is not a good calculation as the money brought back is not much and one gets back sick (see the case of the young man who got malaria) and it would be better to resettle there. But this option is no longer available as noted above.

Migration to Arab countries is undertaken by young women who go to work as housemaids or commercial sex workers. Migration to Yemen and Saudi Arabia is illegal and dangerous and can fail – like this young woman who travelled on foot and on a small and overloaded boat through Djibouti and Yemen to get to Saudi Arabia and was caught immediately and deported back to Addis after 20 days in prison. She spent 10,000 birrs on this failed attempt. She still plans to try again, in UAE this time, once she will have made enough money from working on different jobs in the towns around Geblen. Migration to the UAE is legal.

Reportedly, only few migrants send remittances – women seem to be better than men at this. People talk about young women sending 500 birrs or up to 800 birrs; one man explained that his daughter is sending 1,000 birrs annually, which is making a big difference in the household's income and livelihood. People like the kebele chairman rather highlight that most migrants return unsuccessfully from migration. When people have migrated once they often want to try again, like the woman above, and/or they want to live in towns, like this man who returned from Saudi Arabia and is now living in Adigrat and has divorced from his wife because he didn't want to return to Geblen, allegedly for better work opportunities in Adigrat (but he had also engaged in a relationship with a returnee migrant woman).

Daily labour is important for many, and earnings have gone up. When it is paid cash the PSNP rates (6 birrs/ day in 1997 EC, 10 birrs/day in 2001 EC) are the lowest and considerably lower than some other opportunities - although the PSNP is an important source of food/income for many. Opportunities other than the PSNP include other FFW schemes, usually smaller-scale and shorter-

term, like ADCS-financed road construction/maintenance or ADCS or REST-financed spring development. E.g. 50 young people were employed in 1997 for the construction of a water structure/spring development and water tank in Welaalabur, and paid 10 birrs/day then. NGO projects can benefit up to 200 people involved in the construction or in bringing stones on donkeys' back (they were paid 25 birrs a trip in 2001). People working on Gunda Gundo monastery orange farms (6 hours walk on foot) were paid 30 birrs/ day and a meal in 2000. The grinding mills (three in Geblen) employ 3 people each, earning up to 300 birrs/month (in 1998). One rich household head mentions that wage rates increased from 7-10 birrs to 20-25 birrs a day in 2001, linked to inflation. Others mention similar figures. Skilled/semi-skilled labour is paid higher rates, like this young landless man engaged in quarry work (outside of Geblen) and earning 40 birrs a day as stone chiseller.

But daily labour also fluctuates. E.g. that young man saw his income from his work in the quarry go down in 2000 and 2001, which he linked to the effect of inflation on the construction market. In 2002 he was using his daily labour income (better again) to repay the credit he took for livestock under the package programme.

Some educated people from Geblen are employed in government jobs. Two young women are teachers elsewhere; one male graduate is now teaching in Mekele University and helping with his siblings' education. But not everyone succeeds with education. There are many concerns about this and unemployment of educated young people generally. One woman explains that her daughter, who has graduated one year ago still has no employment thus far, which in her view defeats the main purpose of getting an education that is, making a big difference in one's life (see below).

Human re/production

Housing and consumption goods

For some households (many but not all of them, young) the houses in which they live in Mishig, the new and growing 'almost small town' of Geblen, are fairly different from those in which they grew up. Corrugated iron sheet roofs, plastered walls, access to electricity with even TV in some bars for entertaining the clients, are a fair way from the traditional homestead. Several of the interviewees, women especially, mentioned their or their children's desire to move to Mishig (the small town) in a better house. As we saw earlier, for one woman her better house is her only and much valued asset. This trend goes together with that of an increasing number of government workers living in the kebele who can also rent rooms in Mishig, and when they are single and male, take their breakfasts in one of the small teashops.

The sanitation package is meant to bring a number of changes in all types of houses, such as separate rooms for humans and animals and for the kitchen, latrines and waste disposal systems. In the in-depth interviews all respondents said they had been taught about this and that they had implemented some or all of this. One poor woman said there was no change, because '*no money no change*' – though she also said that they had built a toilet and this was only a start, and that they were trying to use soap but it was expensive. It is notable that whilst Mishig represents progress for a number of people from the community, the research team observed that the houses there did not have latrines. Their practice of throwing waste away (instead of placing them in a waste place and burning them as per the HEP 'model') is recognised as an issue as it leads to contaminating water in a water structure built nearby.

For **fuel** some people say that they use gas (meaning kerosene) because the government has outlawed wood cutting since one year (with the zero-grazing programme), and it is problematic as gas is becoming more expensive. One woman says she uses wood from fences. Others say that they continue to use wood as before but it is becoming scarce.

Drinking water

Most households in Geblen don't have access to drinking water. As explained earlier there have been a few spring development and rock catchment construction. The wereda linked an NGO, the Adigrat Diocese Catholic Secretariat/ADCS, and the kebele administration which together with the community selected the priorities. Many more such projects are needed in the views of all those interviewed in Geblen. There is a big difference for those who live nearby a water structure and the others. Those with access are concerned that water should be protected (including against people's carelessness) and explain that currently the capacity is not sufficient to last for the whole year. Those who don't have access want more water structures to be built. One woman, who believes that only 10% of the community gets pure drinking water, walks to Marwa (a neighbouring tabia) to get water but sometime people refuse to give her.

The HEW notes that water borne diseases have worsened since the 2001 (EC) drought. She advises farmers to boil water but they don't do it. Moreover, lack of water may be a disincentive for skilled workers to come/stay in the kebele. Even the health post to this day doesn't have water – though a project funded by World Vision is just starting to address this. In her view the wereda administration should put more priority on the provision of safe water, or more NGOs should come and help, though people too should be more willing to do something on their own. One wereda official mentioned an idea of supplying Geblen with drinking water through piping water from Hadush Hiwot, a tabia located at approximately 10 kms from Welaalebur and well-endowed in drinking water thanks to deep wells dug with NGO support – though this sounds quite ambitious and would not, anyway, solve the issue for people living in the far away kushets of Geblen.

Health

All HEWs were trained for **malaria** detection by the wereda in 2000 EC. Malaria cases are reported annually but several respondents (including wereda officials) explained that there is no malaria in Geblen and people affected contract it elsewhere (e.g. in Humera or one student in Arba Minch most likely). So members of the community are not impressed with things like the anti-malaria door-to-door spraying campaign organised by the wereda in 2001. Tabia officials explain that it was useful as other pests disappeared, and people became convinced once they were explained that it was not bad for the bees.

Other **diseases** most commonly reported in Geblen are water borne diseases and they have become more frequent and more severe. There is a peak in September to November in particular. Since 1997 EC there are cases of **diarrheal** necessitating treatment at the health centre in Adikelembes (including cases of amoeba). These are linked to both, people using unsafe water, and water in the existing structures not being well protected and becoming contaminated. Other illnesses reported are epilepsy, toothaches, headaches, cold, cough, flu, dust-provoked problems (eyes), skin rash, pneumonia and a number of unknown illnesses which were variably treated and cured.

HIV/AIDS is *'not a big issue for people in Geblen'* but there are three people living with HIV/AIDS who having declared it have access to treatment. The HEW and the kebele administration suspect three other people to be infected but they don't declare themselves. Most respondents reported that they are aware of the disease and that the teaching about it is a good thing. But the anti-HIV/AIDS club is said not to be effective. People have started taking VCT tests and notable people give the example, like the head of the WA (who is also health promoter) and kebele officials (VCT tests are at times organised when they have a meeting, with the nurse from Adikelembes health centre coming for this) – and some of them said they want their children to do so too and will advise them, but on the whole the awareness creation activities and VCT service are not very effective. There is a rule (said to have been passed by Muslim religious leaders in Geblen in 1995, and promoted by NGOs and wereda and kebele administrations) that people cannot marry without having taken VCT tests but it is said not to be enforced. Tabia officials reckon that only 3% of people

marry after conducting VCT. According to them awareness of HIV/AIDS is still very low, especially among men.

Most people – especially the young people – have unsafe sex practices and in addition, it is customary in Geblen to have several sex partners. Some people say that the HIV/AIDS training should be strengthened so that people become convinced to take VCT – for instance, one of the men interviewed said he had participated to the training several times but had never taken the VCT test.

Access to **curative services** is easier than in the past with the health centre in Adikelembes (constructed in 1998 EC) and some first aid treatment given by the HEW since 2000 (gauze, iodine, scissors, ORS and anti-malaria medicines). Before this, people would go to Edaga Hamus or Adigrat when they would seek modern treatment. Wereda officials explain that following the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) they have introduced 24 hours service in the health centres (in 2001 EC) but there are unresolved issues as staff shortage means staff should have to work long hours. People in Geblen have recently decided to contribute for the services of the Red Cross ambulance. In 2001 a man slipping from a cliff was injured, the ambulance came from Edaga Hamus in less than 30 min and took him to Adigrat hospital where his life was saved.

Most people in Geblen seem to have had good experiences of using curative services in Adikelembes health centre or Adigrat hospital – although not everyone (see below), and there are also reports of bad treatment/lack of cooperation for those coming for free services.

People note the high costs entailed (*‘as far as it is concerned it is a good beginning, but it is a matter of money – if you have money you will get it easily’*). Among the respondents in the in-depth interviews several people say they first use traditional treatment like herbal remedies, and go to the health centre in case it gets serious – and may have to borrow to do this. Or they get discouraged by the distance (especially those living in the far away kushets) and so do not visit except when it is serious. Calling on traditional healers is not encouraged. The HEW and health promoter say that they do not have relationships with them. One person identified as a traditional medicine practitioner was unwilling to be interviewed – he was said to be accused to be a witch by kebele officials. But people use holy water and sometimes return to this and other traditional means when modern medicine services did not cure their problem, or use holy water for cases that they know modern medicine can do nothing about (like GM’s sister who is deaf from birth). One woman explains that she gave holy water and killed a lamb for her daughter to be cured and she got better and was able to go back to school – her daughter explains that she took holy water but also visited the health centre in Adigrat.

One household has a relative who is bed-ridden for the last four years. For GM and MU’s daughter there was a protracted and costly process of finding what the illness was.

She is a university student and because of her illness she had dropped-out. The information that her parents first got from the doctors was not relevant. She has been told that it was a *kidney* and *hepatic* problem but it was totally different – she actually had malaria. Before finding this out she was recommended to take 15 injections, two kinds of syrup, and two kinds of tablets and five litres of holy water per day. This all was given for nothing. Her parents spent a lot of money for her check-ups, which was really unsuccessful. Finally, they went to the Adigrat hospital. She was ‘seen in the computer screen [the physician examined her with the support of ultrasound]’. Then she was given medicines for malaria. She improved. As far as her mother is concerned, she says one has to see the change since the beginnings. But there could be so many things to be improved. Doctors don’t take their responsibility seriously and they felt very insecure with all these different kinds of medicine.

With regard to **sanitation and preventive health**, HEWs were deployed in all villages in the wereda in 1997 EC. In Geblen the HEW is helped by 13 health promoters who are also active in relation to nutrition issues and whom NGOs trained for six months in 2002 EC (in Wukro, another wereda). One of the interviewees from the community is a health promoter and she likes her work and is happy to

see changes, but she thinks the workload is huge and would like a salary. Since 2001 they organise experience-sharing events among sub-kebele.

Wereda officials are concerned that the kebele administration must give better support, as *'the community has still a curative mind'*. Indeed, informants from the community deplore the lack of curative services at the health post, which they say is harmful. In 2000 the HEW had to clash with the kebele leader about the vaccination campaign schedule, but she was given reason by the wereda and their relationship is better now.

Tabia officials appreciated the provision of tablets to clean the drinking water structures and springs which the wereda supplied in 1999 EC. They would like tablets to be sent more regularly and people should be educated to keep the water sites clean. One man said that the dry waste dumped at the back of Mishig village should be buried. With regard to the **household extension package** Geblen is a model kebele: 100% households graduated for the HEP in 2001 EC. Wereda officials and the HEW agree that there is commitment to implement the HEP but lack of drinking water is a serious issue. So for instance, 381 washing hand rooms were constructed in 2001 EC but lack of water is defeating these efforts. Generally the HEW explains that farmers have a good attitude to the HEP and interviews suggest that people usually know well and even appreciate the measures promoted. But even the HEW is not sure about the extent to which the different measures are being practised in reality.

Wereda officials explain that in Geblen all households have constructed a **latrine**. The programme started in 1997 and that year, community members say that 40 latrines were built with slabs given by the wereda. Tabia officials explain that the community also constructed latrines in churches and mosques in 1998 EC, with the participation of 100 people from each kushet. This was very hard work because of the rocky soil. The programme was then 'strengthened' in 2001 EC. A 'rule' came down from the wereda (officials indeed say that it was made compulsory), and households lacking labour force (30 in the community) were supported to dig their latrine. People note that the wereda failed to provide slabs or cement as promised. The HEW explains that people were also convinced through experience-sharing visits. There is no agreement as to whether people use the latrines that they have built or not. Wereda and tabia officials believe that the use is still low. The researchers noted that most of the houses in Mishig don't have latrines, even though they couldn't find anyone to interview who would admit not having one or having refused – but tabia officials explain that this is because Mishig is located on a gigantic rock base which prevents digging. The HEW who goes door to door believes that 90% of the households use their latrine.

With regard to **nutrition**, besides the PSNP and emergency food aid in some years, different kinds of nutritious food are provided for selected undernourished under-five children and pregnant and lactating women, depending on the severity of the cases. Beneficiaries are selected through nutritional status assessments based on measuring arms and wrist circumferences, which were done biannually since 1997 EC and have been done four times a year in 2002. This is funded by WFP and Unicef and organised by the wereda and kebele administrations and the HEW. Wereda officials explain that Geblen is one of the villages with a large number of undernourished children getting support: 70 children out of 170 according to the tabia leader and HEW. In addition there also is some support through an OTP programme by World Vision, for 9 children. They also trained the HEW.

Wereda officials explain that transportation is an issue, and follow up is required. They and the tabia officials and HEW note that the community complains that every child should benefit. There are conflicts between the kebele committee selecting the children based on the assessment and families of excluded children. The HEW notes that the programme creates jealousy and dependency – with families not feeding their child well so she/he gets in the programme. The interviews show that the programme can include children from rich families (if their condition is poor) while children from poor families may be excluded. People complain (about selection, exclusion when the child improves, and that all children should benefit). One person (a poor man whose child started

benefitting in 2001) says that *'aid never brings change in our life in the long run'*, and the community should rather use family planning. As noted earlier, several respondents who have children benefiting from the programme say that they share the food supplement among all household members, explaining that they are all malnourished.

Family planning is in place in Geblen since a long time. Most of the community informants show good awareness of the various contraceptive means, and say that they found the 'teaching' on family planning useful/important. Pills and injections have been available for some time, and pills can be given by health promoters. Their use is increasing, albeit slowly: the kebele leader believes not more than 5% of the woman use pills (including his wife). Women who live in the far away kushets find it discouraging to have to walk all the distance regularly to the health post to get these. Implants are available since 2001 EC and the HEW has been trained to place them (by Pathfinder). The health promoter interviewed said she can teach women about the benefits and explain how it works etc. Wereda officials explain that this should make it easier as women have to go much less often to get contraceptives – so it is also less problematic if their husband doesn't agree. Implants begin to be used. The HEW and health promoter say there are 22 women who use it and of these 12 with the consent of their husband. Another 23 women use other means.

But overall, one of the health promoters explains that *'most people in Geblen are not using contraceptives'*. Our interviews of community members suggest that indeed the picture is mixed, at best. The health workers give the example of a blind woman who recently had her 6th child. The researcher also interviewed a woman who had had five children from several men – and she is another of the health promoters. In the households interviewed (all with six children and more), quite a few people admit not to use or have used the advice that they were given, for various reasons including 'laziness' or not knowing what one's husband thinks and for some, the fact that contraception is sinful or they are not sure if it is or not. For some households it was too late anyway (e.g. *'the training came when I had already had an unplanned family'*). One woman explained that she has two children and not more because she is using contraceptives: she is the one who resettled in Edaga Hamus. Among five other respondents interviewed specifically on family planning, one poor woman used pills and currently an implant as she doesn't want many children because the family is poor. One poor man was educated about the benefits along with more than 400 farmers, but he has 11 children. One poor man returning from migration says he doesn't care and his wife doesn't get pregnant because she is under-nourished. One poor woman says she regrets she has a large family because of poverty but she doesn't know about family planning. Religious leaders interviewed don't oppose to it but the Muslim leader was not willing to talk much about the issue and the Orthodox Christian leader stated that he didn't know much about whom from the community follows the advice and who doesn't.

This slow progress is mainly due to high resistance among men and persistent beliefs according to tabia officials and the HEW (e.g. that contraception makes people sterile, or that injections give HIV/AIDS). As men are still reluctant only 1/3rd of the women having adopted some contraception have done so with the knowledge of their partner. The kebele leader explains that the sign that family planning education has not succeeded thus far is that the *'birth rate is still increasing in the kebele'*. More awareness-raising is needed, like for HIV/AIDS. However, our interviews also suggest that beyond the reasons that they evoked, the women themselves may not always be convinced.

Wereda officials explain that since 2000 EC nurses are assigned in high schools to teach about family planning, reproductive health etc. and for first aid. There is no secondary school in Geblen but a number of children attend the school in Adikelembes, Edaga Hamus or Adigrat where they are in principle exposed to this education too. There too, there is some evidence that this teaching is not always listened to (e.g. the 9th grade young woman getting pregnant while studying, and returning to live with her mother in Geblen). It is not clear that any family planning education is provided in primary school. Yet, given that many girls reach puberty while still at that level they are similarly at

risk of unwanted pregnancies (see the case of IIA and DE's 6th daughter – 6th grade, getting pregnant and having to stop too).

Wereda officials explain that with the construction of health posts and deployment of HEWs in all villages (started in 1998 EC) it is easier for women to get **pregnancy and childbirth services**. Yet, awareness of the benefit of delivery at the health post is still low. Also, antenatal care (ANC) skills of the HEWs need to be improved, to deal with complications in delivery. The HEW in Geblen explains that she could start follow-up of pregnant women and simple delivery services in 2000 EC as the health post received the necessary equipment from the wereda (including a bed, forceps, a blood pressure gauge, a stethoscope and iron tablets) and she attended a three-month training programme for midwives in Edaga Hamus and Mekele.

However, the distance to the health post is a disincentive for women who don't take advantage of these services as well as others such as children and women vaccination. Follow-up at home as suggested by some women is difficult: there only is one HEW for the moment, and distances between homesteads are considerable. The HEW says that 60% of women get some follow-up and 30% deliver with assistance and that Geblen is a model kebele in this respect. But she is concerned by her lack of skills in cases of complications. She says that there is not enough medicine and ANC kits. She wants more ANC skill training. Also delivery at night is impossible (no light), and women still deliver at home as *'they are shy to deal with the HEW'*. We have seen that there may also be cases of husbands not letting their wives see a health worker for anything.

Interviews of community members suggest that some women take advantage of the services but others are discouraged by the distance. Some people also say that they didn't get the service they were looking for (e.g. one man came to get tablets to stop his wife's delivery but these were not available at the health post) and this is a disincentive for them to try again another time. Several women simply say that they 'delivered ok' at home so far. But one man lost his wife in 2000, she had attended the follow up at the health post but delivered at home because of the distance, and she died of excessive bleeding whilst being assisted by traditional midwives. GM and ZMU lost their child while she was delivering at home (it would have been their 7th). On the other hand, one rich man explains that he plans to take his pregnant wife to deliver at the health centre as two years before she delivered at home and the baby died. Two of the interviewees had delivered at the health post and found this and the follow-up good. People suggest that the HEW should do follow up door-to-door, a health centre should be built in Geblen, a professional midwife should be assigned at health post, and transport should be organised for women living in the remote kushets of the tabia.

Vaccination for pregnant women started in 1995 EC though wereda officials recognise that there can be shortage of vaccine, which is confirmed by the HEW in Geblen. They also started to give vitamin A tablets to under-five children and mothers in 2002 EC. The HEW believes that only a few people living in remote parts of the kebele have not benefited.

As can be understood from above, the **health extension worker** has a lot of responsibility. There is only one HEW in Geblen for the time being, instead of two as per the policy/in other kebeles. This is a big issue as she cannot cover everything and in particular, it restricts the door-to-door service she can give. She is in Geblen since 1998 EC. She is not from Geblen, she is married and lives with her small daughter in Geblen but her husband lives elsewhere and they hardly meet as she has too much work. She was trained as Grade 10 plus a few months of education as an HEW. She *'likes her job very much'* but wants to quit for many reasons, including lack of water, lack of education and promotion/move opportunities in spite of the wereda officials' promises, overwork (she works 16 hours a day, there is no break even on Saturdays and Sundays and when she takes a break the work accumulates) and lack of proper supervision, for which *'the wereda is liable'*. There is no acknowledgement for the hard work and nobody who provides support. *'When I looked for a job this was the only one, but if there was any other I wouldn't be here'*. She is paid 550 birrs per month which is *'not reasonable'* for the hard work needed. Her ambition is to go back home and work in her

area living with her family – her daughter needs to live with her dad. She also wants to pursue her education and improve in her profession.

Education

Wereda officials note that education is a high priority in the wereda as a whole, which achieved 85% of its plan. However, they face a shortage of teachers and budget even though the wereda allocated 59% of its 25 million birrs budget to education in 2002 EC. The community in Geblen is very committed to contribute money for school improvement and more high school students come from Geblen. Community notables too note that the education level of the community is increasing and the community is keen on education generally. People had remained uneducated for a long time because of the war between the Derg and TPLF but in 2002 EC *'almost all children in the kebele are going to school'* and *'at this time, even the smallest children like their schools and do not want to stay at home'*. There was a big expansion of **primary education** provision – with 3 schools in 2002 EC whilst until four years back there was only one Grade 1-6 school, and no school at all in the tabia fifteen years ago. There is greater proximity of **secondary education** with the opening of Grade 9 in Adikelembes (45 min walk from Mishig), and Grade 10 next year. Some parents then make a lot of sacrifices to support their children's **higher education** (senior secondary, university): so today (2010), children from more than 5 families of Geblen have joined university. The researchers couldn't find anyone opposed to education.

Tabia officials explain that the expansion of Geblen primary school to Grade 8 in 1998 EC was achieved through coordinating UNICEF and community resources. This benefits everyone. There was a (yet unresolved) conflict with a farmer who didn't have land certificate for the land taken and that he claims was his. They also constructed two primary schools in remote kushets, through community labour. This helps smaller children to go to schools nearer to their places. There was some resistance due to the hard work entailed, and as it was not paid/not under PSNP the quality of buildings is not good. The schools need qualified teachers too.

One measure adopted in 2001 EC was to make Grade 7 and 8 full day (this had initially been proposed and rejected a first time by the kebele council the year before – fieldwork 2007 GC). The head teacher says that teachers' attendance is poorer than that of students, but students may drop out when they face economic problems. The number of such dropouts has increased since 2000. In 2001 there were 15 dropouts and 10 in 2002 although four have now returned. Wereda officials mention that in the wereda there is a school meal programme in five schools since 2001 and one of the schools of Geblen (in Irata kushet) is part of the programme. This is successful in decreasing dropouts but should be expanded to many more schools as *'there are many more poor people who are lacking resources to educate their children.'*

People from the community all said that access to full **primary education** in the locality/closer (with the satellite schools in the remote kushets) was a great progress. They, school staff and students themselves have high hopes and expectations (parents hope that children will get educated, get employment and be able to help their parents financially; teachers say that educated children will be able to lead a better life and help the kebele to get out of poverty; students like BK want to join university and indeed talk about helping their relatives once they have a good job) but they are all similarly concerned by the quality of education in the primary schools of Geblen as this is the key for them to be able to progress higher up in the system. And so there are concerns about lack of electricity (parents and students alike – the latter explain that because of this they don't have access to plasma lessons like in the neighbouring school in Adikelembes), lack of school meal which would help students to concentrate (parents); low education quality, lack of water and separate latrines, the incomplete pedagogical centre (teachers); poor facilities at the school – the water in the reservoir doesn't last more than four months and is not safe (students). Parents, school staff and tabia officials alike are most concerned by the issue of shortage of qualified teachers. In the in-depth interviews one mother explains that one of her children has not attended schools since several

months due to there not being a teacher and another explains that the school had to arrange the first two grades in one class. Parents also raise issues of costs, direct (like the school materials which they think the government should provide, and uniforms which one poor father think children should be exempted from, as this is too expensive) and indirect and especially the cost of foregoing children's labour (e.g. to herd for the boys, help their mother at home for the girls).

The main and oldest school in Geblen is a full eight grade one. It is well maintained, classes and compound are clean, with flowers and trees in the compound, outer walls covered with neat drawings and pictures, but too few chairs and desks and a shortage of blackboards, books and educational materials, office space, and water – although one teacher says that lately there has been improvement with regard to educational materials.

The head teacher says that the PTA is effective, the community tries to help in all manners, and payments are based on the families' economic status. The interviews show that everyone contributes including people who don't have children at school – which some young household heads don't find fair but generally people say that they are happy to contribute to the school.

The **head teacher** (female) is new in Geblen. She is married and has three children but has been detached from her husband for the past 4 years. She wants this to change and to be able to live with her family. She wants to pursue further education (she already got several opportunities so from TTI upgraded to diploma then degree level and also took various trainings on education issues). This school, she says, is less good than the previous one that she was heading, which had '*better budget, facilities and teachers*'. She is paid 1,617 birr and is not satisfied because it should be 1,935 birrs but wereda officials respond that there is no budget when she complains. The researcher who interviewed her observed that she is not willing to stay in the kebele.

One of the **teachers** was interviewed too. He is from Gulomekeda; he graduated from Axum University (summer programme) in 2000 and also studied arts in Mekele. He explains that teachers are not motivated because the workload is high and the pay not much, and they don't get promotion. Yet in 1999/00 they were able to make the school stand first in the wereda. He has a kid who lives with his grand-mother in Hawzien wereda (in the same zone). Personally he is not satisfied with the job mainly because he wants to be an artist and also because of the low salary.

There is no **secondary school** in Geblen. A new high school has opened in the neighbouring village/kebele. The tabia leader says that this is a very good thing as previously families had to afford costs of rent, food and transport to send their children farther away, in Edaga Hamus, Freweini or Adigrat. Indeed except for two of them, parents interviewed explained that having this access nearby is great. Children can stay with their family which cuts costs down and is especially useful for girls. (One man explained that his children are in Adigrat with their uncle who is a civil servant and this is convenient for him as he doesn't have to spend resources on them; for another, his daughter is in Gr10 and the school in Adikelembes doesn't offer Gr10 yet so she is in Edaga Hamus). However, the school in Adikelembes is still very far (3 hours walk) for some kushets so students have no time to study/help their parents. Some students do actually rent rooms in Adikelembes. So, even today, many students pass with good grades but drop after Grade 8. Yet the wereda doesn't have an idea of opening a secondary school in Geblen as they say children can attend in Adikelembes.

Tabia officials and community members alike would like a secondary school to be built in Geblen too. In the meantime the current school should be improved. It should have desks (community people), be expanded to Grade 12 and have qualified teachers (tabia leader), and include preparatory and technical education to offer more possibilities for children to continue because when children have to go somewhere else to do this many drop their education and remain at home, or migrate elsewhere (teacher).

Quality of education (in both primary and secondary schools) is a concern, strongly expressed by the primary school teachers and shared by some parents (e.g. one woman explained that her Grade 6

daughter cannot identify the letters of the English alphabet) and the children themselves. A group of boys (15-19) highlights the low quality of education as a major issue, due to lack of qualified teachers and school materials. Due to this many Grade 10 students fail and cannot continue their education. One young woman explains that this is 'the worst part' as it means they have no other option but staying at home. It also undermines the motivation of the younger ones in lower grades to work hard. One woman also explains that as many children fail the Gr10 exams parents may feel it's not useful to send them to school and *'if there is not enough employment opportunities going to school may be costly and waste of time.'*

With regard to opportunities to continue after Grade 10, a **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)** school started in Edaga Hamus in 1998, but there are barriers on access as places are restricted. One woman from Geblen whose daughter had completed Gr 10 but had not been able to join TVET explained that it should be expanded so as to offer opportunities for a larger number of students. Otherwise parents, who have sent children to school to get their support, fail to get this. The teachers interviewed noted that TVET courses should consider local employment opportunities as otherwise graduates fail to be employed and can't help their parents.

Before 1990 EC there was only one man from Geblen who had completed high school, in Mekele. Now he is a teacher and is working as an educated man. These days according to the tabia leader more than 5 farmers from Geblen have children who joined **universities**. Researchers found four people who had one or more child having completed or undertaken university education (and no-one with a child who had completed Grade 12 and wouldn't have continued further). Those whose children had completed were happy because they had jobs (at Mekele university/in the region), and one had started helping his sister. However, people from the community are concerned by the high rate of unemployment, like the woman whose child is still at university and one teacher (*'parents are spending lots of money and energy in sending their children to school but it is not rewarding as lots of students fail'* and *'there might be high unemployment if lots of students graduate every year'*). Parents suffer to meet the costs especially when students are sent outside of Region. There also other barriers and so, one teacher in Geblen noted that only 5-6 students from the wereda join university annually, which is small considering the number of high school students.

There is contradictory information on Alternative Basic Education (ABE) for children. Kebele officials say that this never existed in Geblen. A few community members mention some temporary provision, from 1997 to 1999 EC. Facilitators were Gr7 students paid through the PSNP. One woman's son attended and then transferred to the formal education system. There also was an attempt at starting some form of pre-school, building on a tradition of religious education for young children. In 2001 about twenty under-7 children attended such school for a while. It was more like a day care centre as there was no specialised teacher, but someone who had been hired by the community and was paid a mix of cash and kind. Lack of water at school is even more of an issue with those small children, but pre-school is said to be good because children get used to school earlier. However, this initiative did not continue as the 'teacher' left the job after a few months.

There has been an **adult basic education** evening programme organised in 2000, to which 30-40 people in each kushet are said to have registered, but this did not last for long and only few people (10%) completed the training. People from the community explain that there was lack of commitment and a lot of pressure from the wereda for farmers to enrol. There are some who think that such education enables better leadership (and so the kushets led by people who attended the programme are better off) and that it enables people to become model farmer/implement government policies better because of one's better understanding. For adults/working farmers there are also many training programmes given on various issues, in the kebele and by the workers posted there (on family planning, sanitation etc. by the HEW; on compost preparation, bee-keeping etc. by the DAs) or by people coming from outside (e.g. on HIV/AIDs in 1998 for 443 people including 247 women). People from Geblen also go to the wereda centre or sometimes Adigrat or even Mekele

(e.g. training on women and children's rights for the elders elected on the kebele 'peace committee' established in 2000 organised by the Regional Ombudsman).

The above suggests a picture clearer than with health. The expansion of education facilities in Geblen or nearby, providing more affordable access up to the 10th grade, is greeted with enthusiasm. Parents are committed to educate their children and children are eager to study – though in poorer families they may experience a sense of discrimination and find it hard to cope physically (hunger). There is a mix of high hope (of a better life for the children themselves and of them supporting the family/their parents and siblings once they are educated and get a job) and concern, about the prospect of lack of return to education – if students fail/can't go for higher education - and about unemployment once they graduate. The restricted opportunities for 10th grade students emerge as a particular salient issue for the community, and one which it is not clear, from interviews at wereda level, that it is seen as such by the government.

Social re/production

People in Geblen not only invest in their livelihoods and families; they spend considerable time, material resources and energy constructing, reproducing and changing community-initiated social institutions, relationships, networks and organisations. One function of these is to provide social protection to those in need for shorter and longer periods. Geblen residents are also (differentially) involved in externally-initiated organisations such as schools, health centres, and kebele structures creating webs of interactions, communication and shared knowledge linking 'community' and 'government'. (See next section)

In Tigray generally, families of TPFL freedom fighters and other soldiers killed in wars (e.g. the Ethio-Eritrean war) benefit from special attention in community level **support mechanisms** lying at the boundary between government intervention and community initiative. So in Geblen in 1995 EC the kebele administration mobilised farmers (labour, oxen to plough) to help these families in their farming. This is a rule put in place in the Region since the revolution, but community members say that these 'activities lack consistency', and it's not clear in what form if any this is continuing these days. These families used to have access to free services like food aid, free medical services and other public services. As noted earlier, the provision of free medical care continues. With the introduction of the PSNP these families do no longer get food aid separately but are given priority in the programme (as it lasts only six months one soldier's widow explained that that they should get both). Demobilised soldiers have a pension but they were not given land when they came back from conscription from the war against Eritrea – because of the general land shortage in the kebele.

Community members generally note that customary **common agricultural labour** in Geblen (e.g. labour contribution in groups rotating among farms) has disappeared. *'These days everybody prefers to work by himself rather than doing things with others'* says one; *'It is more effective if one does one's own job'* says another. One person also notes that there is actually *'competition for the narrow chance of job opportunities offered by NGOs or government programmes'*. Support in form of labour still occurs but seems to be more occasional, like the case of sixteen people constructing the house of a poor elderly woman, or a man helping his neighbour whose son was sick at the time of harvest. People may also organise groups for things like chasing the baboons attacking the crops.

Most people interviewed explain that **relatives and neighbours** matter a lot: *'People in Geblen have strong relationships with neighbour, family, relatives'*. Wereda officials too note that there is a *'strong tradition of supporting the poor in Geblen'*.

Neighbours and relatives help each other to sustain drought, like in 2001 EC. Part of this support is in the form of loans, for instance one very poor young woman with a young children had to *'borrow from neighbours for their food'* for the past three years. As we have seen earlier, the PSNP has become 'integrated' in the customary social protection mechanisms: people participating in the programme find it easier to borrow from relatives or friends when they need to do so, on account

that they will be able to repay their debt when they will receive their PSNP ration. For the poor people PSNP represents collateral. But for some poor households, the PSNP, even with the addition of the emergency programme implemented in some years and through which a few more members will 'benefit', is not sufficient to lift them out of a cycle of borrowing for food from various sources, like MZ. Moreover, MZ clearly feels under pressure to repay what he has borrowed from his father and father-in-law so borrowing even from relatives is not an 'easy option', even though he also believes that if his relatives would not let him down if things were getting worse, for instance if the kebele administration was coming to arrest him for repayment failure under the package programme. Family networks are important in other ways, like in the cases of educated people from Geblen helping their younger siblings or parents, a grand-daughter helping her grand-mother with domestic chores, an uncle taking care of his nephew whose mother moved to Adigrat and who in return herds his goats, an old widow helping her cousin '*who needs it more*'. Youth help each other at times, through the Youth Association: the YA leader reports that they raised 300 birrs through contributions from members to help one young man to cover his medical expenses.

But these community-initiated social protection mechanisms may not work for all the people who might need assistance, and increased economic hardships push some arrangements to break down – for instance, GH explains that he had to stop helping his disabled sister because of the losses he faced with the drought in 2001. And on another hand, the introduction of government-led social protection mechanisms creates tensions that may damage the relationships underpinning the community mechanisms. For instance, several people note that targeted interventions like the PSNP or the provision of nutritious food to undernourished children and women create conflicts around targeting which damages social relationships (and also relationships between officials/those handling the selection process and community members feeling aggrieved).

People have celebrations and events for fun too in Geblen. The Youth Association organises things 'for fun'. They obtained permission from the school principal to get access to the school's sport ground, and together with the head of the school's sport department they organized a **sport competition event** between 5 kebeles. The best players were then selected for a wereda level competition. The youth in Geblen won in running and football and received footballs. There was a big and lively **celebration** for the 35th anniversary of the TPLF. And a big **party** to bid farewell to the tabia leader, recently appointed to work at wereda level. For youth and more generally members of the community living nearby or visiting, there are now opportunities to watch TV and have a drink at a bar or a teashop in Mishig. These are places to discuss about many things. It also has some negative sides in that when people drink too much they can quarrel – a trend that the militiamen have noticed. And some men can spend a lot on drinking.

Labour and cash contributions for **weddings, mourning and memorial ceremonies** (in particular, Teskar, celebrated 40 days after the death) continue to be given in spite of government strong 'advice' against it. For Teskar people close to the decease might contribute up to 1,000 birrs. Among the respondents in the in depth interviews GM, who had just said that he supported the government position against excessive spending, recognised a little later in the discussion that he had just contributed an ox for the teskar of a close relative.

Remittances from migrants are an important source of income for some households (e.g. GM gets 1,000 birrs annually from his daughter who has resettled in the Middle East, another receives remittances from a brother who is in Saudi), so helping them to stay and do better. But there are also migrants who simply 'disappear' (like this soldier who never came back from the war with Eritrea and now lives in Asmara) or abscond (like this other man who came back from migration but lives with another woman in Adigrat and doesn't help his family). So migration has mixed effects on the economic and social capital of the community. Some people like the tabia leader seem to think that on the whole they are rather negative. The Youth Association keeps statistics of migration and passes this to the wereda, which suggests a concern at higher level too – though we have not verified this.

There is no tradition of **equb and iddirs** in Geblen; a few women are in the process of trying to set up one **iddir** but it is not yet operational. Most of the Orthodox Christians interviewed were found to be members of a **Mehaber** and organising the regular feasts (DK, an ex-soldier and head of a rather rich household, said he was spending 300 birrs per year on this), but for some of them this has to be small ceremonies with just family members because they do not have the money to afford larger feasts, while others like MZ cannot afford it altogether and have *'not organised a feast for the past five years at least.'* Yet even poor families organising small feasts pay 'the tenth' as a gift to the **Church**. The looting of the Church of Geblen, which happened when the research was taking place, was a very big shock for the whole community, which successfully helped the police so that some of the thieves were later on found and arrested.

Traditional mediators have continued to tackle cases, including serious ones like, in the past four years, a feud between militiamen who killed a man who allegedly had tried to steal money deposited in the kebele office and the relatives of the deceased, and a case of abduction. There is now a kebele 'peace committee' since 2000 EC, officially established on advice from the wereda, and formalising this customary mediation practice. This is aimed to reduce time, energy and money spent by people in unnecessarily bringing cases to courts (so as to maximise the time they spent on developmental activities), according to tabia officials. For members of the community it is a continuation of the way things were done before. Wereda officials underline that the presence of strong traditional mediators is the reason why Geblen, in their view, is doing well in terms of peace and security compared to the average in the wereda. One man from Geblen is a member of the wereda level committee trying to resolve a boundary conflict between a neighbouring tabia and communities in the Afar Region.

Community management

Geblen is one of the 27 rural and urban tabias of Saesia Tsaeda Emba. The wereda clearly appreciates the strength of the tabia, which has stood second in terms of governance in the wereda for the last three years (after Mai Megelta tabia, a much richer tabia). The person who served as kebele chairman from 1997 to 2002 has just been promoted to take a post in the wereda youth affairs office – and the community organised a farewell party for him for which *'more than 30 people contributed 100 birrs'* and *'they were drinking beer and singing till midnight came'*. He visits his family in Geblen at the week-ends and his wife is heading the household. She is a strong woman, as he put it *'Anyway in our household I am the President but she is the Prime Minister'*.

Kebele structures and personnel

The various **kebele and sub-kebele structures** were gradually expanded and, according to a former kebele chairman, their role and the accountability system has been greatly clarified since 1997 EC. These changes in the structures were adopted following proposals from the wereda and discussion at the kebele level. The **kebele Cabinet** expanded from 7 to 9 and now 12-14 members, with focal persons for all important sectors including a women affairs' representative. Previously (according to the previous kebele chairman) *'the kebele chairman was accountable for all failures observed in cabinet members' and civil servants' duties. Now there is a clear mechanism making every official and employee accountable'*. So the job has become somewhat easier and the role of the kebele leader has become of mobilisation and coordination of other actors.

The **kebele Council** is better organised too and has four standing **committees** (notably the security, health, and 'stream' committees) and a number of other committees (e.g. the social committee composed of civil servants and kebele administration members). The Council is said to have the highest power in the kebele; 35% of its 205 members are women since the local elections of 2001 EC. The 'stream committee', recently established (and which seems to play an important role judging by the number of times it is mentioned by kebele officials and workers), focuses on service delivery

sectors and follows up on service delivery performance (e.g. time management of workers and effectiveness in plan implementation, coordinating among sectors...).

The **kebele chairman** (also called tabia leader) interviewed has now been appointed to work at wereda level. He studied to grade 5 and was a soldier in 1990-1995 EC, then from 1995 to 1997 he served as a vice kebele chairman and since 1997 as the kebele chairman (the previous chairman had resigned for personal reasons). He says that he has generally good relationships with the kebele cabinet members although some of them lack commitment. He has multiple overlapping responsibilities and spends more than 90% of his time on public duties. There is no personal benefit from this, but he is satisfied because he feels that he is serving the people. The major problem of the people in the kebele is backwardness. They are ready to mobilise to some extent but there are people resistant to participate in different development activities. He has good relationship and frequent meetings with the wereda. He also has good relationships with the kebele workers (who confirm this). In his view, the relationship of the kebele administration with the community are helped by the recent strengthening of the self-criticism and evaluation process, through which people's views on the administration effectiveness are gathered and taken into account, every three months since 2001 EC. But this can also be used to blackmail kebele officials without evidence and it needs to be carried out carefully. He is considered by many interviewees as a 'good person', though this doesn't include the administration as a whole, and some blame 'the leadership' for not raising people's issues higher up (e.g. DK see below).

The kebele also has a **kebele manager** who was appointed by the wereda Capacity Building (CB) office in late 2000 EC and facilitates much the task of the kebele chairman by working on his behalf to assist people, and strengthening the documentation system. He is from Geblen and lives with his parents (he is not married). He trained as an accountant at graduate level through distance education. He previously worked as an assistant DA then medical production worker in the pharmaceutical factory of Adigrat, but left and applied for the position as kebele manager. He was trained on management for 15 days by the regional Capacity Building Bureau. He sees his job as very important as '*the kebele leader is not an educated person but the manager is educated*' and there are many tasks at the kebele level that '*require professionalism*', such as '*coordinating activities of the sectors and implement provisions of proclamations, directives and instructions*'. He gives his remarks and opinions on the development trends in the kebele, but '*mobilisation is the responsibility of the kebele leader*'. In his view as there are cases of nepotism, important responsibilities such as land administration, social court, prosecutors etc. should be held by people appointed and not from the kebele. He also thinks that it would be good if more power was given to the manager. He is '*happy to serve the society*' but thinks that people don't value the kebele manager commensurately to his role and responsibilities. The salary is insufficient, and he would like to see better facilities in the kebele and to get opportunities for further education. He wants to quit the job and become a trader as he has not seen change in his life.

The tabia **Women Association** has a new leadership since 1998 EC, following a meeting organised by the tabia administration. Membership has gone up to 462 (from 350 in 2000 EC). The leader of the WA (a female head of household, educated to grade 3 and who had various other roles at sub-kebele WA level in the past) is also a health promoter and serves on the social court at times. She is very active and concerned with women's issues. In her capacity, she receives women's complaints of maladministration and presents them to the kebele Cabinet. Together with the kebele chairman and the DAs she has presented a report to the wereda explaining that it was not fair for women to have the same volume of work to perform under the PSNP than men (as they have many other duties). Even though she doesn't get any payment and it is hard for people like her to work in that way, she is happy to struggle for the rights of women, to see some change (albeit not enough) and to see the commitment of the kebele chairman.

But she is deeply disappointed by the wereda and higher WA structures, that don't give them any support and always claim that there is no budget. Yet, members pay their contributions (Geblen is

known for its timely payment) but this is used for salaries of officials of the association at higher levels who earn like 2,500 birrs in a month whereas all they have at the kebele level is an allowance of 18 birrs for the work they do. She is not satisfied because, as the association lacks finance they cannot support very poor women. *'There are a lot of elderly women who need support in the kebele.'* She is unhappy because there is little benefit from the WA for the members. Interestingly, out of the six women members of the WA and respondents to the in depth interviews (four other women were not members, including an 80-year old lady), three were quite positive about it, appreciating the WA's advocacy and information work. *'They aware us about women's right to education and so at least we work to free our daughters'*, said one woman, adding that this is how her daughter was able to join university, which would have been unthinkable in the past. The others mention the importance for women to know their rights and to have *'one voice for every woman'*.

The **Youth Association** seems to struggle more. There are 185 members, 70 of whom working on the PSNP. 115 are dependents on their parents. There are only two women who are members of the YA: it is only since 2001 EC that women have been encouraged to join. The association is in charge of organising the youth with regard to various opportunities and development activities. According to the YA leader this has started to be more active – e.g. they have organised the bee-keeping co-operative mentioned earlier (though it hasn't yet produced any benefit); they have obtained plots of residential land for 38 young households with children; they organise sport events, and at times they also help each other: for instance in 1999 they collected 300 birrs from the members to help a young man to cover part of his medical expenses.

The YA leader (who is educated to grade 7, and spent some time in Eritrea as daily labourer on road construction projects) explains that they have a good relationship with the kebele chairman who is himself a young man, with the cabinet as a whole and the kebele manager, and with the school staff (that is how they got access to the school sport ground). He is advocating among the youth on HIV/AIDS and sanitation issues. He is also the vice-speaker of the kebele council so he can advocate for the youth at the council level. That is how he convinced the council to distribute unoccupied land to the young people for the construction of residential houses in Mishig. There is nothing in the job as a YA leader that he dislikes but the overlapping of responsibilities is an issue as so he would like to resign from the position of militia commander that he also has. In his view the YA have had some success, but he is concerned that the most crucial demand of the young people cannot be satisfied: access to land or resettlement, and so, many young people migrate: 56 of the 185 YA members migrated in 2001, more than double the number in previous years. The three young men interviewed as adult dependents all three said that they were members as they had been *'recruited'* (the YA leader said it was a voluntary association) but had seen no benefit from their membership.

There are two **Development Agents** in Geblen, specialised in livestock and natural resources, instead of three as per the policy. The crop DA left his job for family reasons. They trained as Grade 10+3 in Ag TVET colleges in the Region. They are not from Geblen, and have both been posted there since less than a year as a demotion measure because they were found to study outside of the wereda's interest/sponsoring scheme. For the livestock DA this demotion also separated him from his family (he is married and has a three year old daughter) and he was penalised with a deduction of one month salary and 5 per diem days (a total of around 1200 birrs). The DA NRM says that he likes working *'in connection with the community'* as this is where he is learning most. But their relationship with the wereda is admittedly bad. This interdiction to study and the punishment they were given are the source of a profound dissatisfaction. They believe that wereda officials abused their right as they know civil servants in other weredas who continue on distance education courses. In their view officials in this sector are corrupt: *'if there is any job or education opportunity it is done based on relationships (with wereda officials). Even the award for the best farmer goes to the wrong person.'* They want to have the right to access to opportunities for further education and improvement in their life.

The **Health Extension Worker** is in Geblen since 1998 EC. There is only one HEW instead of two as per the policy. This is a big issue as she cannot cover everything and in particular, it restricts the door-to-door service that she can give. She is not from Geblen, she is married and lives with her small daughter in Geblen but her husband lives elsewhere and they hardly meet as she has too much work. The other HEW left her post because of family reasons. She was trained as Grade 10 and a few months of education as an HEW. She *'likes her job very much'* but wants to quit for many reasons, including lack of water, lack of education and promotion/move opportunities in spite of the wereda officials' promises, overwork (she works 16 hours a day, there is no break even on Saturdays and Sundays and when she takes a break the work accumulates) and lack of proper supervision, for which *'the wereda is liable'*. There is no acknowledgement for the hard work and nobody who provides support. *'When I looked for a job this was the only one, but if there was any other I wouldn't be here'*. The salary is *'not reasonable'* for the hard work needed. Her ambition is to go back home and work in her area living with her family – her daughter needs to live with her dad. She also wants to pursue her education and improve in her profession.

The **head teacher** (female) is new in Geblen. She is married and has three children but has been detached from her husband for the past 4 years. She wants this to change and to be able to live with her family. She wants to pursue further education (she already got several opportunities so from TTI upgraded to diploma then degree level and also took various trainings on education issues). This school, she says, is less good than the previous one that she was heading, which had *'better budget, facilities and teachers'*. In particular, she is not happy with teachers, who are often absent. Indeed one of the mothers interviewed explains that since several months her child doesn't attend school as the teacher is absent. One of the teachers explains that teachers are not motivated because the workload is high and the pay not much, and they don't get promotion. Yet in 1999/00 they were able to make the school stand first in the wereda. The head teacher explains that she is paid less than what should be the case according to the scale, but wereda officials respond that there is no budget when she complains. The researcher who interviewed her observed that she might not be willing to stay in the kebele.

The **sub-kebele structures** are said to be very important by the kebele chairman and other respondents who serve on them. There are sub-kebele cabinets (12 coordinators including chairperson and deputy), development groups (5 coordinators) of 30 households and cells of 4 to 5 households. Officials at these levels are appointed by the kebele administration on approval by the council. Since 1998 they are said to have been given the authority of *'operating as an independent administrative unit'* and *'development groups pass decisions on matters concerning the households that are members of the group and in relation to development works'* (e.g. sub-kebele administrations are instrumental in the first steps of the selection of beneficiaries for the PSNP). Sub-kebele are important in processes such as the selection of model farmers and models for awards and selection of beneficiaries of PSNP – though final decisions are taken at the kebele level. Sub-kebeles don't have a budget and an office but the sub-kebele chairperson interviewed thinks they should.

Local party structures that is, the TPLF structures as there is only one party in Geblen, are important in all spheres – including socially. So for instance, the community organised a lively celebration for the 35th anniversary of the TPLF, which took place while the researchers were in Geblen. In 2002 EC the community had decided to allow people to work harder so as to reduce the number of days needed to carry out the '40 days of free community work' (this had increased to 40 in 2001) but at the same time the people mobilised 'on their own initiative' to work 6 additional days (done in 3 days) for a local notable TPLF member, Iyasu Berhe.

The party has its own kebele level structure, called the 'basic structure', with 15 members including its own chairperson, deputy, secretary, and mobilisation and propaganda coordinators for each sub-kebele. There are also mobilisation and propaganda coordinators in the development groups. There is further overlap with the kebele administrative structures: almost all kebele cabinet members are

members of the 'basic structure'. The 'basic structure' has an office in the kebele administration office building. In 2002 the chairman of the kebele administration was also the chairman of the kebele 'basic structure'. The role of the party structures and members is to be at vanguard of development: *'Government instructions and programmes are presented from the wereda administration to the members who act as brokers between it and the public'. 'Party members are at the forefront to accept and implement government policies and programmes (for these) to come to the grassroots'. 'The wereda administration first deals with the members of the basic structure whenever it wants to implement a development plan.'*

In 1998 EC there was a strong effort by the TPLF to mobilise the community to join the party massively. In 2002 there were 270 party members in Geblen (up from 117) and women had been strongly encouraged to become members – which helped ensure greater women representation on the council as said above. Some of the men interviewed think that the party contributes a lot to the development of the kebele and say that they are members *'from their own initiative'*. Others were 'recruited', don't like to have to pay the membership fee but see no other harm, or would like there to be fewer meetings. The women interviewed seem to be at best agnostic about the party (*'no benefit no harm'*, says one). One of them, asked about the party, explains that she is a member but has no interest in it and *'hates the government'* because it doesn't care about its people and doesn't respect poor people. The WA leader too, who is a TPLF member, is disappointed as *'contrary to her belief in the party's hard working and struggling nature'* the government doesn't give due attention to the fate of students who complete Grade 10. Due to lack of post-grade 10 and in particular, TVET opportunities nearby, only children of wealthy people may continue, she says, but this opportunity is denied to the poor.

From the wereda perspective Geblen has an effective and efficient kebele administration. The kebele stands second in governance among all kebeles of the wereda and was awarded a certificate from the wereda Administrator. It is *'one of the few kebele administrations which is discharging its responsibility on its own without any help from the wereda'*. However, interviews of community members reveal a number of accusations of corruption, mainly around food aid. Some people say it's the food aid officials and not the kebele leader who is *'a good person.'* Yet others think all government officials don't care about poor people; or *'do as they like'* when it comes to exemption for the poor or elderly; or mistreat them because they are poor (case of one young man who was asked to work on a kebele official land to get his ID card). A group of girls (15-19) are not impressed by the kebele performance in governance. They argue that there is discrimination in the PSNP programme, and it is unfair to restrict access to the non-farm land to the community (under the 'zero-grazing' programme). Officials are not 'selective'; they just implement the wereda programmes indiscriminately. The strongest criticism comes from DK, an ex-soldier who explains that

In a meeting of the TPLF party members, he had expressed his opposition about the pressure put up on him to purchase a modern hive before he cleared (his previous) debt. He requested the kebele chairman to write his opposition in the minutes of the meeting and to report his concern to the wereda officials. But the kebele officials threatened him, accusing him of having an *'anti-development outlook'* and that he would be put under arrest. At the end, he was forced to change his stand and kept quiet. He said that kebele officials never report the concern of the people to the wereda, if they feel that the issue under concern could bring something wrong upon them.

Some people when feeling unfairly treated appealed to the wereda. This happened for PSNP targeting issues and others. E.g. a young man who was unhappy about decisions made by the kebele administration in relation to land (in a complicated story about his mother's land and residential land that he had requested to build a house in Mishig for himself) went to the wereda and got the wereda to reverse those.

Justice and governance

There is a militia, a peace committee and the social court. The **militia** counts 64 men elected to the job, under 3 commanders that they elect. Militiamen must have good ethics and be former soldiers or TPLF veteran fighters to ensure good handling of firearms. They ensure security and safety by checking the identity of people who are unfamiliar in the area, and execute the orders of the social court. They report every three months, including on the number of bullets in their possession, to the wereda militia office, and they work closely with the kebele cabinet member in charge of justice and security (this is a new position established five years ago). They also have a close relationship with the peace committee. They are not paid. They are entitled to an allowance of 18 birrs which they say has never been paid. The militia commander explains that even though they are ashamed to ask for this payment because it is usually stereotyped as 'dependency', the current situation is not fair on them. Several of the respondents in the in depth interviews confirm that while they are happy to serve the community, this is taking their time and it is not fair not to be compensated. Members of the community interviewed appreciate the night patrols that the kebele administration instructed the militia to conduct since 1999 EC, as it has reduced quarrels among young people drinking in Mishig's bars.

Community policing is in place but does not appear to have made a big difference in people's life – it is not mentioned in the in depth interviews for instance. Tabia officials explain that it could be really useful to reduce time wasted by people and their own workload whilst ensuring peace in the community, but it requires the policeman to be committed to his job.

One tabia level **peace committee** has been established in 2000 on recommendation of the wereda justice and security office – although customary mediation was practised even before the committee was in place. Wereda officials suggest that it is working well in Geblen '*because people partially are Irob*'. At the wereda level there is one large committee also known as 'Community Forum' with members from the militia, police, religious leaders, representatives from the YA, WA, FA, the traders, and twelve elders from various kebeles, involved in peace and security at the wereda level. Among members of the Forum the elders seem to play the biggest role. The elders first try to mediate then call on the full Forum. At the tabia level the peace committee is a smaller structure with three elders from each kushet.

The Forum and peace committee do not judge and have no system to enforce its recommendations. The rationale behind the establishment of the system is to save/reduce wastage of labour, time and resources that result from the long process of examining disputes in the social kebele or wereda courts, a trend which was reportedly on the increase. At tabia level the difference with the previous system of customary mediation is that whilst in the past, elders were called for mediation by the disputing parties themselves or their networks, the Peace Committee is now formally called by the tabia leadership, which in some cases can attend some of the mediation process directly.

Elders who serve on the committee got some training (e.g. on human rights by the wereda, on women and children's rights by the Regional State Ombudsman). So far the most challenging case they confronted was a dispute about a piece of land between farmers in Kaslen, which they resolved in three weeks of intensive work. Interviews of community members reveal other cases of arbitration/ mediation – which may have taken place before the establishment of this formal process (or outside it). As noted earlier one of the committee's members who is a customary dispute mediator (and also the previous tabia leader) has been appointed by the wereda on the wereda-level committee mediating a conflict between Afar and a neighbouring kebele. Tabia officials and people from the community agree that it is a useful system to deal with disputes and reduce time wasted on these, but in their view the committee members need additional training to strengthen their capacity to deal with complicated problems. The committee members are not paid even though their activities are tiresome and carried out '*at the expense of their daily life*'. As one woman who serves on the committee explains, it is '*hard for us to work on many things without payment*'.

Apart from the tabia officials who have frequent interactions with wereda officials and community members appealing to the wereda level, there are few mentions of interaction with the wereda. One (male) **wereda councillor** representing the kebele doesn't live in Geblen. One (female) **wereda councillor** wasn't able or willing to talk much about her responsibility in relation to this position when she was interviewed (she is household head since her husband went as a soldier during the war with Eritrea and didn't come back – he lives in Asmara).

Governance interventions

The **Business Process Reengineering (BPR)** (process) is talked about. According to the kebele chairman they are working to raise people's awareness of the BPR through various training so that people understand better their right of demanding that the administration performs their service in a way which save time, money and labour of the society, thus facilitating the government development strategy. As a result of the BPR-related efforts the social court is now making decisions on legal cases within one month whereas it could take 6 months to 2 years previously. This gives people more time to engage in soil and water conservation activities. The head teacher also mentioned the BPR usefulness in cutting administrative 'red tape'.

When asked about the **good governance package** people mention specific aspects such as the strengthening of the self-criticism and evaluation process, the importance of the sub-kebele structures and the appointment of the kebele manager (see above), and the suggestion box. The latter has not been used much at all so far and so that is not successful – due to people's lack of 'commitment' according to the tabia leader, but as a woman notes, *'only those who can write can use it so such measures should take account of the community literacy status'*. The self-criticism and evaluation process, now carried out quarterly since 2001 EC involves gathering information from the public, kebele administration conducting self-criticism, and final evaluation by the wereda – with officials coming to the tabia. According to the tabia leader it builds acceptance and trust between the community and the administration, but it can be misused for blackmailing officials without evidence, if carelessly used.

Wereda officials note that Geblen is an outstanding tabia with regard to tax payment. In the wereda they conducted an awareness raising campaign and succeeded in substantially increasing tax collection (in 2001 EC they reached 4.5m birrs, or is 3 times the amount collected in 1996), so that the wereda will be able to begin to allocate capital budget to development projects. In addition to **taxes**, people in Geblen are asked various **cash and labour contributions**. The tabia leader explains that in 2000 EC they decided to subscribe to the **ambulance service** of the Ethiopian Red Cross, as proposed by the wereda following the case of a man falling from a cliff, seriously injured and who was saved as an ambulance could come promptly. They mobilised 400 households in the community, though he is concerned because there are rumours that the Red Cross might cease the service.

Also, there is a rule that all community members above 18 years old have to contribute **free labour** for **community work** on conservation. The duration increased in 2001 EC, from 20 to 40 days. According to the tabia leader people are not happy about the rule but he believes that the benefit will be for the community as a whole. Members of the community interviewed on the topic said that 40 days was too much, even though the work is useful as it is for environmental rehabilitation. Someone else explained that in fact, in 2002 EC the 40 days had been reduced to 20 effectively, as people had been allowed to work harder and carry the work in less time.

Some people also said that the **land tax** rate had doubled in 2000 EC. Among those interviewed there are people, poor and rich alike, who think that it is hard to afford for poor farmers or because of the drought. Others think that all those owning land can afford, but there is no benefit for the community as *'taxes benefit only the government'*. Yet others – an elderly woman for instance – think that paying tax is a duty, and there is no problem with this, but the problem is the lack of rain which hinders production and leads to people facing difficulties to pay. Most particularly, as one (middle wealth, head of household) woman explains, there are many different payments in addition

to the tax (e.g. Red Cross, party membership, WA membership, contribution to the school) and even though each is small (and varies according to the land's size as the land tax), when adding up it is hard to afford.

When asked about what mattered in the **interaction between the community and the government** more generally, one Muslim religious leader raised the issue of credit. He was visibly angry and said that the Muslim community is pressurised to do a sinful act and in addition, the benefit of the credit is negligible or it harms most people. This should stop as it will otherwise lead to unrest and violence.

Working with NGOs

There is comparatively little NGO activity in the tabia and in the wereda as a whole, according to wereda officials. In Geblen, the Adigrat Diocese Catholic Secretariat (ADCS) has been involved in various projects since a long time (road construction and maintenance, water development, small-scale irrigation, toilet construction and farmers' training), much of the road and water development work as FFW or providing payment for people working on the various projects. This has continued since the outset of the PSNP and in parallel with it. These are important activities but there are neighbouring tabias where ADCS's presence is larger than in Geblen. World Vision has been active in Geblen and elsewhere in the wereda since a while too, in building bridges, capacity building, health, water supply as well as the provision of modern hives (notably for the youth co-operative) and selected seeds and in the provision of food supplements for (very few) infants (e.g. training for TBA to become mid-wives in 1998, construction of piped water structure for Geblen health post launched in 2002). REST has developed one spring (in Semui Daga). UNICEF is involved in provision of nutritious food and school materials for poor children.

Activities are small-scale and not predictable, but many of the community members interviewed mention NGOs as a source of work opportunities which is precious.

Ideas

Repertoires in Geblen

The **local customary repertoire** in Geblen is about working hard on one's land and in other ways and becoming successful while staying in/with the community; people sharing and supporting each other in times of crises (family or weather-related); calling on traditional healing methods; spending on weddings and teskar, that have good functions; for the Orthodox Christians, respecting holy days by not working (and not doing so may lead to big trouble like people being killed by lightning) and for Muslims, not taking credit (including through government programmes) and not taking human made contraception because this is sinful. For the Christians, mehabers and going to church to pray and paying 'the tenth' is important and 'gives good feelings'.

The **local modern repertoire** includes the belief that individual work is more efficient. People who migrate may succeed; others believe that they 'hallucinate'. People compete for opportunities arising from government and NGO activities, but there is some 'regulation' of these individualistic trends, so sharing across households of things like access to PSNP and emergency food aid also occurs. Peace matters and elders continue to be important in maintaining it. Education is very important and girls have equal right to it and to join university. Non-working holy days should be few. Female-headed households and families from TPLF veterans and soldiers killed at the war deserve special attention. Gender equality became an important part of the local modern repertoire under the TPLF during the struggle and '*has remained so these days*' – although in practice the agenda is further advanced on some issues (e.g. access to land and property generally) than others (e.g. contraception). But women *can* take contraception as part of today's local modern repertoire. And the idea of marriage by mutual consent has emerged (though marriages are still commonly arranged by families).

A number of people (particularly but not only the younger landless generation) live differently, following some 'urbanisation' of one part of the tabia (the construction of 'better houses' in Mishig, with corrugated iron roofs and cement plastered walls), the household extension package (e.g. improved stoves, separate rooms for human and animals, toilets), and the availability of 'modern' house instruments (jerricans) and furniture (beds). With access to public transport in Mishig (due to the all-weather road and now minibuses three days a week), commodities like packed drinks and beer are consumed in Geblen. People spend money on them (reportedly men may spend up to 200 birrs on beer at once). Young people who went to towns take the habit of wearing expensive suits that they or their parents can hardly afford. For instance, on return from Humera with 500 birrs one young man spent 300 birrs on a suit, he then fell sick with malaria, and his parents had to help him meet the costs of his treatment. Some bars in Mishig have TVs for people's entertainment. People call relatives (including abroad) and others, to keep in touch and know the prices of goods.

For some people development is about being healthy (*'the richest person is the one who is healthy'*), access to infrastructure, sufficient rain for agriculture, and education for their children. But young people and adults may have different ideas and for young people it's about *'being successful in making their own business and live in towns or outside of their country'* – they even are *'not interested in education and being employees'*.

Religious and ethnic repertoires are not 'vocal' among community members, but they are present. When asked about ethnic and religious identities, community members explain that there are no problems linked to their differences and adults reportedly couldn't identify themselves clearly as Tigrayans or Irobs. But as noted earlier, Muslim religious leaders while not overtly forbidding (according to the tabia leader) speak strongly against the credit programme of the government which forces the congregation to violate the Koran. Muslim leaders were also reportedly upset when the school administration banned the use of the *hijab* in school for the young girls having reached puberty. Orthodox Christians are divided about the government intervention to reduce the number of non-working holy days (see below). Praying and paying the tenth and celebrating saints is important and poor families that cannot afford organising celebrations or only small ones deplore it.

Revolutionary democracy in Geblen means that people may speak their mind about government's and local officials' weaknesses (e.g. corruption around food aid, enforcement for the package programme, 'hate' against the government not respecting poor people) – but in final may have to keep quiet (appeal against biases for food aid, but accepting that complaint against enforcement will not be taken up, and keeping one's party membership).

How the government acts in the field of ideas

The government acts on the field of ideas through all interventions as they have potential implications for how people think about and do things. A group of girls (15-19 year old) interviewed in an FGD explains that it is the wereda which brings all programmes to the community and is responsible to *'enforce the community'*, and this interaction is generally better since 1998 EC. The way the government promulgates its 'development model' includes models, extension workers, government-initiated organisations (WA and YA), training programmes, experience-sharing with other tabias or places, and the party 'basic structures'.

Extension workers work with **models** and the DAs in Geblen explain that they find this useful as they act as brokers for the others to adopt the technologies. Model farmers can be awarded at various levels (with a certificate in a public meeting, and cash or some equipment like the man who was given a hoe and a shovel as he had been awarded as sub-kebele level model farmer for land and compost preparation). But according to tabia officials only a few farmers from Geblen get awarded (at wereda level) as the production is low due to drought and unfertile soil. Among people interviewed, one (rich) farmer was wereda model in 2000 EC for his use of irrigated farming and water pump; one (middle wealth) farmer was awarded because he built a canal to use human waste

from the family's toilet as organic compost; two women were rewarded for their performance in loan repayment.

The community members interviewed have mixed views about the usefulness of models. One of the models expresses doubt that people really learn from them but he wishes that there would be more experience-sharing visits for models to learn from models in other weredas. One woman says that rewards are an important motivation for non-models like herself to work hard. DK explains that he does not need them (nor does he need the DAs) to find new ways of doing (but he appreciates the training programmes which he attended). Some people, and even the DAs as we have seen earlier, believe that there is bias in the selection or the criteria for selection are not clear. Anyway, *'almost all farmers are hard worker'* in the view of the 15-19 girls interviewed in group. A group of boys of the same age explains that the idea of models is used *'for political consumption only'*. Those selected deserve it – but there are other farmers still stronger than them who the administration ignores due to biases. And some model farmers have remained poor so it somewhat defeats the idea that they are good models to emulate.

In health there are **graduated households** (graduating from the 16 packages of the health extension programme) and **health promoters. Students and schools** too can be distinguished and so, Geblen's school was first in the wereda three years back, and GM remembers with pleasure the fact that in 2001 EC his son stood first from among all 8th Grade students of the wereda and was awarded one lamp and three litres of fuel by the wereda education office.

Also **training** is used to present government models. There are views that there should be more training on various issues, but per diem should increase as what they are given is not enough for a person to stay out of home for days. Some respondents (in the in depth interviews) explain that they found some of the training programmes really useful – but may not have been able to apply the techniques learnt (like on bee-keeping) because of drought. Tabia officials mention that training is also regularly organised for those farmers most committed to improve their life, with NGOs. About 5% farmers participated and this has been successful as some applied the advice (e.g. farmer planting and selling elephant grass as fodder, farmer planting and selling oranges). In his view this needs to expand (additional budget), focus on livestock and bee-keeping and involve young men and women.

Experience sharing with other kebeles and even among kushets in the kebele is another means. The HEW uses this to encourage people from one kushet by seeing how others have done in another, for some of the HEP packages. The tabia leader notes that this was tried with 45 farmers (35% of them being women) who went to visits kebeles performing well in water harvesting. This was organised by the wereda and the kebele allocated 3,000 birrs to the group for their expenses, and selected the farmers. He says that they learned a lot and some farmers have started applying what they learned. In his views experience sharing is successful as it brings attitudinal change through better acceptance of technologies, because people see for themselves.

The **party 'basic structures'**, overlapping considerably with the kebele administration structures, are key vehicles for government models as we noted earlier. Community members do not find these channels problematic 'per se', but some blame tabia officials for not taking into account the actual conditions in which the government's programmes must be implemented – as noted earlier with the zero-grazing programme or the forcing of the packages onto people.

With regard to **extension workers** all six household heads interviewed said that they had no involvement with the **DAs** – in contrast with several of them who said that they liked the training they had attended, and yet several of them had taken packages under the package programme. The same applies for three women interviewed (adult dependents) although they too had taken packages. Among the male adult dependents interviewed one was a student and herder, but from the other three only one, who is also the youth bee-keeping co-operative chairman (and is from a rich family) mentioned that he had had dealings with both the agriculture and livestock DAs (he was

'mobilised' to use selected seeds, dig a water pond, plant papaya and some vegetables for irrigated farming and take a hybrid cow – some of this was successful like the cow and he sold some of his vegetables). The role of the DAs in the package programme is not very clear.

In some contrast with the DAs, everyone among those interviewed as household head and spouse or adult dependent has had something to do with the **HEW**, except one young man, and another who was '*to some extent*' trained but did not say more. Women (even the elderly lady, who said the HEW was helping her a lot and was '*a very nice person*') are usually appreciative of the HEW's work on sanitation and disease prevention, HIV AIDS awareness raising, assistance/advice during their pregnancy, and the vaccination services.

The ways **people hear about** the government model and get ideas about development is usually from meetings organised by the administration and various training also organised by government officials and sometimes NGOs, and generally tabia officials. Some people also say that they get ideas from their children or friends who have a radio (like this militiaman who explains that militiamen spend quite some time together and some of them have a radio). One woman says her husband informs her, another, her husband and her children. One elderly lady remarks she doesn't need anyone to tell her about development as she can see it (road, electricity etc.) There are TV programmes in the bars of Mishig – though people highlighted TV's entertainment role rather than its contribution in providing ideas about development.

The government has made a number of **direct interventions aimed at changing certain customary beliefs**. Female circumcision was reportedly abandoned thanks to the TPLF campaign against it in the 1970s and 1980s. So in Geblen, more recent efforts concentrated on reducing excessive ('extravagant') spending on weddings and in particular, teskar, reducing the number of non-working holy days for the Orthodox Christians, and the dangers of traditional medicine to some extent.

(Christian Orthodox) **holy days** (without work) were reduced to 4 days/month in addition to Sundays, through discussion between the government and religious leaders. The campaign for this is said to have started in 1983 EC and that already in 1995 '*working on saints' days (was) becoming the culture in Geblen*'. But there are still people today who believe that this is not a good thing and who, for instance, attribute the death of people struck by lightning to the fact that they were building terraces during St Abune Aregawi's day (St Abune Aregawi is a highly respected saint in the area, but his day is not one of the official holy days). One Orthodox religious leader says that the government position is good for development but Saturdays should be holy days too as this is the day in which God rested.

Government has also campaigned since a long time against **excessive consumption/spending** for weddings, funerals and memorial ceremonies, building monuments on people's graves, Timket etc. It is said to be 'outlawed' and there are heavy penalties (a kebele rule fixes a penalty of 1,000 birrs). People readily explain that such practices are decreasing (especially for weddings) but in practice at least some people continue to spend a lot of resources for memorial ceremonies or feasts. For instance GM admitted to having contributed an ox to a close relative's Teskar even though he had just said that he was in favour of the government's idea. A young man spent 11,500 birrs on this in 2002 EC, roughly half for the ceremony and half as bride wealth (he is from a relatively well-off family but which had suffered from the drought in 2001). People are said to '*knowingly pay the penalties*'. Perhaps for this reason, wereda officials (who recognise that people in Geblen have other positive characteristics) mention as a challenge that they '*are extravagant*'.

There were very few **traditional medicine** men and witches and already in 1997 EC these traditional practices were said to have disappeared. However, the same informants went on to report that a traditional medicine man who had continued to deal with sick children (healing them with a juice of herbs, cutting glottal tissue, removing milk teeth) had officially declared he was stopping after a campaign by the HEW, supported by the kebele administration, convincing parents not to take their children to the man (the man was reluctant to be interviewed). Several informants reported not

calling on modern medical services for most of the usual illnesses, and there were also several reports of people using holy water etc. to cure diseases. So an elderly notable (also customary mediator) said that even these days *'though they do have access to hospitals, there are many who are using traditional medicine men and traditional medicines'*.

Social interactions in 2010

Extra-community

There is no story of open conflict between the community and any other in the neighbourhood. Wereda officials report cases of such conflicts between other tabias, e.g. about a health post location, or, in 1997 EC, between the two urban communities of Edaga Hamus and Freweini about the location of the wereda capital – this involved students from both town. They also explain that rural villages disapprove and resent the expansion of Protestantism seen in the towns of the wereda.

Geblen is indirectly involved in an extra-community conflict in that one elder, customary mediator from Geblen, is actually a member of a wereda committee trying to mediate between a neighbouring tabia and communities in the Afar Region (boundary issues). There are some relations with neighbouring communities through sport competition and experience-sharing visits (nobody mentioned that other community groups would have visited Geblen, but some people from Geblen went to visit other areas). Individuals also go out in various capacities for market, studies, meetings at the wereda, and training programmes organised by the government in Edaga Hamus, Freweini, Adigrat or even Mekele. One group was formed in a bee-keeping/honey production co-operative with youth from Geblen and Marwa, one neighbouring tabia.

Intra-community

Several programmes engender tensions between community people and kebele officials or other decision-makers involved in their implementation: the zero-grazing programme pit farmers against kebele officials; bad repayments of loans for fertiliser or the package programme are also creating conflicts, and tabia officials mention that they had to mortgage the land of many bad payers, and there are conflicts too between bad payers and the co-operative leaders on loans for fertiliser; people excluded from PSNP were in conflict with the selection and appeal committees – and appealed at wereda level; people not getting food supplements for their children complain about the HEW and the selection committee. There is also one case of conflict between the kebele administration and a farmer whose land was taken for the school expansion – but he didn't have a land certificate although he has witnesses.

Men may enter in conflict over job opportunities. Youth may quarrel in Mishig bars and this was reduced by militia night patrols on instruction by the kebele administration, which people appreciated. Spouses may have quarrels or be in conflict: these situations are usually mediated by elders from the community. When this concerns issues of family planning and the use of contraceptives the HEW tries to talk to both spouses about it. The lack of access of youth to land is an issue and some youth have harsh words about it, saying that their parents are their enemies, but the research didn't reveal cases of open conflicts between parents and children about land. Children may do things against their parents' will, like this young woman who decided to keep her baby while she was not married, but in her case her parents had pardoned her sufficiently that she could have returned and lived with her mother. There was one case of a feud, which arose when militiamen shot and killed a man suspected from stealing money from the kebele office and the family of the death had decided to take revenge, but the feud was mediated by elders and resolved.

As noted earlier, there is reportedly no conflict between ethnic groups and people say that this has no relevance to them. For each of the two main religious congregations in Geblen (Orthodox Christians and Muslims) some government policies are causes of resentment on the side of some

followers (holy days and credit issues), but this is not provoking open conflict between the congregations and the government or anyone. One Muslim leader explains that Muslims used to agree to also not work on Christians' holy days as they were afraid of conflict if they were refusing.

Social actors

Table 1: Notables mentioned by the community members

Social positions	Main activities in the community
Village Chairman	Good leader who made Geblen get award for good governance
Traditional conflict mediator, member of the peace committee, ex-chairman	Mediating conflicts, advising kebele officials and others
Knowledgeable person, member of the kebele council, award winner of the FA, head of agricultural development committee	Acting as a model farmer, coordinating activities of the agricultural development committee and participating in the councils meetings
Priest, orthodox Christians religious leader	Giving religious service to the community, chief priest
Veteran TPLF militia, Head of Kaslen sub kebele, member of the PTA of Geblen elementary school	Advising kebele officials, notable comedian, participating in PTA of Geblen elementary school, one of those beaten by a leopard last year
Rich, young	Acting as a model in the wereda, owner of a grinding mill, a tea room and a bar.

As can be seen several of these notables are people who hold a position in a government-related structure, or more than one, or have done so in the past. It is also significant that on the short list, is included one of these successful young people who became rich while staying in the kebele.

People involved in government-initiated structures often cumulate several roles. For instance, one lady, educated, married in a relatively rich and small household, is a health promoter and also the WA leader after having had various other jobs in the VA; she also used to be a social court judge (now acting), and is now a member of the peace committee – and got training on the new family code in Adigrat in 1998, disaster preparedness and prevention in Mekele in 2001, women and children's rights in Mekele in 2001, contraception in 2002, nutrition, etc. The young rich man who is chairman of the youth bee-keeping co-operative (since 2000) is elected leader of one of the development groups of his kushet (he doesn't get any benefit but he feels 'it's important for the public to organise around specific goals'). The YA chairman is also vice-speaker of the kebele council and militia commander. The kebele chairman is also (among others) the FTC leader, and the chairman of the local basic structure of the TPLF. Priests can be officials serving in the cabinet. A Qadi (Muslim religious leader) is also social court judge.

People on this type of trajectories often go from one official post to another, like the former kebele chairman who now is a peace committee member (and continues to advise the kebele administration).

They often are from the non-poor groups – although not necessarily among the richest households. The time that they invest in these activities, not paid and taking away time they could spend on activities focusing more 'narrowly' on their own household/livelihood, is considerable in some instances (the kebele chairman says 90% of his time is devoted to 'kebele matters'). Some do indeed

mention that it is 'not easy for them to work on all these things without being paid'. Some would also want to be able to withdraw from some of the activities for which they are responsible (e.g. the YA chairman who is also the council vice-speaker would like to resign as a militia commander). But generally they explain that they are happy with 'serving the community' and that this is important. Presumably they value the fact of being in a position to somewhat influence what is happening, although as loyal party members and having been distinguished for particular aptitudes there may be little scope for them to refuse these tasks.

In Geblen there are three schools and a health post, a multi-service/FA co-operative, the WA and the YA, a newly established peace committee, a militia, a land management committee, a social court, and the regular party and government structures (kebele Cabinet and Council, sub-kebele administrations, development groups, cells, and the party 'basic structure' – which as noted earlier, overlap). That makes a quite large number of positions to fill. It is difficult to assess what proportion of the people living in Geblen is involved in one of these structures as we have just seen that there are people with several posts. But it can reasonably be said that even so, the number of people involved with 'the government' is quite large.

Notable people from outside the community are not many and apart for one who is a businessman in Adigrat and has installed the first grain mill in Geblen, the others (a teacher who is the first educated person from Geblen and is teaching elsewhere, and a trader living in Saudi Arabia) don't have roles in the community.