



WIDE Bridge

Harresaw Community Report 2018

25 January 2019

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This community report is part of a series produced by the Ethiopia WIDE team, based on fieldwork carried out in four of the twenty WIDE communities in the first quarter of 2018 under the WIDE Bridge research project.

Ethiopia WIDE is a rigorous independent longitudinal study of 20 rural communities in Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, and Tigray regions, selected in 1994 by researchers from Addis Ababa and Oxford Universities, as exemplars of different types of rural communities in Ethiopia. They represent wide variations in a range of key parameters notably livelihoods (including surplus producing, drought prone, cash-crop and agro-pastoralist sites), remoteness or ease of access, cultural institutions, and religious and ethnic composition. The team has recently published a book entitled *Changing Rural Ethiopia: Community Transformations*, as well as a compilation of an earlier series of discussion briefs under the title: *Twenty Rural Communities in Ethiopia: Selected discussion briefs on change and transformation*. Further reports and data are available on the website www.ethiopiawide.net.

In the Bridge Phase in 2018, 4 sites were selected one from each of the 4 regions for a fourth round of research: Yetmen in East Gojjam, Amhara; Sirba/Ude in East Shewa, Oromia; Aze Debo in Kambata, Southern Nation, Nationalities and People; and Harresaw in Eastern Tigray. The community reports represent a part of the evidence base used in a range of analytical research outputs under the WIDE Bridge project. This includes twelve papers presented at the 20th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Mekelle in October 2018 (<http://www.ices20-mu.org/>), and seven policy-oriented discussion briefs on land and urbanization, farming and nonfarming systems and livelihoods, young people's economic experiences, rural modernization and inequalities, selected aspects of social protection, and local governments and governance, available on the WIDE website (<http://ethiopiawide.net/publications/wide-bridge-discussion-briefs/>), and which will be compiled in an English and Amharic book in the first half of 2019.

The Harresaw Community Report 2018 describes the situation of the community in 2018, using a number of different perspectives. The database from which the report was written was produced in two rounds of fieldwork. The first two-week fieldwork was undertaken in January 2018 and provided a basis to develop more in-depth lines of enquiries for the second, longer fieldwork, undertaken in February-March 2018. The Research Officers were guided by Protocols which are available on request. Our methodology ensures that all statements in the Report 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 (male and female heads of households) and wives, rich-to-poor nonfarmers/businesspeople and urban residents (male and female heads of households) and wives, rich-to-poor young women and men in three age groups (17/18, early 20s and late 20s), as well as people (women and men) interviewed because of holding a specific position in the community (e.g. leaders of community social organization), or because of their status with regard to a specific government programme, or in relation to inequality in the community. (Random initials have been used to refer to information related to individual respondents wherever the case occurs).

1. Community features in context	7
Historical background	7
Trajectory of Tigray and Harresaw up to the fall of the Derg	7
Harresaw in the EPRDF period	8
Geographical context	9
Terrain & ecology.....	11
Altitude, terrain, floods and erosion	11
Rivers and springs	11
Underground water	12
Watershed management	12
Irrigation	13
Water harvesting	13
Water quality control.....	13
Forests and wooded areas	13
Grazing land.....	14
Waste disposal and environmental sanitation	14
Weather and climate.....	15
Community land use	16
Land use.....	16
Spatial patterns.....	16
Settlement pattern	16
Urbanisation	17
Infrastructure	19
Public buildings.....	19
Internal roads, paths and bridges and transport	19
Irrigation infrastructure	20
Drinking water infrastructure.....	20
Mobile phones.....	22
Electricity	22
External roads, bridges & transport	23
Community social fabrics and economy	24
Main social traits of the community.....	24
<i>Population and households</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Ethnicity and clan</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Religion</i>	<i>24</i>
Independence of the economy.....	26
Balance of livelihood activities.....	26
Main livelihood portfolios.....	26
Mixed economy	27
<i>Exports.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Imports.....</i>	<i>28</i>
Savings, credit and debt.....	28
Inward investment.....	28
Inflation	28
Cultural ideas and practices.....	29
Conservative and modern repertoires.....	29
<i>Gender social norms</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Family planning and maternal health.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Other signs of ‘conservative thinking’</i>	<i>30</i>
Attitude to education.....	31
Cultural imports	31
<i>Lifestyle, clothes, hairstyles</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Media.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Diet</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>New economic activities</i>	<i>34</i>
External links and relationships	34
Rural-rural links	34
<i>Rural/agricultural migration linkages</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Other rural-rural relationships with other kebeles</i>	<i>34</i>
Rural-urban links.....	34
<i>Rural-urban relationships</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Urban migration linkages</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Urban market linkages</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Urban travelling linkages – paths, roads and transport</i>	<i>35</i>
Industrial migration linkages.....	35

Trade and business networks.....	35
International migration linkages	36
2. Selected community topics.....	36
Local government and community management.....	36
Government management structures	36
<i>Wereda</i>	36
<i>Kebele/ Municipality</i>	38
<i>Kebele political structures and party membership</i>	55
Government financing	56
<i>Taxation and contributions</i>	56
<i>Debt and insurance</i>	62
<i>Wereda policies and budget</i>	63
<i>Kebele budget</i>	63
Government services and interventions in the kebele	63
<i>Perspectives on progress and problems</i>	63
<i>Public services and sectoral interventions</i>	64
<i>Use of government services</i>	67
<i>Services and interventions by NGOs</i>	67
Community management structures.....	68
<i>Elders</i>	68
<i>Religious organisations</i>	69
<i>Iddirs</i>	71
<i>Meskel associations</i>	72
<i>Equubs</i>	73
<i>Mehabers</i>	73
<i>Historically influential/wealthy families</i>	74
<i>NGOs</i>	75
Wereda-kebele-community interactions.....	75
<i>Government planning and consultation</i>	75
<i>Wereda – kebele relationships</i>	77
<i>Messaging and mobilising the community</i>	78
<i>Targets and accountability</i>	83
<i>Appeals, petitions and complaints</i>	87
<i>Resistance and conflict</i>	88
<i>Rights and duties of community members</i>	89
<i>Perspectives on community’s key problems</i>	90
<i>Perspectives on justice, nepotism and corruption</i>	91
Farming	94
Smallholder farming.....	95
<i>Land for smallholder crops and grazing</i>	95
<i>Wives’ farming activities</i>	96
<i>Farm labour</i>	96
<i>Crop-livestock & products mixes</i>	99
<i>Crop production and sale strategies</i>	99
<i>Livestock and products production and sale strategies</i>	102
<i>Agricultural modernisation</i>	108
<i>Diversification</i>	113
<i>Credit and other sources of resources</i>	115
Co-operative farming	116
<i>Crop co-operatives – rainfed and irrigated</i>	116
<i>Livestock co-operatives</i>	116
Other group farming	116
Investor farming	116
Government and non-government farming interventions	117
<i>Wereda level</i>	117
<i>Agricultural research institutions</i>	117
<i>Kebele level extension services</i>	117
<i>Other government roles in farming</i>	119
<i>Beneficiaries of government farming interventions</i>	120
<i>Non-government organisations</i>	121
Non-farming	122
Non-farm work opportunities	122
<i>Non-farming in the local economy</i>	122
<i>Changes since 2012</i>	123
<i>Impact of drought on non-farm activities</i>	124
<i>Non-farming activities, women and young people</i>	124
Crop and livestock trading	125

Trading generally.....	125
Crop trading.....	125
Livestock trading.....	128
Livestock product trading.....	128
Productive businesses.....	129
All productive businesses.....	129
Innovations.....	129
Construction.....	129
Skilled self-employment.....	130
Non-skilled manual productive labour.....	131
Food processing.....	131
Non-farm producer co-operatives or groups.....	132
Other services.....	133
All services.....	133
Shops.....	133
Hospitality services.....	135
Personal services.....	136
Leisure services.....	137
Petty services.....	138
Non-farm service cooperative.....	138
Theft and burglary.....	139
Government involvement in non-farm self-employment.....	139
Support – land, training, credit.....	140
Business licences and taxation.....	143
Non-farm employment.....	144
Formal government/NGO employment.....	145
Employed by the kebele.....	145
Private employment.....	145
Government involvement in non-farm employment.....	146
Migration.....	146
Migration changes.....	146
Commuting.....	147
Migration for work.....	147
Migration to Saudi.....	147
Migration to Afar.....	158
Migration to towns.....	159
Perceptions of the impact of migration on the community.....	161
Impact of migration to Saudi – Examples and perceptions.....	161
Government involvement in migration for work.....	167
Female migration for marriage.....	167
Child migration.....	167
In-migrants.....	168
Economic and political inequality.....	168
Economic inequality.....	168
Wealth statuses in the community.....	168
Changes in economic inequality.....	177
Relations between rich and poor.....	179
Political inequality.....	180
Elites.....	180
Middle-level people with potential influence.....	182
Access to important people.....	183
Inclusion in government public services & interventions.....	184
Social protection.....	186
Vulnerability in Harresaw – An overview.....	186
Informal social protection system.....	188
Government social protection interventions - Overview.....	194
Productive Safety Net Programme and Emergency Food Aid.....	195
Community-Based Health Insurance.....	205
Community Care Coalition.....	210
NGO social protection interventions.....	212
3. Selected policy topics.....	212
Land use and urbanisation.....	212
Wereda.....	212
Wereda boundaries.....	212
Investors in the wereda.....	213
Urbanisation in the wereda.....	213

<i>Landlessness and homelessness in the wereda</i>	214
Kebele	214
<i>Kebele boundaries</i>	214
<i>Municipality boundaries</i>	214
<i>Kebele land use</i>	214
<i>Urbanisation</i>	215
<i>Land planning in the kebele</i>	218
<i>Landholdings, landlessness and homelessness</i>	219
<i>Land allocation and transactions in the kebele</i>	219
<i>Land administration</i>	232
Young people’s economic and other experiences	240
Young people’s perspectives	241
<i>Young people’s stories</i>	241
<i>Perspectives on young people’s economic experiences</i>	249
<i>Perspectives on other youth transition experiences</i>	257
<i>Setting up an independent household</i>	264
<i>Life in the community</i>	265
Adult perspectives on young people	272
<i>Young people’s problems in general</i>	272
<i>Migration</i>	273
<i>Young people’s livelihoods</i>	275
Inter-generational relationships	276
Youth policies and programmes	277
<i>Wereda level</i>	277
<i>Youth livelihood support interventions in Harresaw kebele</i>	280
<i>Perspectives on government interventions</i>	286
Drought	290
Drought history in Harresaw	290
<i>Until the Millennium drought</i>	290
<i>In the last eight-ten years</i>	291
Government measures to address drought	292
Effects of drought	294
<i>On the community as a whole</i>	294
<i>On households</i>	295
<i>Long term effects</i>	296

1. Community features in context

Historical background¹

Trajectory of Tigray and Harresaw up to the fall of the Derg

The Atsbi area in which Harresaw is located is rich in what are thought to be pre-Aksumite artefacts and inscriptions. In the 19th century there was an agro-pastoralist livelihood system; cattle and goats and collecting honey were the major sources of food. Small plots of land were cultivated by hoeing and grain was bought in the market.

Historically Tigray has suffered considerably from wars, drought and famine. There were six famines in the 19th century; and after several other military undertakings by neighbouring countries, in 1895 the Italians invaded. The fighting of the last quarter of the 19th century had a devastating impact on the area. The Italian invasion took place when the country had not fully recovered from the 1887-92 Great Ethiopian Famine. Besides the destruction caused by invading forces the large Ethiopian army of more than a hundred thousand, which succeeded in repelling the Italians, depended entirely on the local people for its food, which more often than not was taken forcibly.

The early 20th century period is widely seen as not having benefitted Tigray as a whole. While Haile Selassie promoted and imposed Amhara culture on others in Ethiopia, people in 'rural Abyssinia' did not benefit: they were dominated, exploited and repressed by the ruling class. The northern Amhara and Tigrayans resisted the new Shewa domination. This, according to some scholars, led to their political and economic marginalization: the historic northern regions of Gondar, Gojjam, Wollo and Tigray were economically neglected, while the regime built infrastructure in the south where the resources lay.

The Italian occupation in 1936-1941 shook the whole Ethiopian state. The period immediately following the restoration of the Emperor Haile Selassie by the British did not bring better days for Tigray and more broadly, for 'rural Abyssinia'. Investment in agricultural modernization largely focused south of Addis Ababa. Famines in 1958 and 1966 in Tigray and Wollo killed tens of thousands of people and little or no relief action was taken. The 1974 famine was the last one without mechanisms for delivering large-scale humanitarian relief. It contributed to the downfall of Haile Selassie, not because peasants revolted but because the issue was taken up by students and middle classes in Addis Ababa.

The Derg regime brought more misery on Tigray. The main State-related events, institutions, policies and programmes which affected rural societies at large included civil war, famine, conscription, land reform, collectivization of smallholder agriculture, the continuation of surplus extraction policies (with quotas due to be sold at low prices to the Agricultural Marketing Co-operative, taxes and other contributions), re-settlement and villagization, tight political 'encadrement' through micro-level political structures, drastic restrictions on people's mobility, and religious discouragement. Elsewhere in the country, some areas saw improvements in services such as electricity, education, health and the provision of food aid. This, however, did not extend to Tigray where the struggle against the Derg started as early as 1975 – at the same time as the 1974/75 drought.

The Derg's first military offensives in Tigray took place in 1976. Between 1976 and 1989 fighting touched nearly all of the region. Government troops made frequent sweeps to fight the TPLF but also to ravage local communities. The 1984/5 famine combined with war forced around 200,000 Tigrayans to migrate to Sudan. A quarter of a million died and up to one million were displaced.

¹ This section draws on a draft paper prepared by Pip Bevan for the 19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Warsaw, in 2015. The paper was not finalized and several of the sections would have required further checking according to Pip Bevan. There was no time to do so in the timeframe of the WIDE Bridge research project. This section must therefore be seen as work-in-progress, to be continued in later WIDE research phases.

When the government began to lose it suspended service provision and destroyed infrastructure through air attacks and ground forces. In response the TPLF mobilised people to ensure basic service delivery. They focused on establishing trust by infiltrating deeply, creating youth, women and farmers' associations to raise political awareness, mobilise for war, and deliver basic services. In liberated areas people administered themselves through *baitos*. Over 55,000 resistance fighters died in combat and tens of thousands of civilians died in air raids and government terror.

In Harresaw, in 1976 the Derg recruited about fifty youngsters for a military campaign in Eritrea; a few others were recruited later on. At least 10 were said to have died, whilst others managed to defect and return home. In 1978 the area was 'occupied' by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), a group of which had retreated in Eastern Tigray following the sweeping purges by the Derg in Addis Ababa. The area was also insecure as thieves took advantage of the turmoil to rob local people. In 1980 the TPLF ousted the EPRP and occupied the area. After that the *Derg's* army made frequent attempts to retake the area from TPLF fighters.

This period was a hard time. The *Derg's* army executed many people, accusing them of being supporters of the TPLF. People were forced to leave their houses whenever the *Derg's* army marched to their area. Even so, many people were taken to Derg prisons at Wukro and Mekele suspected of being supporters of the TPLF. Some of them were executed without trial and others had their property confiscated. The Derg soldiers slaughtered the cattle, goats and sheep of the peasants, and raped married women of the area, including wives of priests, which is a big crime in the eyes of the society. In 1988 the *Derg's* Air Force bombarded the people of the area while they were waiting to receive aid at Wukro. Once about 50 people were subject to forcible conscription after they were summoned to take aid at Wukro. Due to the early control of the site by the TPLF the *Derg* regime was not successful in moving people out of the area. There were, however, continuous moves to more sheltered mountainous forest areas to flee damage and clashes with the *Derg*.

Harresaw in the EPRDF period

In 1994, at the time of the WIDE1 research, the main local political institution in Harresaw was the *baito*, the institution established by the TPLF during the Derg period and which remained in place at the fall of the Derg. It was responsible for keeping peace and order in the community and settling disputes which could not be solved by the elders. Since there had been no taxation for the last fifteen years, no one was responsible for collecting taxes. Members of the community visited each other frequently and discussed recent events. The civil war which affected the area for a long period of time made exchange of information and discussing current affairs very important. Political assemblies were frequent because the people developed the habit of discussing the current affairs of their village and of the country at large. People explained that this was the effect of the TPLF's active involvement in the area for the past fifteen years.

One view was that people supported the regionalization policy; they had been involved in discussions over the Constitution; if regionalisation proved effective, it would facilitate the fast development of the region and avoid war, since the rights of every citizen would be respected. People, recalling the protracted war and suffering inflicted by the Derg, did not want such a war to be repeated in the future and considered that regionalization was the only guarantee which could prevent civil war. They believed the regionalization policy would facilitate political, legal, social and cultural policies, since the people themselves would have the chance to actively participate in the local accomplishments of these policies. Another view was that this kind of regionalisation would actually lead to war, although this was not further elaborated.

In 2011/12, at the time of the WIDE3 research, the community appreciated many of the development initiatives that had unfolded especially in the past decade. However, they resented some aspects of the government drive, such as enforcement to take fertiliser, and lack of individual choice and of space to challenge development ideas - which was taken as political opposition. They

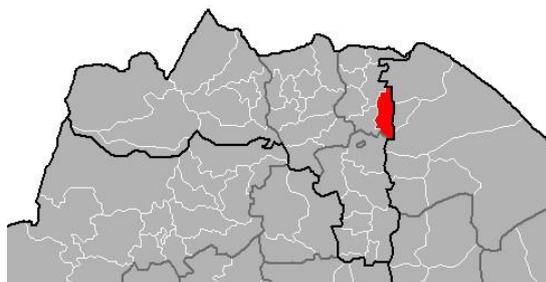
also failed to reconcile the emphasis on focusing on improving one's livelihood with the many time-taking meetings and, for the community volunteers serving in *tabia* government and party structures, the additional demands of their many responsibilities on their time.

A very small town was emerging around the *tabia* centre with electricity, radios, TVs, and mobile network since 2008. The centre was a 20-minute walk from an all-weather road to Atsbi the *wereda* centre in one direction and Afar in the other. There had been recently a sharp increase in irregular migration to Saudi Arabia. Urban migration (including by students) and international migration were a route through which new ideas were entering the community. It had become acceptable for people to try to establish their children in towns and for people with capital to invest in towns or outside of farming. Under the influence of urban areas and returning international migrants young men aspired to work in trade or business and live in towns. 'The political aspiration of the youth is to keep away from participating in political activities. They do not want to participate in politics because there is poverty and they want to improve their life. Those who are engaged in different political activities waste their time for no economic benefit' (Harresaw community report, 2012).

Geographical context²

Harresaw *kebele* is one of the *kebeles* sharing boundaries with the Afar Region at the periphery of Atsbi-Wemberta *wereda*, itself at the periphery of the Eastern Zone of Tigray (see Map 1). All boundaries of Harresaw that are not shared with other *kebeles* of the *wereda* are boundaries with Afar (see Map 2).

Map 1. Atsbi-Wemberta *wereda*



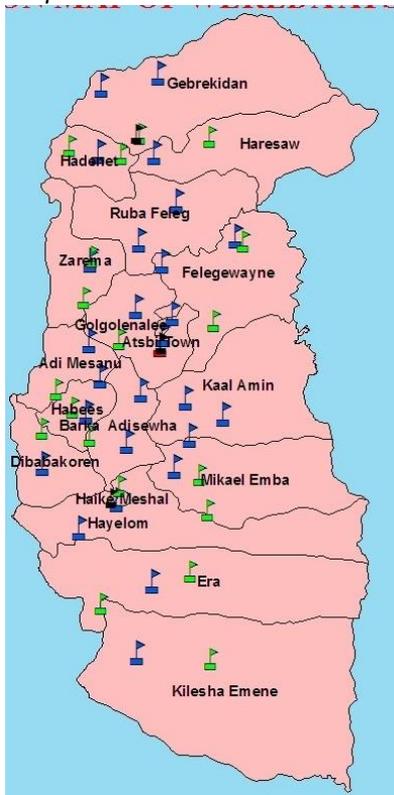
As can be seen from Map 3 and Map 4 below, showing the coverage in primary and secondary schools and in water points in the *wereda*, respectively, Harresaw is less well served than some other *kebeles*. Moreover, there are large intra-*kebele* differences, with e.g. Harresaw *kushet* in the eastern part of the *tabia*, much less well served than Lima'et *kushet* in the western part, where access to the main Atsbi-Dera road is also a lot easier.

² Except if specified otherwise, all maps come from an 'atlas' of Atsbi-Wemberta *wereda*, realized with regional support fairly recently but undated.

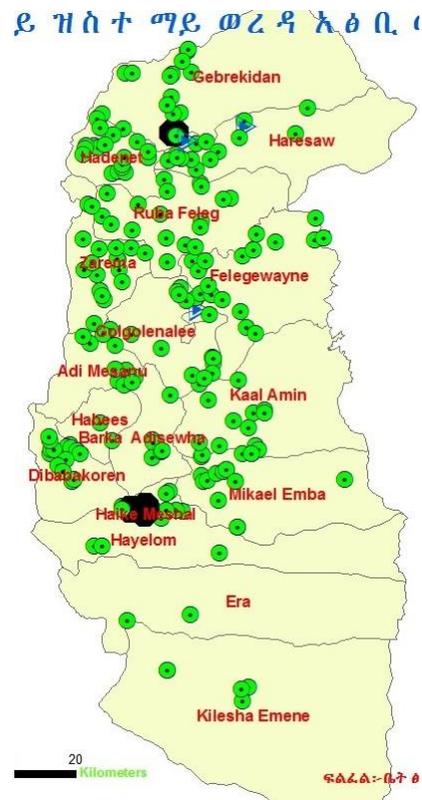
Map 2. Harresaw tabia/kebele in Atsbi



Map 3. Schools in Atsbi



Map 4. Water sources in Atsbi



Below (Map 5) is a map of Harresaw tabia (or kebele). Since 2012 there was one change to the kebele boundaries, that is, land adjacent to Dera was annexed to the newly established municipality, including one of the community's churches, the larger and older Gr1-8 school, and the health centre

which used to be on Harresaw's *kebele* land, as well as some farmland. This had yet to be finalised: no one had been compensated for land lost yet, and people had not yet been approached for that.

Map 5. Harresaw *kebele* (drawn by authors)



There had been no change to internal boundaries dividing the *kebele* in three *kushets* (Lima't, Maekel and Harresaw). The Lima't *kushet* is itself divided into two *gots*, Endemariam Wuo and Abi Dera; the Maekel *kushet* is also divided into two *gots*, Ekunta and Endegabriel. Harresaw *kushet* is not divided. This too had not changed.

Terrain & ecology

The terrain in the *kebele* ranges from highland (just above 3000masl) to lowland. It is very sloppy in some parts, and a large area in the slopes towards Afar is covered by forest.

Altitude, terrain, floods and erosion

Most of the *kebele* is *dega* (highland) with a lower altitude where the *kebele* is sloping towards Afar. The altitude therefore ranges from just above 3,000 masl to approx. 1,500 masl but there are no people living on these slopes.

Flatland is found in Endegebrael *got* in Maekel *kushet*, where the current *kebele* centre is located and there is also the flat farmland which used to be irrigated from the dam when this was functional. There are hills in Endemariam Wuo *got* in Lima't *kushet*, and in Harresaw *kushet*, as well as escarpments (towards Afar) in Harresaw *kushet*. Generally many areas of Harresaw *kushet* are vulnerable to erosion, and not suitable for settlement.

As there was very little or no rain in the past few years there was no risk of flooding or of further erosion. However, the community continues to work on water and soil conservation activities every year, through the PSNP public works, the free community labour, and work by individual farmers on their own farmland. The works done include terracing, construction of trenches and of check dams, tree and grass planting, and generally watershed development (see below).

Rivers and springs

There is a river flowing from the Zereroha watershed to the Afar Region. In addition to the lake of the dam, now much smaller than it used to be, there is a small lake in Abidera *got* in Lima't *kushet*; and a relatively large pond in Ekunta.

Underground water

In the community, access to drinking water is a big challenge. Following the visit of the then-Regional President during the 2007 EC (2015/16) drought, the Region invested in a big drinking water infrastructure project which pumps underground water, but it has hardly been functional since then (see more on drinking water infrastructure [p.20](#))³. Several water points are not functional (e.g. at the time of the fieldwork, water points supposed to supply water from the regional investment just mentioned to Ekunta and Harresaw *kushet* were not getting any water). Moreover, due to water scarcity in general, the quantity of water that a household could take was restricted at the water points that were functional, which at times provoked bitter disputes between people queuing for water. In spite of this context, the community has scarce information on underground water, and there was no mention of attempts to study it.

Watershed management

Watershed management has been since years a priority investment through community public works (paid by PSNP or voluntary on an annual campaign basis, see more on how these are organized elsewhere in the report). The first large watershed to be developed was the Zeroreha watershed in Harresaw *kushet*, which was under intensive development in 2012. Works have progressed well, more water has surged to the extent that this has been one of the few water points that did not dry up throughout the 2015/16 drought.

As more water was flowing, around one year ago a fairly large check dam, including a concrete wall to retain the water and windows to regulate the water flow, was built by a contractor commissioned by the *wereda*. However, there are many issues with this investment, including seepage and lack of enough rain water so that the structure does not retain as much water as planned. In addition, according to community respondents the project was not constructed according to standards. The dam is lower than what was specific, and the mechanisms to open and close the water regulating system are not completed so the flow is not regulated. Respondents from Harresaw *kushet* said they suspect there was corruption and collusion between the contractor and *wereda* officials, which they take as a kind of betrayal: *"this contractor is educated thanks to us (the parents' generation) and now he's cheating us, who are uneducated and have made him what he is"*.

In addition, two watersheds (called My Legede and Tahitay Ekunta) were started in 2007 EC.

There are guards for the watersheds. There should also be by-laws established by community members living nearby, and a management committee, to regulate the use of the resources of the watershed (e.g. water) to best effect. However, as illustrated by the case of the Zereroha watershed, this kind of communal management is not easy to implement: showing us a water access point recently developed on the Zereroha stream, a group of respondents living in the area recognized that although in principle, animals should only be brought to drink downstream so as to keep the water upstream cleaner for use by human beings, this is loosely implemented and the people living in the area so far failed to establish a management committee. They blamed the *wereda* for this too: *wereda* experts stopped coming, leaving the infrastructure unfinished and not giving any guidance about management, which undermined people's motivation.

The DA in charge of natural resources management (NRM), who leads on these developments, explained that the community could see for themselves the benefits of watershed development, including eroded areas now rehabilitated, underground water regenerating and springs surging, and that the rehabilitated land could therefore be given to landless youth to engage in beekeeping or

³ The combination of italic fonts and grey highlight is being used throughout the report to signal a hyperlinked reference to another part of the report (a chapter, box, specific text section, page etc.). 'Cntrl clicking' on the link brings the reader to that other part. To come back to the part which the reader was initially reading, click 'Alt Home'.

permanent tree plantation. However, he also mentioned challenges such as shortage of budget to do more, and difficulties in getting people's participation. Another challenge is that the people who are given rehabilitated land believe they can use it for anything they want, instead of using it for activities that will protect it and prevent it from being wasted again. In his views, the *kebele* administrators should do more awareness creation to prevent this mistaken attitude.

Irrigation

Harresaw has one of seven dams found in the *wereda*. The Harresaw dam was built in 1986 EC with support from an NGO. However, due to the recurrent drought and lack of or poor rain of the last few years, the water held by the dam has receded to the point that irrigation through the infrastructure built to channel the water to the plain around the *kebele* centre and elsewhere is no longer feasible at all since last year. See more in the *Irrigation infrastructure* section, below. Some smaller infrastructure was built over the years (wells, small ponds, small dams), at an individual or small group level, but most structures have similarly been affected by drought/lack of water.

In theory, a total of 275.5 hectares could be irrigated in the *kebele*, of which the largest area (223 hectares) through water from the dam; and a total of 649 households should benefit from irrigation. However, with the recurrent drought this potential has almost completely disappeared. No study seems to have been done or even mentioned, to try and ascertain whether some of this lost potential could be returned, depending on the rain pattern.

Water harvesting

Various respondents mention water harvesting activities done as part of the broader range of water and soil conservation activities undertaken by the community. This includes digging wells, building small dams, digging ponds – at an individual or small group scale. There was no information on the number of such structures. The technique consisting of lining a well/pond with plastic (*horeye*), which used to be heavily promoted with household strongly encouraged to buy the plastic on credit a few years ago, seemed to no longer be practised. The only mention was a 27-year old poor young man who explained that when he dropped school at Grade 9 and migrated to Saudi in 2002 EC, the first thing he did was to repay the package loan taken by his parents for a *horeye*.

A few respondents, including the elderly man head of a traditionally influential family interviewed by the Research Officers, mentioned having access to water (used for livestock and/or small-scale manual irrigation) through their own water harvesting device, but these were rare cases among the interviews. One respondent indicated that during the drought, most wells and ponds were dry, and many were dry again this year.

More generally, on one hand the *wereda* and to a lesser extent, *kebele* officials continue to insist on the priority for the community to work on 'alternative water source' infrastructure such as household reservoir etc. On the other hand, several respondents implied that solving the issue of access to water in Harresaw, be it water for agricultural development or drinking water, required investment way beyond the community and even the *wereda* level.

Water quality control

Water generally has become an even bigger issue than in 2012, not only for irrigation but also access to drinking water. The large scheme mentioned above, built as a regional investment, has been marred with issues, some owing to poor management and alleged corruption of the contractors and officials involved, others internal to the community. Roof catchment tanks like in the health post and Harresaw school were empty.

Forests and wooded areas

As was already the case in 2012, in the *kebele* a very large area of 12,190 hectares is protected forest. There are two government forests, in Harresaw *kushet* and in Ekunta *got* (Maekel *kushet*).

These are protected under the federal government regulations. There are also smaller 'social forests' i.e. areas which it was locally decided to protect, in Maekel and Lima't *kushets*. The northern part of the *kebele* also has various trees. One of the priests also noted that churches make their own contribution to environmental protection by planting various trees in their compounds such as eucalyptus, acacia, olive trees, *gravella*, *tahse* and *tid*.

The protected forests are guarded by people living nearby and paid for this work under the PSNP and instead of doing PWs. Livestock cannot graze there, in principle, although cutting and carrying grass is allowed. This grazing ban affects especially those keeping goats, and goat herders have to take goats far away to the Afar border to graze. No one can cut wood from the protected forests.

Forest protection seems to be taken more seriously than a few years ago, so that for instance, any deforestation-related case can no longer be seen by the social court but must immediately be seen by the *wereda* court. This change was put in effect in 2010 EC. In the past, traders from outside the *kebele* used to come to collect illegally cut wood from the area and were selling wood as fuel in local markets (including in Atsbi). This is gradually being replaced by eucalyptus trade, with an increasing number of community members in Harresaw growing eucalyptus as both, a source of fuel for themselves, and cash crop (selling wood for construction, and as fuel, locally in the community, and to these traders).

Grazing land

There are individuals having their own grazing land. This is land that they use only for grazing, and which was distributed to them in the 1983 EC land distribution. It is certified to them and can be inherited like any other farmland plot. There is also communal grazing land, including some specially protected communal grazing land.

The 'regular' communal grazing land is now being managed through the cut-and-carry system. There are penalties for individuals who do not control their livestock and whose livestock enters the land. That land is guarded: there are households who get the PSNP support as payment for guarding it rather than working on PWs like others. In two *kushets*, the communal grazing land was demarcated in individual plots allocated to households, although the land continues to be considered as communal land. There is also some protected communal land, which is grazed only twice a year and only by ploughing oxen. This tradition was already reported in 2012. In 1995 it was known as *hiza'eti* and could be used only at times of drought, as decided by the then PA leaders.

There is pressure on the communal grazing land: some people requested the *kebele* to reallocate this land in Maekel *kushet* as farmland to landless young people, but others opposed and this was not done. In 2009 EC, the government distributed 70 quintals of fertilizer to improve grass production in the *kebele*. Due to drought, the results were not as planned but there was some improvement, nonetheless.

Waste disposal and environmental sanitation

The HEW explained that there is no waste disposal service, but that all people have dug holes to put garbage and liquid things and collect dirty papers and burn them inside the holes. However, at another moment in the interview she recognises that environmental sanitation generally is poor in the urban centre of the *kebele*. She said

"People in the rural area are better at practically constructing latrine, hand wash station as well as dry and liquid garbage holes and they use them properly comparing to people in the centre of the kebele. People from the centre of the kebele do not use latrine and hand wash station properly even though they construct them."

Weather and climate

Generally, in the highland part of Harresaw winters can be very cold, with frost, heavy and cold mist, and hailstorms damaging crops and causing people's suffering from colds and skin sores. At other times a very hot wind is blowing from Afar which burns crops and is also hard on people; the areas adjacent to the Afar region are most highly affected by recurrent drought, hot winds, and frost during winters.

Most respondents noted the severe weather conditions in the *kebele* over the past five years. Community members talked about recurrent drought, with only one relatively better year just after the 2015/16 (2008 EC) drought. That drought was not as bad as the 'millennium drought' (2000 EC or 2007/8) which lasted two consecutive years with no production at all and large numbers of livestock dying. The reasons the 2015/16 drought was not just as bad are that a) it lasted only one year and there was some production the year after; b) emergency food aid (EFA) and other assistance was timely and even though most said it was not sufficient, it helped; c) especially, the water and fodder assistance made a difference, for people and livestock. However, there was again no production at all and landholders did not even get straw for their cattle.

The last season (2009/10 EC; 2017/18 GC) was considered as drought as well in Harresaw. It was comparatively a little better than 2015/16, because at least farmers had straw for their livestock. However, unlike for the 2015/16 drought, the PSNP support was very late and no emergency food aid was being provided.

In most respondents' views, repeated drought and shortage of water is a major reason for the lack of development in the area, because most people's livelihood still depends mainly on farming.

In particular, irrigation activities which were picking up in 2012 (WIDE3) have almost completely disappeared. The Harresaw dam holds so little water that even with the silt which has accumulated over the years, the water is not high enough to reach the water distribution mechanism. Last year there was still a little water available for a very few people, but this has now completely stopped. The water has been stagnant so that people say it cannot even be given for livestock to drink as it makes them sick. As said above, other small structures (wells, smaller dams) were built but most were also dry during the drought and are again dry this year.

Hence, most people's livelihoods depend on the rain and as Research Officers explain:

"It was very striking how community members were extremely happy when it rained for the first time in the dry season whilst we were in the field (in mid-March), which raised the hope that the coming summer will be a good harvesting season if there is rainfall during the dry season. Smile and hope was visible on every one's face at the time and it makes emotional enough for outsiders who observe that."

Moreover, non-farming activities are also affected by the recurrent drought. For most respondents the drought has a wealth-equalising effect as those with more farming activity are more strongly affected and poorer people get more support from the government. However, for others, this is not the case because no matter what, richer people manage to diversify into less drought-affected activities whereas poorer people do not have the resources to do so. (See more in the *Economic and political inequality* chapter).

In general people noted more extreme weather conditions. Heat waves, with very strong and hot winds coming from Afar, especially in July and August, affected Harresaw *kushet* in particular. Frost had been severe, affecting crops and trees, even 'burning' eucalyptus. And the winds were sometimes also very strong: in 2007 EC a windstorm destroyed several house roofs, among others blowing off the roof of two rooms in the *kebele* offices, which have not been repaired till now due to budget shortage.

Community land use

See [Map 5](#) above.

Land use

The total land area of the *kebele* is 16,500 hectares, of which as said above, 12,190 hectares of protected forest. The rest is composed of 675 hectares of arable land, 238 hectares of grazing land, 560 hectares of rehabilitated land, 325.5 hectares of rocky terrain and escarpments and 75 hectares of land that is not cultivable.

Spatial patterns

In the past, there was economic inequality between people involved in irrigation and those who were not. Access to irrigation was very different between *kushets*, because of the location of the dam and configuration of the terrain in the *kebele*: while Maekel and Lime't *kushets* had access to irrigation from the dam, Harresaw had none. This was prominent in people's accounts in 2012. Now that the dam holds too little water for irrigation this difference has disappeared, although households which used to be able to irrigate some of their land may well start from a better basis to cope with the drought.

There remains a big difference between *kushets* in terms of access to drinking water. Although poor everywhere, it is worst in Harresaw *kushet*, and Ekunta *got* (in Maekel *kushet*). During the 2015/16 drought two of the three big 'rotos' (hard plastic water containers) placed in the *kebele* and regularly supplied by trucks by the government were in Harresaw *kushet*, where all water points were dry. At that time access to the water point in the *kebele* centre became strictly regulated and this has continued to this day: people from rural areas have access in the morning and urban residents have access in the afternoon.

Those who live in the centre of the *kebele* have more exposure to new things like TV, electric stove and other household material. This has a lot to do with access to grid-based electric power, which is only available in the centre of the *kebele*. Access to electricity in the *kebele* centre also allows residents there to undertake business activities using things like a refrigerator, modern stoves, baker stoves, grinding mills, and mobile charging services.

In addition, people living in the remoter *kushets* and *gots* lack access to transport and have to walk long distances to access services in the *kebele* centre as well as in nearby towns. For instance, pregnant women who live in Harresaw *kushet* face a lot more problems in getting timely ambulance service, especially at night and during the rainy season.

People from Lima't *kushet*, especially those who live in Abidera *got*, benefit from easier access to the government services found in Dera as they are much closer to it. For instance, pregnant women from Abidera do their antenatal care service in Dera health centre rather than going to the health post in Harresaw. Those living in Abidera also have better access to the older, better established Grade 1-8 primary school located there, and to the secondary school in Dera. Also, whilst people from Lima't and Maekel choose between the health post and the health centre for services such as vaccination, FP, ANC and PNC, GMP and HIV/AIDS, most people from Harresaw *kushet* go to the health post because the health centre is far for them.

Settlement pattern

There is a growing difference in settlement patterns. On one hand, 'modern design' houses are found in the (existing) *kebele* centre; and in two other areas where young people were given residential plots, they build small houses made of square rooms and a usually one-slope roof of corrugated iron, also not following any traditional design (see section on [Urbanisation](#) just below, and more details in the relevant section in the [Land use and urbanisation](#) chapter). On the other hand, the customary Tigrayan settlement continues to prevail in 'the rural parts' of the *kebele*, with

traditional *hidmos* scattered in hamlets themselves scattered here and there in the sub-*kushets*. In a number of *hidmos*, some of the rooms are now covered with corrugated iron roofs but this is not yet a majority. *Hidmos* have continued to expand as young landless households may build a new room in their parents' compound.

This difference in settlement pattern is reflected in differences in lifestyles too. For instances, houses built on the small plots of residential land given to young people are much smaller than the traditional *hidmos*; and although some may have a compound, this is usually a lot less spacious than the large compound of some of the old *hidmos*, with the internal compound often used to protect animals from predators. As another example, as said earlier access to grid electricity is only available in the *kebele* centre. Elsewhere people increasingly use solar lamps though solar panels are not found. See pictures below to illustrate.



Top left: traditional hidmo in rural Harresaw. Top right: new house in Ekunta residential area. Bottom left: Harresaw kebele centre seen from a distance. Bottom right: Houses on the main street of the kebele centre.

The DA NRM is of the opinion that the mostly dispersed settlement pattern in Harresaw should cease and households living in these dispersed houses and hamlets should be resettled in specified locations. This, he said, would be beneficial in terms of both, easier access to services and infrastructure, and freeing up more land for rehabilitation hence bringing real long term change from an environmental viewpoint.

Urbanisation

More detailed information on urbanisation in Harresaw is given in the *Land use and urbanisation* chapter below. In brief, four urbanisation-related features have emerged or grown in importance since 2012.

- 1) The current *kebele* centre, although still very small, has expanded (see A in *Map 5*), with more service businesses of various sizes concentrated there.

- 2) Other smaller 'residential areas' have emerged elsewhere, as other *kushet* also began to allocate residential land to young people. Livelihood options in these smaller settlements include offering the same kind of services as in the *kebele* centre, but with more constraints of various types.
- 3) Dera, the adjacent rural town, has recently been established as a municipality, and is due to annex land from Harresaw including the health centre, the older Gr1-8 school, one church, as well as farmland. The process has not yet been finalised; no information was given yet with regard to compensation. Most people in Harresaw are neutral or content with Dera's expansion and new status, although there was a conflict about land still formally belonging to Harresaw and that livestock traders in Dera started to use for the livestock market.
- 4) One big issue on people's mind in Harresaw in 2018 was the question of where to establish the 'sketch plan' town of the *kebele*, which should be or become the centre of the *kebele*. Box 1 below presents the case and its various ramifications for the community.

Box 1. The sketch plan town of Harresaw

This follows a plan of the *wereda* whereby every year, four to six *kebeles* are selected to establish a 'sketch plan' town. It is part of a project of gradually urbanising specific areas of rural *kebeles* to reduce rural-urban migration of young people by supposedly offering them opportunities to involve in small businesses in these small urban centres, to be built according to a well-organised plan (prepared by the Tigray Region Housing Development and Administration Agency, according to a *wereda* informant). See more on the *wereda* project in the *Urbanisation in the wereda* section.

In Harresaw, the question of where to locate the sketch plan town has become a serious source of tension, deeply dividing the community. Even the community elders, renowned for contributing to settling conflicts between neighbouring *kebeles* and *kebeles* in Afar, cannot handle it as they too are divided and not neutral. Tensions arose when the former *kebele* leader (who was replaced following the annual *gemgema*, in the course of the fieldwork), 'decided' that the sketch plan town would not be established where the current *kebele* centre is located in Maekel *kushet* and instead would be located across the main road, in Lima't *kushet*, much nearer Dera (see B in *Map 5*).

One group vehemently opposes this, accusing the *kebele* leader of favouring his home area as he and his relatives have land in Lima't *kushet*. Others highlight that his decision is sound because although the current centre is the most 'urbanised' part of the *kebele*, it is poorly connected, on a small road not passable in rainy season. Locating the sketch plan town nearer the main road would facilitate business activity. To which the first group replies that this is not realistic as there will be competition from neighbouring Dera with better services. Some in that group mentioned that 'better educated *wereda* officials' sided with the *kebele* leader. Young people opposing the 'decision' went as far as disturbing a council meeting, throwing stones on the hall door. Young people are divided, and conflicts occurred between groups from different *kushet*. The quotes below, from people interviewed after the *kebele* leader was demoted, illustrate each position.

"(The man) was very biased, thinking only at the sub-kebele level instead of giving priority to the whole kebele's benefit. The main goal in his leadership tenure was moving the site of the kebele centre to his sub-kebele so as to benefit himself, his parents and relatives as well as people from his kushet. He was even saying officially that he would never regret if he left his position after moving the kebele centre to his sub-kebele. People from his sub-kebele are also on his side so that there was conflict among young people. So, it was only fair to remove him from the position before he could implement his bad plan" (a young man from the centre of the *kebele*).

"He was very intelligent and knowledgeable although he was young so he had not been able to accumulate leadership experience. He planned to move the centre of the kebele to the road side thinking that it is good for the development of the kebele as it would be easier to closely connect with Dera and Atsbi towns. However, people could not understand him. In any case, he is no more

the kebele leader but he had the capacity and he would have become better and gained experience if he had been given the chance for more years” (a man from Lim’at sub-kebele).

Several men identified as the most negatively influential people in the *kebele* the leader and those standing with him, having taken this ‘decision’ “*without consulting the community and because of this the community has entered into an argument.*”

At the end of the fieldwork this issue was not resolved, and *wereda* officials were rather unhappy about it, blaming the *kebele* administration for this and generally being ineffective in other respects as well. A possible solution had been proposed, to establish the sketch plan town in yet another location in *Ekunta got*, *Maekel kushet*, along the dry weather road connecting the current *kebele* centre to the main road, in one of the ‘residential areas’ mentioned above where young people were given residential plots and built houses (see C in *Map 5*).

Infrastructure

Public buildings

There has been no new construction of *kebele* public buildings since 2012. In the *kebele* centre, the *kebele* compound has offices for the leadership and the manager. There is also the cooperative shop and offices in which the LAC and social court meet, and a large meeting hall that had been built not long before 2012. The Farmer’s Training Centre is in a separate compound, very close to the *kebele* compound. Public buildings in the *kebele* centre still include the houses of the Development Agents and the community police, and the Health Post which is located at the other end of the ‘main street’ of the small but expanding *kebele* centre.

Some of the offices in the *kebele* compound were not in use at the time of the fieldwork. Strong wind had damaged the roof, taking away of the corrugated iron sheets, and this had not been repaired. When the ROs visited in 2018, the PSNP PWs were sometimes used to maintain and beautify the FTC compound (e.g. tree planting and watering).

The ongoing issue of where to locate the ‘sketch plan’ town of the *kebele* (see above under urbanisation) has implications with regard to public buildings as it presumably raises the question of relocating at least administrative buildings such as the *kebele* manager’s office.

The smaller Harresaw school has expanded as it is now providing education up to Grade 7 (from Grade 4 in 2012). The health centre and the older Gr1-8 public school in *Abidera got* are on land that has recently been allocated to the newly-established Dera municipality. Most people in the community note that this will not affect the community members’ access to these services.

Internal roads, paths and bridges and transport

The community spent a good part of the PSNP PWs to build internal dry-weather roads 1) to connect the (current) *kebele* centre to the main Atsbi-Dera road and 2) to connect various other parts of the *kebele* to the *kebele* centre, including *Abidera got*, *Ekunta got* and *Harresaw kushet*.

The road connecting the *kebele* centre passes through a flat part of the *kebele* which when it strongly rains, is waterlogged and not passable by car. Even motorbikes struggle. Once at the *kebele* centre the other dry-weather roads are more accessible even in the rainy season. But they are on rocky, sloppy terrain prone to erosion, especially the road to *Harresaw kushet*, and will likely require substantial maintenance every year. However, respondents asked about it or talking about the PSNP PWs all agreed that these were useful developments, especially to allow ambulances to come for pregnant mothers about to deliver. Also, people said they could ask a ride when there happened to be a vehicle coming from or going to a rural part of the *kebele*. The road connecting the *kebele* centre also allows more easily goods to be brought to the *kebele* centre, and business owners can hire private transport to do so.

There was a rumour that the *wereda* might build an all-weather road connecting the *kebele* centre but nothing moved thus far.

There is no regular transport within the *kebele*, all transport is on foot for people, and using donkeys to transport e.g. stones, water, grain and other goods to or from the markets or the *kebele* centre. A few people (five or six) have bicycles, which is a recent thing, and can use these to move to parts of the rural areas of the *kebele*. People also have to walk up to the main road or Dera to get access to transport to Atsbi and elsewhere and at times, when there was heavy rain, the walk is not easy as the terrain is completely waterlogged. There are no bridges within the *kebeles* but two *fords* (large concrete slabs put on the dry-weather road and over which the water is flowing) to channel the water and prevent it from stagnating on the roadside and damage the road.

Irrigation infrastructure

As noted above, the main irrigation infrastructure i.e. the dam built in 1986EC, has stopped providing water due to the last five years of poor rainfall. There are other dams in the *wereda* and some of them still hold water for irrigation, but this is no longer the case in Harresaw. Silt also accumulated against the wall of the dam. *Wereda* officials explained that this in itself is not an issue, and even, a certain amount of silt is 'recommended' as it can lift the water up to level at which it reaches the water distribution system, but since last year even this is not sufficient. As discussed in the *Farming* chapter this is a drastic loss for the community. Some of the most outspoken members mentioned that they believe this is not reported anywhere. Although our interviews with *wereda* officials suggest that they are aware of the problem, no solution was outlined by them.

In addition, canals to bring the water to the land that could be irrigated when there was water were built in earth and were never replaced by concrete canals, leading to big losses of water. One *wereda* official mentioned that with concrete canals five times more land could have been irrigated.

A number of smaller structures were built over the years, such as wells and smaller dams, but most are dry too. The same *wereda* official noted that the plan is now to focus on 'dry water structures' such as family 'baska' (a concrete water tank) and roof catchments.

However, it would seem that on their own, solutions relying on rainfall may not be sufficient; irrigation may never be a realistic prospect in Harresaw without a combination of several years of better rainfall, and some federal/regional level investment in more accurately mapping the potential of underground water, followed by investments of various sizes.

Drinking water infrastructure

The poor situation with regard to drinking water infrastructure was one of the three problems most often mentioned by respondents of different ages, gender and status – alongside migration and youth unemployment. One woman even said that in her opinion, "*it could be said there is no clean water access in the community: the water points for drinking are few and most of them are not working currently.*" For several other respondents, the drinking water service is the worst public service in the area.

According to the HEW, there are many water points for instance in Lima't *kushet*, but the waterflow has decreased and is small. Others are dysfunctional and no maintenance is done, or they are dry. Many wells for water for washing and livestock are also dry, as are the roof catchment reservoirs at the health post and the Harresaw school. There are a few protected springs or water points on streams but they are difficult to manage, as shown above be the case of the water point developed on the regenerated Zeroreha stream. The HEW said water purification medicine is available and distributed to the community, in liquid form (*wuha agar*) or in flour or tablet form (*bishan gari*), but that few people use the *bishan gari* because it is said to change the taste of the water. Only one of the women interviewed on the drinking water service mentioned the tablets.

As noted above, the then Regional President (Abay Woldu) visited Harresaw during the drought in 2015/16⁴. Following his visit the Regional Water Bureau together with UNICEF dug a big borehole and installed a sophisticated system of pipes that should first pump the water up a hill and add rain water collected there, then push this water down to make it reach communal taps built in Harresaw *kushet* and Ekunta *got*, where the shortage of drinking water is most severe. The project which is said to have costed 60 million *Birr*, was completed in July 2009 EC (July 2017). However, it only worked for four months (from July to September 2017) then some pipes exploded, and no water reached the taps any longer. Community respondents suspect that the contractor did not respect specifications – for instance, he used two different types of pipes and the lower ones, narrower and in plastic, did not cope with the pressure. They thought there was either lack of follow-up, or collusion, by regional officials. Some repairs were done in the course of the fieldwork, but whereas the water started flowing again in some pipes it did not in some others, so that recently built water point like the one shown in the picture below continued to not give any water.



Dysfunctional water point in Ekunta

There was also an issue of pipes being damaged in the upper part of the scheme, and this appeared to be intentional. These pipes are laid on land in Lima't *kushet* even though residents of Lima't do not have access to water from that scheme and so, some people suspected that residents of Lima't had damaged the pipes on purpose. This even involved the former *kebele* leader (who was in post in 2012 and is from Lima't *kushet*), who is otherwise rather well-regarded, as he was accused of covering up and not wanting to expose the culprits. The pipes were repaired at the same time as the others but the issue of who did the damage continued to agitate minds.

Always with the same scheme, an issue also occurred when the man responsible to open and close and regulate the water taken by residents at the outlet of the borehole, which was still possible, refused to give the money he had collected as user fees to contribute to the repairs: the money, he said, was his compensation for the land he had lost to the scheme and for which he had not been compensated (at least, as it was made clear by others, not as he wished). Again, this was dividing the community between those understanding him and others finding this behaviour unacceptable given the importance of drinking water.

There are regularly conflicts at the water points, between residents who queue for their turn or sometimes because someone does not want to pay the water user fee. The fee used to be 10 *Birr*/month and per household, but in early 2018 it was changed and made to depend on the number of jerrycans that a household is taking and the rate was fixed at 1 *Birr* per jerrycan. Reportedly, many

⁴ The story is that when he was fighting against the Derg, Abay Woldu was part of a group of TPLF fighters positioned in the area around Harresaw and supported in various ways by the people from Harresaw; some respondents from Harresaw believe that this is why he came especially to Harresaw during the drought and also decided that the Regional Government had to invest in the borehole.

women complain about this. The water resource leader of the *kebele* explained that the intention was to be able to maintain water points more efficiently and rapidly when there is a problem. Water points are all managed by a committee and one person who is responsible for opening and closing the water point and ensuring that people respect their turn (including about access for rural vs urban residents in the centre of the *kebele*) and collecting and managing user fees.



Queue at a water point

Mobile phones

Mobile network has been available since 2000 EC, and by 2007 EC access had been expanded to most parts of the *kebele*. There used to be a fixed landline in the *kebele* office and it was still functional and used in 2012. It became faulty and has not been repaired as no one would use it any longer. The use of mobile phones has become widespread. Some respondents, including the *kebele* manager, believe there is now at least one mobile phone in every household. Some young people, especially Saudi returnees, have smartphones and use social medias such as Facebook (most mentioned), Skype, IMO and Viber. However, access to a mobile and especially a smartphone seems to be a lot more widespread among young men than among young women. There are network problems as well and at times the network does not allow calls.

Mobile phones are used to listen to FM radio broadcasting; this has become very common. Almost all respondents note that mobile phones facilitate contacts with relatives and that this is especially useful for emergencies such as funerals, and to communicate with migrants everywhere including in Saudi. A few people add that it facilitates remittance transfer via the banks as the person receiving the transfer gets a text message. More generally, mobile phones are ubiquitous in all migration stories. There are also mentions, though less frequent, of their usefulness for business or trade (e.g. to find prices), and one farmer explains that young people can find information on job opportunities as well as educational materials on line, in addition to music and videos, most often mentioned. A few respondents note that communication by mobile can also facilitate crime (such as robbery) as criminals can better help each other to escape. However, mobile phones are generally seen as making things easier and faster, and people to be better informed about the news everywhere in the country and beyond, through the FM broadcasting.

All shops in the *kebele* centre offer mobile charging services for 2 *Birr* for a charge, and this is also available in Dera and Atsbi. Mobile phone repairs are available in Dera and Atsbi and if this is not done properly, in Wukro and Mekelle. To register/activate a SIM card, more often than not the system fails to allow doing this from Atsbi and one has to travel to Wukro.

Electricity

Electricity reached the *kebele* in 2002 EC and no expansion work was done ever since. It is therefore still available only up to and in the *kebele* centre. Those who want to connect are responsible to pay for the costs of drawing the line up to their house. The *kebele* administration's records show that

around 105 households have access to electricity either through their own meter, or through drawing a line against payment to someone having a meter. Since 2008 EC it has not been possible to get more electric meters. All government offices and the health post have electricity, but not the school in Harresaw *kushet*.

In contrast, the new residential areas are not electrified, nor are the rural hamlets. An increasing number of households use solar lamps. The *kebele* manager noted that across the whole *kebele* 503 households bought Delight solar panels, which are brought by the water office or rural development office of the *wereda* but which some people also bought on the market. One respondent mentioned two people using biogas to cook food, charge mobile and get light, and that this was introduced three years ago. No more details were given by anyone.

The issue of expansion of grid access has become a hot issue linked to that of the location of the sketch plan town (see above). This is how, as explained by a very upset young woman living in Ekunta got.

“The chance of electric power access was given to the kushet Maekel by the woreda. There is electric power supply in the centre of the kebele but not in other parts of the kushet like Ekunta. Thus, we were very happy thinking that our got Ekunta will have electric power soon. However, the kebele leader planned to move the centre to his kushet, Lima’t. That means the chance of accessing electric power too will be moved to his kushet. So, we felt very angry and sad: even, many young men disturbed the kebele administration and they were about to beat the kebele leader because he officially said that he will certainly move the centre to his kushet and he will feel happy if he leaves his position after he did that. He was saying this in public and at meetings. That is why most people are angry on him.”

With regard to changes brought by electricity, there were mentions of new things found in people’s houses and some new business activities, including the fridge in the largest snack-bar/ café of the *kebele* centre, a number of TVs in hospitality or leisure service places and in private households, a few electric stoves, grinding mills, and Hagos’s bakery stove. Barber shops and modern hairdressing salons can be open and at the time of the fieldwork in 2018 there were six barber shops and for a short period of time one hairdresser salon (her owner closed it soon after starting it, to migrate to Saudi). Electricity is needed to charge mobile phones. TVs are useful to get information and entertainment. Access to electricity was associated to urban lifestyle by several respondents.

Several people mentioned that as access to electric power is restricted to the *kebele* centre this means access to things like news and entertainment through TVs is also limited. Hence, access to electricity has a lesser impact than access to mobile phones and to the mobile network. There is also a strong gender difference, because it is not acceptable for young women to spend their leisure time in bars and cafés where there are TVs, unlike young men. So, only a very few young women who have TV at home and occasionally their friends enjoy this.

External roads, bridges & transport

There was no change in terms of road access to and from the *kebele* since 2012. The *kebele* is crosscut in its westmost part by a gravel all-weather road connecting Atsbi to Dera and further to the Afar Region, or back to Adigrat through Edaga Hamus. The main and welcome change is that whereas there used to be transport only on market days i.e. twice a week, there is now transport every day. Access to the main road hence to Dera, Atsbi and farther is of course much easier for people of Lima’t than those of Ekunta got or Harresaw *kushet*. It takes 30 to 40 minute to walk from the *kebele* centre to the road. From there most people travel to Dera on foot to save the money and because it is close by. Moreover, there is rarely any seat available for that short distance.

There are two main issues with transportation. First, to go to Atsbi one may have to wait a long time on the roadside for the same reason i.e. buses are full when they leave Dera. So, it is better to walk to Dera and take the bus from there. Second, as the demand exceeds the supply transporters often

charge whatever they please. This is equally true for journeys to Wukro or Adigrat, the zonal capital, or Mekelle. Official tariffs are as follow:

- Dera – Atsbi: 10 *Birr*
- Atsbi – Wukro: 12 *Birr*
- Wukro – Adigrat: 17 *Birr*
- Wukro – Mekelle: 20 *Birr*.

Community social fabrics and economy

Main social traits of the community

Population and households

According to knowledgeable respondents, there are around 2,000 households in the community, of an average size of 7 household members. It is customary for several households of an extended family to live in separate houses and households but on the same compound, but this trend has increased as there are so many young people and young couple without any land (farmland and residential land). There are more female-headed households than male-headed households: they reportedly represent approximately 60% of the households. The HEW talked about 1,339 households in total who should pay the ambulance/Red Cross contribution but she does not say whether this includes all households.

The population of the *kebele* is approximately 7,000 although both the HEW and the community police noted that this is difficult to estimate as there is so much mobility. At any point in time there are a number of people who are in Afar for work, for periods of time varying from a few weeks to much longer; these are both men and women although women are less numerous. At any point in time there are also people who are abroad, almost all in Saudi. There is a sense that the number of those who go over one year may have decreased somewhat in the past few years as deportation and other risks are much higher, but the numbers are still in the hundreds (some say 200-300 a year, others even higher).

Ethnicity and clan

All inhabitants of the *kebele* are Tigrayans. There are no clans in Tigray.

There are 'historically influential families', but they are few (the Research Officers were told of one and went to interview the head of household, see *Box 9* below). Their influence is of a different nature from that of other elite such as *kebele* leaders, ex-fighters, elders, and a few increasingly influential informal model non-farmers.

There is no longer overt stigma against groups like people considered as 'slaves' because their ancestors were servants of rich households, and craftworkers. Respondents are reluctant to comment on this, but those who did mentioned that people considered as slaves were coming from other parts of Ethiopia; and members of the community did not want to marry them, and also the two blacksmiths, although they might have children from them.

Religion

The only practised religion is Tadesho Orthodox Christianity and this has not changed.

The *kebele* is sharing borders with the mainly Muslim Afar people. In Harresaw, priests explained that there is a good relation between the Church and Afar people, with mutual respects for each other's elder and religious leaders. When there is conflict, it is about land. However, one respondent mentioned that people who have blood relations with Afar are called *Teltalay* or *Aslamay* (Muslim) and are less respected and that people prefer not to marry them.

Most respondents said that the community does not, generally, spend a lot of time in religious activities; and several said that they are less religious than in the past and the young generation is not much interested. Several respondents linked this to migration (to Saudi) and in particular, to migration by the priests. For instance one young woman explained:

“Even priests and deacons are not as committed as earlier in religious activities and service. For instance, there are many deacons and priests who migrate to Saudi and have to adopt a Muslim life style there. But, they give religious service when they return back to the community as if nothing had happened. Thus, community members have less trust in these religious personalities and they also reduce their involvement in religious activities. In addition, I know a few priests who are involved in gambling and being drunk in the community, which was not familiar in the past years.”

Priests even if they do not migrate are ambiguous about migration (meaning, migration to Saudi). One middle-age priest talking about it explained that church leaders are asked by *kebele* officials to help discouraging young people from migrating and they do this. At the same time, as an institution the church does not blame them. And he as an individual is “*strongly against migration*”, but “*we understand their frustration so we cannot criticise them harshly. What do we have to tell them?*” In his opinion, migration does not lead people to change their religious position; what bothers the community including priests is the change in their ‘cultural identity’ and especially their ‘consumerism’ (spending one’s money in towns, on drinking, smoking, gambling etc.).

Several instances of stealing from churches were reported to Research Officers during their stay. One young woman said this kind of incidents were on the increase, which she relates to a growing laxity with religious rules. For instance, she said there are young people and women eating eggs and meat even during the big fasting season before Easter. With regard to the stealing instances, in one case, the precious crosses of the church had been taken out for a funeral and they could not be found afterwards. Some people reportedly suspected the priests themselves. In another case, money was stolen from the box in which people make gifts for the church. The *kebele* administration and police could not find the thieves so the community attempted to find the culprit in the way which is customary when these kinds of stealing from the church happens, as follows:

All members of the community are asked to gather on a specific day and place. The praying sticks are all gathered and people and priests curse the unknown thieves by throwing the sticks on the ground, meaning ‘let’s God break the thieves’ body like these sticks’. Anyone who is absent from this ceremony is suspect. However, no one was absent.

One trait of the community is the major importance of *maheber*, these voluntary associations linked to each church, honouring the church’s saint and organising feasts for the *maheber* members to this effect, and supporting the church. All respondents mentioned their *maheber* as an important form of socialising, including young men and women stating that they were not otherwise particularly ‘strong with their religion’. Women belonging to one *maheber* thrive to dress in similar ways and there is a new fashion of wearing traditional dresses but made of *shifon*, an expensive new fabric which can be found in Dera. The *mehaber* support to the church is very important as well, through monthly contributions serving to purchase carpets, umbrellas and other materials for the church.

Meskel groups and *Meskel* feasts are also an important social institution and event. *Meskel* groups are formed by neighbourhood and they join efforts to prepare a big feast for the *Meskel* holiday, as a way of thanking God for being healthy and alive for one more year and to strengthen relationships between members of the groups. Traditionally, the organisation of the *Meskel* feast calls on a lot of work by women preparing the food, and young men mounting tents etc. All households contribute what they can whereas the food and drinks are shared among men exclusively. Leaders of *Meskel* groups are generally well-respected men, and among the people considered as influential.

Independence of the economy

As further outlined in the chapter on *Drought*, the local economy of Harresaw was strongly affected by the 2015/16 drought, and generally poor weather in the last five-six years, with only one year of better rains. In addition to the immediate effects on rainfed production, this also affected the livestock subsector, and as explained above, led to the quasi-disappearance of irrigated agriculture. A number of respondents noted that the community could not survive without the government assistance and without people moving out to look out for work. Several of them added that the government needed to change its focus, considering the repeated failure of farming in the area. If anything, the local economy in early 2018 was less independent than in 2011/12 and yet, 'food aid support' in the form of Productive Safety Net Programme transfers and emergency food aid covered far fewer people and households in 2018 than at the peak of the 2015/16 drought and even fewer than in 2011/12 (see *p.196*).

Balance of livelihood activities

Due to drought the farming sector contracted over the past five-six years (see *Farming* chapter). Alternative sources of income have become more important, such as eucalyptus sale. There has been a shift towards livestock production, although this too is constrained by water and fodder shortages – with 'low-value' fodder such as cactus leaves being increasingly commercialised, and grass said to become expensive. Honey production is said to have become insignificant, as bees die or flee because of drought or are kept alive by farmers but without producing.

The small nonfarm sector – comprising mainly of agricultural trade and various services offered in the *kebele* centre – has somewhat expanded (see *Non-farming* chapter). However, drought has limited this too as the lower level of agricultural production means less of it is being commercialised, and people's purchasing power hence demand for services and manufactured goods is affected by the smaller agricultural incomes.

Outmigration is a vital component of the local economy: migration to urban areas is less important than migration to Afar, where opportunities for daily labour in farm and nonfarm activities represent an alternative to the reduced local demand for daily labour; and irregular migration to Saudi Arabia. However, the latter, in particular, was drastically curtailed in terms of both numbers (the approx. 150-250 said to still go in a year represent half the number going in 2011/12) and outcomes (much riskier, relatively small incomes in maximum 20-30% of the cases, continuous inflows of deportees sometimes not able to repay the loan taken to finance their trip). Arguably, because of the macro-level decision taken by the government of Ethiopia to ban migration abroad over the 2013-18 period, and of shifts in regional/ international political economy (the war in Yemen, and Saudi authorities' anti-immigration and crackdown policy), the local developmental potential of this type of migration was greatly reduced. At the same time, the local developmental potential of people's moving for work to urban areas also appeared to be constrained by the government's 'indecision' with regard to how to handle this type of migration.

Main livelihood portfolios

In early 2018 many households and individuals had mixed portfolios with a range of livelihood activities. Diversification across farming and nonfarming was important both for richer households and individuals as it enabled them to effectively manage risks and maintain or possibly enhance their economic status; and poorer ones, especially the large and increasing number of landless households and individuals for which farm and nonfarm daily labour, and some small-scale nonfarm

activities were indispensable for survival. There were households and individuals belonging to each of these categories⁵:

- 1) Economic elites (mostly male) – rich households with heads involved in one or a combination of farming, trade, other business, and *kebele* leadership; other family members may have independent economic activities; they may have houses in nearby urban areas
- 2) Middle-wealth landed farming households (male and female) – maybe renting in more land – maybe also with members involved in non-farm activities
- 3) Landholding households renting land out – some with heads who are female or too poor, old or sick to farm; some rich households in the process of abandoning farming and adopting fully non-farm livelihoods; some renting land out temporarily to repay a debt or while involved in more or less successful non-farm activities including migration
- 4) Households renting farmland in: some landless, some seeking (more) land to farm including young men unable to get land from parents; members maybe also be involved in more or less successful non-farm activities
- 5) Landless households involved in mixes of relatively successful non-farm activities (male and female) – small businesses, trade, full-time employment, daily labour in the community, and migration
- 6) Poor landless households with a portfolio of livelihood activities – maybe daily labour, wood/ grass-selling, petty trade, seasonal migration, PSNP, some ‘idle’
- 7) Landless full-time farmworkers/domestic servants
- 8) Destitute people – no land, often no house, dependent on others.

A number of respondents argued that in Harresaw there are no or very few very rich households or people (see *Economic and political inequality* chapter). There were also very few fulltime farmworkers and domestic servants in the community. The most successful ‘businessman’ was a young man in his mid-20s, who in 2011/12 was the first and only shoe-shiner of the *kebele* also repairing bicycles, and who in early 2018 owned the largest shop, ran the largest café/snack-bar with a refrigerator, and had the only bakery of the *kebele*. He had a small plot of land which he was thinking of renting out and he had also just started fattening two hybrid bulls. (See *Box 16*).

Mixed economy

The local economy was therefore mixed, across the farm and nonfarm sectors, although even with the drought and land scarcity many were still thinking of themselves primarily as ‘farmers’. From the point of view of exports and imports, the main characteristic was the small scale of flows in both directions, which was directly related to the small size of the local economy, and the community’s relative remoteness⁶.

Exports

Exports of irrigated products which was picking up in 2011/12 (vegetables, potatoes) had all but stopped in 2018. Exports of other crops were limited, with eucalyptus possibly being the dominant source of net income: most households selling other crops such as grain were doing so immediately after harvest because they needed the cash, but they would need to purchase food at other times in the year or they were selling small quantities of a crop to buy another as food. Commercialisation of livestock and livestock products was more visible than five-six years before: eggs, chicken for meat, milk and butter, sheep especially around Meskel and other holidays, and some cattle fattening.

⁵ Drawn from the WIDE Bridge Discussion Brief on ‘rural modernisation and inequalities’, by Pip Bevan, forthcoming.

⁶ In comparison with the other WIDE Bridge communities Harresaw is the smallest economy and it had contracted whereas the other three had grown since 2011/13. It also is the remotest.

Imports

The community imported food (including in the form of in-kind PSNP transfers every year, and emergency food aid in 2015/16 and some in 2016/17) and a range of commodity goods including imported factory drinks (soft drinks and beers) sold in two local snack bars/cafés. Inputs for crop growing (fertiliser, improved seeds) were ‘imported’ through the multiservice cooperative and purchase was sometimes enforced on farmers. Inputs for livestock production such as improved chicks and factory-made fodder were imported by a few private actors, locally or on nearby markets (Dera, Atsbi). At a very small-scale the few businesses such as a bakery, two/three tailors, also imported the inputs they needed.

Savings, credit and debt

Formal savings and credit services were available in Dera (with a branch of the regional micro-finance institution Dede-bit and a newly opened branch of the Ambessa/Lion’s bank) and Atsbi (seven banks, Dede-bit). There were people with bank accounts and savings, but access to credit services was very limited. On one hand, Dede-bit limited the lending capital available in Atsbi *wereda*, known for its general weak loan repayment performance; on the other, the high interest rate (18%) on standard loans discouraged people and several individuals, including the *kebele* manager, considered it to be unreasonable in a hardship place like Harresaw. A local rural savings and credit association was established in 2012, whose membership had expanded, and a few interviewees mentioned savings and loans they obtained from it, and that this kind of community association should become strong so as to help people expand their business (see [p.115](#) and [p.140](#)).

On the whole, access to loans from formal or established community organisations was very limited. Most loans were taken from relatives or ‘acquaintances’; there was a growing trend in informally using land as a collateral, in transactions in which the party renting-out her/his land got a loan in cash from the person renting-in and would get her/his land back only when the loan would be fully repaid. Many of these informal transactions (but not all) were undertaken for financing migration journeys; this could turn well, allowing the loan to be refunded, but could also leave the indebted household landless in case the migrant was unable to remit/save to refund the loan (see chapters on migration and on land management).

So on one hand, the level of indebtedness vis-à-vis formal institutions was most likely lower than it was in 2010, but informal indebtedness might well have risen.

Inward investment

There was some investment in Atsbi, the *wereda* centre, although *wereda* officials were complaining that most of this was in the service sector and especially, for hotels (53 licenses in the past few years), and very few in manufacturing. In addition, the few manufacturing investments in e.g. water bottling, took a long time before starting activity, and consideration was being given to take back some of the land allocated for these.

In Harresaw the only investors that were given land were two brothers, from the community and with their own farmland, with established businesses in neighbouring Dera, and who obtained 10 hectares of land for beekeeping and honey production. At the time of the fieldwork this was one year old; they had fenced the land and placed 45 modern bee hives but they had not yet started producing because of the drought, whereas their 15-year license was given against the objective of placing a thousand bee hives.

Inflation

Most respondents saw inflation as a big issue, negatively impacting most household’s economic status and wellbeing. In recent years, reportedly the prices of most of the items purchased in the market rose. The price of agricultural inputs was said to have doubled in the past three years (e.g.

from 700 to 1,300 *birr*/quintal for fertiliser), which together with the drought led to reduced use of agricultural inputs (both in terms of number of farmers using them, and the quantity they used). The price increase for fertiliser was all the more problematic that practices of enforcing farmers to purchase fertiliser continued (examples included emergency food aid distribution delayed until farmers had bought what they 'had to'; and a well-known and respected individual sacked from his *kebele*-paid position as guard because of refusing to buy). Further, daily labour costs and the price of agriculture tools also increased.

Livestock prices kept fluctuating, decreasing because of drought-induced water and fodder shortage and people selling livestock at a loss to be able to sustain those they kept; and increasing when the weather conditions were a bit better due to rising demand in nearby markets.

The price of commodities, including grain that most households have to buy at one or another point in the year, as well as sugar, coffee, oil and others, had all strongly increased. The price of houses had also become very high. Transport had also risen (10 *birr* from Dera to Atsbi) and transporters charged over the tariff. The wage rate of daily labourers was 80 -100 *Birr* per day for farm labour, 130-150 *birr* per day for labourers quarrying stone for housing, and 200 *birr* per day for skilled construction labourers. School registration fee had increased from 25 *Birr* to 50 *Birr*.

Reportedly, fewer than 5% of Harresaw's households were said to benefit from the inflation. These were grain and goods traders who were able to buy at a cheap price and sell after they stored and waited until the price increased.

Cultural ideas and practices

Conservative and modern repertoires

'Fault lines' between conservative and modern repertoires were most tangible with regard to gender social norms; family planning and maternal health; and as further outlined below, in relation to some of the 'modern' clothing and hair styles adopted by some of the young people in the community.

Gender social norms

Social norms defining what was acceptable and desirable were much stronger and more conservative with regard to young women than for young men. For instance:

Silence and patience are considered as desirable for young women... and considered as respect for adults. Young women who talk too much and are more sociable with adults, especially with male, are considered as rude and disrespectful for adult community members (18-year old poor young woman)

Conservative gender norms limited their options for the majority of young women who did not succeed in breaking away from tradition in one of two ways, i.e. getting a professional job after pursuing education (of whom there were very few), and/or moving away from the community. If these options were barred, young women, including grade 8 or even grade 10 completers, would then sought to marry as the first and only option they were left with (e.g. 27-year old middle-wealth young woman grade 9 dropout, established as second wife of a man married elsewhere and established as a farmer; 28-year old grade 10 leaver who got sick and is now married with a husband repeatedly migrating to Saudi and with two children).

With regard to marrying, wealth and prospects of access to land mattered (see chapters on inequalities and on land), and also, whether the young woman was "*a good girl*". The female Research Officer was struck by the way in which for marriage, people in the community appreciate more the young women who 'stay around', help their parents etc; whereas those who went away, even to study elsewhere in Ethiopia, were seen as 'rootless'. That was most acute for those who went to Saudi, who were said to have no chance of finding someone from the community to marry,

except someone they might have met over there, or if they had returned with some money. It was said to be “*taboo*” for young women, especially unmarried, to have boyfriends, or even simply male friends (e.g. a young woman who had male friends when she was studying for college education in Wukro, had stopped because it was “*unacceptable in the community*”). Having premarital sexual relations, being pregnant out of wedlock, or establishing one’s own household before/without marrying were all equated to prostitution. However, the young women in their late 20s thought that young women these days had a bit more of a say on their life and could refuse a marriage arranged by their parents, especially those who had a boyfriend. In some cases, this was settled ‘amicably’ between the girl and her parents, “*if the young man is a good person*”; in others, the young couple eloped which put parents before a ‘*fait accompli*’.

Involvement in community affairs was another domain of tension between conservative and more progressive ideas. Women explained that young women wanted to be involved in politics, but their parents and husbands did not allow this. Husbands were said to “*feel bad when their wives are exposed outside home and participating in meetings and discussions in the community*” and “*community members do not have a good attitude for women who have active participation in kebele meetings and other political activity*”. However, the few women in *kebele* positions were considered as influential.

Family planning and maternal health

Several women thought that there was a big shift in the community’s attitude with regard to family planning/use of contraception, and maternal health. They explained that some ten or even five years ago religious leaders opposed contraception, male opposition was very high too, and many, including women, were afraid that contraception resulted in permanent infertility. More recently, priests reportedly stopped opposing, and there were even a few husbands coming to the health post with their wives to choose what kind of contraception they would use, which would be convenient for both; and there was a general awareness that spacing births was desirable and “*giving birth every year causes problems*”.

At the same time, there seemed to be a lot of children in the community, and the female Research Officer was struck by how young some of the mothers of one, two or even three children were. Whilst some women, including the Health Extension Worker, thought that young women were more open to discuss about health issues and contraception and abortion with her and their peers, interviews also showed that unmarried young people continued to feel shy from accessing contraception locally for fear of gossip and of being labelled a prostitute. This reportedly led to a rising number of unwanted pregnancies and possibly abortions.

The same tension between modern and conservative repertoires was visible around birth deliveries at a health institution, which was said to be strongly opposed to by older people and husbands in the past (“*men used to refuse to carry women at the health centre*”; “*husbands did not care a lot about deliveries, because they thought they could have a number of wives*”). These days, this was shifting – as described in **Box 11** by a former Traditional Birth Attendant. Among the interviewees there were examples of ‘progressive husbands’ such as this third-year TVET student in Atsbi, also working as construction manager, who explained that he and his wife borrowed the money they needed to go and consult because they knew about the risk of RH+ factor.

Other signs of ‘conservative thinking’

The interviews reveal that beliefs in witchcraft and in the virtues of holy water continued to exist, including among younger and more educated people with exposure to urban life (e.g. a grade 8 young woman age 22 working as housemaid in Mekelle and who stopped as she was bewitched and had to go to holy water).

Attitude to education

There is not 'one', but a range of attitudes towards education. However, on the whole, Harresaw may well be an example of a community in which the question of 'education for what' has become prominent in students and parents' minds even whilst the number of young people able to go beyond grade 10, which is necessary to 'make it with education', is still small. To give an idea of proportions, those with grade 10 and more were fewer than 9% of the young people identified as unemployed by the *kebele*.

The prevailing ambivalence vis-à-vis education is summarised by the head teacher of the grade 1-7 school established in Harresaw *kushet*; he is from Ekunta and therefore "*I know well how people in this area are thinking*". On one hand, he said, school dropouts in early grades have decreased and access continues to improve with more grades available in his school and the grade 9-10 school in nearby Dera, encouraging students to stay longer at school. On the other, most of those attending "*don't love their school*", they want to migrate and are at school whilst waiting the right time to do this, so, "*we are giving education for nothing*". He added that he, for instance, has a degree in economics and in teaching, and from Harresaw there are others who are lawyers, or doctors and there even is a pilot; but his students believe that these people reach where they are because they were from rich families who could support them and they do not think they have a chance to succeed as their family is not rich. Moreover, some professions like teachers are no longer valued so much, and they are no longer role models as such.

The lack of job prospects for educated people played a role. For many respondents, young and adults alike, government had to give priority to create more jobs so as to give young people some hope; several respondents had stories of themselves or friends or relatives with education and no job. At the same time, many parents still dream of seeing their children educated and getting a job, or having their own business and doing well with the help of their education – one poor woman whose son studies at Woldia university with some support from a relative explained to the Research Officer that she would do anything for him to be able to continue; and some young people highlighted that education helped generally: "*it gave me a good attitude to work, and to believe that you can change your life by working hard*".

The growing trend of questioning the value of education coexisted with still large numbers of young people who did not go very far at all at school, like an 18-year old poor young woman who dropped at grade 4 and another still quite young who had never been to school.

Also see the [Education, work prospects and what do young people actually do](#) section below.

Cultural imports

Lifestyle, clothes, hairstyles

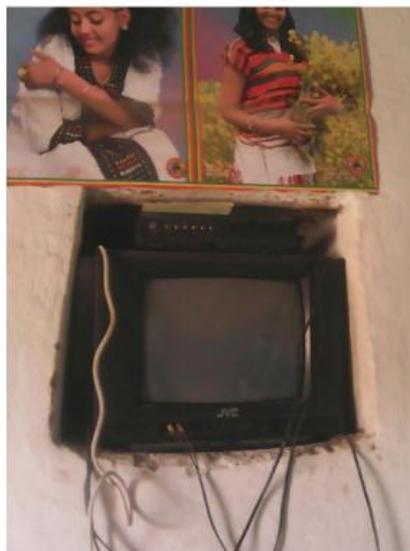
Lifestyles markedly differed for those living in the *kebele* centre and with some wealth, with a few households with their own TV, an electric injera-baking plate, electric lighting at home, 'modern' household furniture etc. and those living in the traditional '*hidmos*' far away from electricity and who, even if they might be relatively wealthy, usually also had more traditional household equipment and furniture. This contrast is illustrated in the pictures below.

One woman listed the new items found in the community as follows: electric baking stoves, introduced one year ago and 15 households have one; improved stoves, introduced five years ago and used by many people, found in almost each household but not durable; kitchen cupboards made of wood, bought by a few households living in the *kebele* centre; plastic or metal utensils for water, tella and to make and serve good; battery bulbs and torches, which became common in the past three-four years as they were introduced by people who returned from Saudi; TVs, also introduced by Saudi migrant returnees four years ago and other people followed and bought a TV (nine households owned one); two refrigerators owned by people who sell beer; solar lights, used in the

rural parts of the *kebele*, distributed by the DAs and also found and bought on the market; biogas, introduced three years ago and used by two households to cook food, charge mobile and light; and a few bicycles (five or six).



Traditional lifestyle



Modern lifestyle

Generally new clothing styles and clothes were worn by young people, mostly returnees from migration to Saudi or a town, or under their influence. For young women these included skirts, underwear, scarps, and even jeans/trousers for migrant returnees. There is also a new kind of traditional dress but made with an expensive new fabric called *shiffon*, which is worn by both young and older women. Generally new clothing styles adopted by women were not frowned upon, except trousers which they rapidly abandoned when they were in the community and would wear only

when going to towns. Young men's clothing style was also strongly influenced by the same factors, and the trend of wearing trousers without belt and "*their buttocks are shown*" was particularly disliked by the older generation.

Several respondents linked these trends to migration in two ways, first because they were mostly introduced by migrants returning with some money, and second, because some young people would be drawn into migration because of the desire to get such 'modern clothes'. Several also highlighted that these new clothing trends created or deepened the gap between wealthier and poorer people: poorer young women could not afford *shiffon* dresses or only the cheapest kind (at 350 *birr* whereas middle-wealth women could afford buying a *shiffon* dress at 700 *birr* and rich one at 1,000 *birr*), poorer young men would get in debt or would find it difficult to compete with wealthier ones to buy the expensive new clothes now seen as indispensable gifts for one's bride.

There were also some modern trends in braiding, also using artificial coloured hair, and new straight and curly hair styles; with young women going to 'modern' hairdressing salons in Dera or Atsbi especially for social occasions. Again this was linked to urban and migration influence, and was more common among younger women. Some respondents said there were no negative reactions to these new hair styles for women (unlike for men); others said they were disliked because of being "*out of the tradition and culture*". Like for clothes, changes were more visible with regard to new hairstyles among young men. There were six barber shops in Harresaw centre vs not even one modern hairdressing salon for women. Hairstyles copied from abroad, or seen on TV or in towns, were a 'must' among a group of young men, alternating between idling in the *kebele* centre and attempting to migrate to Saudi, and those under their influence (see p.267 in *Young people's economic and other experiences* chapter). Dreadlocks ('twisted hair') and the kind of cuts that makes young men resemble to cocks were found very odd, and much disliked by the older generation.

Media

There was greater access to a wider range of media than five-six years back, although this was strongly mediated by age, gender, wealth, education and extent of exposure to urban and migration influences. For instance, young people at school and those with more exposure to towns or migration were said to be more likely to e.g. listen to non-traditional music; or they would know about TV channels like Kana TV, not found in Harresaw but which a young woman was watching when she was working and studying in Mekelle.

The main novelties are access to TV including to channels other than domestic ones (especially EBS and Eritrean TV), and access to a range of FM radio programmes for news and music including modern Amharic and Tigrinya music. This gives access to ideas, news, information (including on health issues, mentioned by several women), videos, music from a wider range of sources. Some said this meant that this caused the community to know more about the world and news of the country. Some older people listened to America and Deutsche Well radio channels.

Access to TV was a lot more limited for young women who are not supposed to go and have relaxation time in places like the local billiard rooms and snack bars. As explained earlier listening to FM programmes was one of the main uses of mobile phones, more widespread amongst young men than young women. Access to internet was still quite low, limited to a few young men with smartphones (especially migrant returnees), using Facebook (most mentioned), Viber, IMO and Skype.

Newspapers were hardly mentioned at all. The practice of development teams gathering to read the party newspaper seemed to have faded away and one respondent said "*often people get bored and do not attend because the newspaper is repeating what they already know.*"

Diet

Diet which used to be mostly based on barley porridge and *tihilo* is more diversified. Injera is said to have become more common; the community also has access to bread with a local bakery, and pasta, macaroni and rice in the commodity shops. People also buy biscuits and soft drinks. Several respondents seemed to imply that this was 'good for one's health'. In somewhat of a contrast, access to vegetables must have declined as the production has almost stopped. Some respondents noted that eggs and milk were more on demand locally than in the past. Most of the changes, especially those related to factory-made food, concerned especially wealthier households and those living in the *kebele* centre.

Another new trend was the consumption of factory-made alcohol and especially, beer, available in several places in the *kebele* centre. This involved the group of 'drifting young men' mentioned earlier and was sometimes degenerating in people getting drunk and fighting each other. Even when this was not the case, it was somewhat striking to see young and older men having already drunk three or four beers before noon, whilst at the same time many respondents highlighted the hardships that had affected the community in the past five years.

New economic activities

The only entirely new economic activity since 2011/12 is the bakery. As said earlier, other activities have expanded, including commodity shops, snack bars/cafés, grain mills, leisure and other kinds of services; as well as livestock and livestock production and the sale of eucalyptus. On the whole, migration may well have increased: whilst there were fewer irregular migrants to Saudi, migration of young people to towns and especially, the number of those going regularly for weeks or months to Afar appeared to have significantly risen.

External links and relationships

Rural-rural links

Rural/agricultural migration linkages

Some of the migration to Afar, important and seemingly rising, is for farming daily labour. Migration to Humera for the sesame harvest, which used to be relatively common, declined. A few young people are going to neighbouring *kebeles* less affected by drought for farm labour there. In-migration for farm labour, which a few respondents mentioned as occurring 'in the past', do no longer exist. People in Harresaw also send livestock to graze in other rural areas, including in nearby *kebeles* which are less affected by drought and where they have relatives, and in rural areas in Afar.

Other rural-rural relationships with other kebeles

There are family links with neighbouring or nearby *kebeles*, through marriage and access to services. In particular, children from Harresaw go to a primary school in neighbouring Ruba Feleg; and people from neighbouring *kebeles* come to the health centre which was located in Harresaw – on land recently allocated to Dera municipality. A few young people from Harresaw also work as professionals (teachers or DAs) in other rural *kebeles*.

Rural-urban links

Rural-urban relationships

Rural-urban relationships have intensified over the past five-six years – driven by enhanced transport services between Dera and Atsbi, and the expansion of Dera and especially Atsbi, with a concurrent expansion in the range of services available, especially in Atsbi. The only new government service since 2011/12 is a new TVET institution in Atsbi – where few Harresaw students were said to be attending. People continue to go to Atsbi for the secondary preparatory school, the *wereda* hospital, the *wereda* court service, and other *wereda* administration services. Private

services such as banks, mobile repairs, metal and wood workshops, commodity shops, hotels, restaurants and cafés, leisure services etc. are more numerous.

Between 50 and 100 people from Harresaw, usually richer farmers, owned land and/or houses in Dera or Atsbi. Some rented these properties for residence or business; others resided in these urban houses part of the time, or most of the time whilst other family members resided in Harresaw so that they could retain their rural land tenure rights. (See [p.217](#)).

Urban migration linkages

There are also migration linkages, with mostly [grade 10 leavers](#) moving to towns to seek work; and a few young people with professional jobs. See [Migration to towns](#) section for more.

Urban market linkages

Both Dera and Atsbi markets are very important for people from Harresaw, as places to sell and to buy. The market in Dera increased in size and activity in the past five years and will presumably expand further now that Dera is a municipality; and some of the Harresaw land now demarcated to be in Dera will be used as a place for a bigger livestock market. Whilst agricultural trade from Harresaw may not have increased, the Atsbi market is the first outlet for crops (including eucalyptus) and also where most traders in Harresaw buy crops in lean months when people in Harresaw have to buy food. There is also some trade with Mekelle - E.g. one bigger crop trader has partners in Mekelle; honey is also sold to Mekelle traders though this was down in the past few years; sheep from Harresaw and more generally Atsbi *wereda* are renowned and sold to traders from Mekelle for holidays and especially, Meskel. The nonfarm service sector in Harresaw expanded, which in turn, led to more links with urban areas where these businesses get their inputs.

Urban travelling linkages – paths, roads and transport

See the section on [External roads, bridges & transport](#) above. In summary, it has become somewhat easier to travel from Harresaw centre to Atsbi and from there to Wukro, Mekelle and other destinations (except Afar which is in the other direction), because of the expansion of public transport now available every day from Dera to Atsbi, although there are issues of costs, transporters overcharging, and difficulty to get a space except by walking to Dera. It is also somewhat easier to come from other parts of the *kebele* to the centre as dry-season roads have been constructed, but there is no transport on these and no one in the *kebele* has a motorised vehicle.

Industrial migration linkages

There were very few mentions of industrial migration. One respondent talking about young people moving to urban areas said some of them might work in factories. The same respondent highlighted that people in Harresaw hear about industrial parks and factories established in the Region, but do not get information on job opportunities. One young woman mentioned that several months before the fieldwork, ten young women were called to Atsbi for passing a test, and it was assumed that this might have been for recruitment for work in an industrial park, but nothing happened since.

Trade and business networks

There is not a lot of data on trade and business networks, and Harresaw can hardly be described as a trade and business hub. One of the bigger crop traders talks about 'partners' in Mekelle, suggesting regular contacts with the same people. At the other end of the scale, a woman surviving through petty trade, selling on the road to/from the market of Dera small items that people might have forgotten to buy on the market, also deals with always the same woman trader providing her the items she resells. One of the tailors get advice and help from a friend tailor in Atsbi when he has problems with his sewing machine. The young man who owns the biggest shop in Harresaw, as well

as the only bakery and biggest snack bar/café, started his shop (the first of his businesses) with items that a trader in Atsbi gave him on credit to sell in Harresaw.

International migration linkages

By far the main form of international migration linkage is with Saudi Arabia. The trend over time, characteristics and impacts of this irregular labour migration are described in the sections on *Migration to Saudi* and *Impact of migration to Saudi – Examples and perceptions*. In summary, migration linkages to Saudi are very important in Harresaw, although the impacts have drastically changed for the worse since 2013. These linkages are quite extensive and at the same time, volatile. Extensive, with chains of brokers and smugglers ‘facilitating’ the migrants’ journeys, some form of networks at destination (between migrants to find jobs for men; between migrants and ‘local brokers’ for women) and to facilitate the sending of remittances, and networks of information (e.g. on the ‘good brokers’) between migrants, returnees, brokers, and their families. Volatile, as the irregular nature of migration to Saudi means that anywhere, at any time, for any of the migrants, the linkages she/he is relying on can be ‘broken’; and also, in the sense that with the regular deportations from Saudi, flows are bi-directional: within a year, some respondents said, as many people return because they are being deported as there are people who go.

2. Selected community topics

Local government and community management

Government management structures

Wereda

Wereda structures

Research Officers found no significant change in the *wereda* government structure since 2012 (WIDE3 fieldwork). The only change is that the Manufacturing, and Culture and Tourism sectors recently emerged and they are cabinet members. Also, Micro-finance and Urban Development now stand as different sectors.

There are a number of committees, of which the following were specifically mentioned and some explanation was given:

- Two *wereda* committees (steering and technical) are responsible for youth livelihood support in rural *kebele*. Each comprises members from agriculture, women affairs, water and mining, land, social affairs and micro-finance and small enterprise offices, at office head and expert level respectively. The steering committee is chaired by the *wereda* leader.
- There is also a complaint committee and a complaint command post. When an individual has a complaint, it should first be presented at the relevant *kebele* sector office. Then it is seen by the *kebele* manager and chairman. If the person is not satisfied by the decisions at these two levels, he/she presents his/her complaint to *wereda* level. It is prohibited to present complaints to *wereda* level without first presenting at *kebele* level. Any issue presented to *wereda* level is first seen by sector offices and then by the complaint committee. If it is not resolved at these two levels, it is presented to the complaint command post, chaired by the *wereda* administrator (no details given on membership).

The *kebele* women affairs’ leader explained that things are changing since a few years regarding women’s participation in *wereda* and *kebele* structures, with equal participation in most. She added there are even more women members of the *wereda* council than men. This was not verified in *wereda* interviews.

Wereda civil service

There are 1,774 salaried civil servants working in the *wereda* government (725 women and 1,049 men). Out of these, 45 are political appointees (office heads and vice-heads). There are many vacant positions in the structure. All sector offices except health and education have vacancies. A *wereda* official thought that the cause was the Job Evaluation and Grading (JEG) system. The related directive does not allow to employ fresh graduates for positions that require job experience; yet, it is not easy to get experienced experts. In addition, under the JEG system, workers may get different salary level for the same position. For example, due to health-related risks cleaners in a hospital get a better salary than those working in offices, which makes it difficult to find cleaners for offices.

The newly established offices created some job opportunities: 4 positions in culture and tourism and 12 positions in manufacturing. As it is very difficult to get graduates of culture and tourism in the *wereda*, the office has recruited history graduates.

Some more information was given on specific sectors of interest to the research. In relation to social protection, there are five social workers at *wereda* level. There are no social worker government employees at *kebele* level; social workers at *kebele* level are volunteers selected by and from the communities.

With regard to police, there are 72 police officers in the *wereda*, ten of whom were assigned this year (2010 EC). Among them, 19 officers are assigned to the 19 *kebele* of the *wereda*, working as community police. The recruitment and assignment of police officers is done by the region, although the *wereda* administration pays their salary. The police officers working at *wereda* level report to both the *wereda* police and the *wereda* security and administration office. Meanwhile, the community police officers are responsible to *kebele* security and administration and the *wereda* police office. Those assigned as community police officers must have a track record of performance in the result-oriented evaluation system, and have two years or more of work experience. Their salary is the same as that of *wereda* management officials' salary (5,250 Birr gross).

Wereda successful and problematic programmes

According to *wereda* officials, in general in the *wereda* natural resource management, health extension and road works are successful. Good work is done which resulted in increased coverage with natural resource conservation activities (including coverage in area enclosures preventing free grazing), and a growing number of people involved in the animal resources sector (livestock production, fattening, beekeeping and poultry). The clustering approach in agriculture (see *Agricultural modernisation* section). However, irrigation and also animal husbandry did not do as well as hoped because of the lack of water in the *wereda*.

Health extension is among the very successful programmes. There are five health centres in the *wereda*. In particular, mother starting to deliver at health institutions has reduced death of mothers and infants. Education can be counted as successful in terms of expansion, with four high schools, 48 elementary schools and 30,000 students in the *wereda*, which is a big increase.

With regard to road, almost all *kebele* are connected to Atsbi by all-weather roads and there are internal roads to connect sub-*kebele* in most *kebele*. Only two *kebele* have a mobile network problem. Other *kebele* have a good mobile network connection.

Problematic areas of work include the absence of progress in strengthening cooperatives, expanding illegal house construction in towns, unclearly demarcated town boundaries, shortage of funds to compensate displaced farmers to expand towns, and the participation of SMEs only in the services sector rather than in the manufacturing sector. Regarding rural areas, there are challenges in ensuring that women and youth benefit from development programmes. These are the major problematic areas in the *wereda*.

There are also limitations in the successful *wereda* programmes. For example, in relation to natural resource activities the area coverage has expanded but this has not yet resulted into economic benefits. Ensuring education quality is also problematic, and quality lags behind expansion. And a lot more work is required in developing internal roads to connect sub-*kebele*.

The officials thought that challenges would be overcome by increased awareness-raising and capacity building, as well as ensuring widespread literacy so as to boost people's capacity of using technology and raise acceptance and adoption of new technologies in the community. One of them added that *"there is need to expand land for work so that women and youth could benefit from involving in entrepreneur work"*.

Kebele/ Municipality

Overview

According to *wereda* and *kebele* officials there is no change in the *kebele* structures. The *kebele* is the lowest government administration level, with the former *kushet* and *got* structures used to support the *kebele*. The exception is land administration for which the lowest level structures are the *kushet* Land Administration Committees (LACs), although strictly speaking the LACs are not part of the government administration. Development teams and 1-5 networks are used to implement the government development activities and *"to meet the community"*. The party structure is similar but party and government structures have different mandates (see *Kebele political structures and party membership* section).

The main change in Harresaw *kebele* is a strong sense of weaker effectiveness of the government structures – which even the (by the end of the fieldwork, demoted) *kebele* leader recognised:

"Most members of the kebele cabinet, especially those volunteers, are frustrated due to workload. Hence they focus on their private work. Absenteeism to meetings is widespread among members of the kebele council. The development teams and 1-5 networks are getting frustrated and lose interest in their work. The DT leaders and kebele officials blame each other and kebele officials blame the wereda administration and vice-versa. This attitude also emerges in both male and female development teams and 1-5 networks."

For many community members, this weakness is compounded by maladministration. As one farmer said (and there are many thinking like him, as will be illustrated in the sections below), *"in general, all of the kebele structures are not working properly as planned. This is because the leaders are very bored... Also, whereas there was no maladministration in previous years nowadays injustice is prevailing in the kebele. Generally service provision in the kebele has weakened"*. As just two examples of the administration's weakness he cited the lack of control of those disturbing youth, who *"cannot even be contained by the police and militia"* even though there is a new by-law to this effect; and the fact that *"kebele officials have totally stopped discussing problems in gatherings with the community"*. Indeed when the big annual *gemgema* process occurred (ongoing at the time of the fieldwork), participants said the discussions were *"like washing one's body with soap for all the dust to go away"*.

Whilst the issue of the location of the sketch plan town (see *Box 1*) appeared to be a big factor in explaining people's opinion, this was far from being the only reason why the current *kebele* administration was blamed for weakness and 'injustice'. Several interviews also suggest that the sense of lack of effectiveness of government structures was not restricted to the *kebele* level, and several respondents laid the blame on corruption, as most starkly expressed by an elderly yet 'modern' lady (she had travelled and lived in Asmara many years ago and was well-respected):

"Our government is dead since long years. Everywhere there is corruption and cheaters are rewarded. Truth has been buried somewhere and is nowhere to be found".

Others expressed a sense that “*it looks like if the government has forgotten us*” (group of adult men from Harresaw *kushet* talking about migration and the lack of options for young people in the area). (See the [Wereda-kebele-community interactions](#) section below for more on these issues).

Kebele management structures

The *kebele* management structures associated with government and reviewed in this section include the *kebele* Cabinet and council, the DTs and 1-5 networks, the militia, the social court, and the women affairs, youth affairs and social work sectors. The land administration and land justice committee are reviewed in the [Land use and urbanisation](#) chapter. This section first describes each structure, its role and perceptions of its performance as well as the main actors in them. It then discusses issues that arise as crosscutting across them.

Generally, people with positions in any of them and government employees in the *kebele* knew more about the activities of these structures than community members without any role in them; and men knew more than women, including among the young people. For instance, several of the adult women said that they heard about the *kebele* and *wereda* councils and that they were gathering for meetings “*to decide what to do on the kebele and the wereda*”, but nothing more. This contrasted with the *kebele* Women Association leader who was even able to comment on changes at *wereda* level with regard to women’s participation in *wereda* structures (although the RO noted she was at best unreliable with figures). More to the point, she had a better idea of, for instance, the *kebele* cabinet and council’s respective roles and their activities.

Among the six young women interviewed in-depth, five had few contacts with the *kebele* administration or said this about young women of their age (by and large limited to getting an ID card; for married ones, involving in voluntary community work and/or PSNP; for both married and unmarried ones, possible involvement in a youth group). In contrast was one young woman, 27-year old and middle-wealth, ruling party member and *kebele* women league leader since four months (after having been the women affairs leader for Maekel *kushet*), seemingly closely involved in the *kebele* activities. However, she too confirmed that there are “*few young women of her age actively participate in politics and involve in party and government responsibilities in the community*”. Among the young men interviewed (in total about a dozen) none suggested it was different.

A *wereda* official explained that there are many unpaid voluntary officers at *kebele* level: more than 10 cabinet members; in principle, 5 LAC members at each level, 6 land justice committee members, 5 social court members; and all the militia members. Only social court and land justice judges receive financial incentives. This list does not include

- The leaders of the development team (DT) (more commonly called development army group in Harresaw) and 1-5 network leaders (see below)
- The leaders and other unpaid management positions in the irrigation, multi-service, credit and savings cooperatives (see below)
- The water user committee leaders – There are water user committees for each water point, deciding on the water user fee (though this seems to be a *kebele* level decision), following up on any disfunction and maintenance required, cleaning the water point etc.
- The leaders of the women, youth, farmers’ associations, leagues and federations – at *kebele* and *kushet* levels (see below for some of these)
- The members of the ‘recognised’ *kushet* and *kebele* elders’ committees (see below).

There may be others not listed here. There are also an expanding number of committees, including the technical security committee and a ‘PSNP selection’ committee (both existing in 2012), and a ‘CBHI selection’ and a CCC committees (both new since 2012) also claiming time from their members (see relevant sections in other chapters for the PSNP, CBHI and CCC committees, all three with different memberships; see below for the security committee). There is also at least one committee established for following up an NGO nutrition programme, involving ten members of the cabinet and

government employees. And finally, there are the many volunteer positions on non-government/community management structures (see relevant section below).

Kebele Cabinet

As seen in **Box 1** and several other instances in this report, the (by the end of the fieldwork former) *kebele* leader was a controversial character. This may have coloured the respondents' views about the cabinet. Several farmers' wives and other female respondents did not know about it. Those who knew a bit more were generally not impressed, blaming them for lack of commitment, not being available, not playing their role etc. One of them said that community members "*are not even informed about who the members of the kebele are*". For instance, a group of knowledgeable respondents did not know who the *kebele* vice-leader was: they heard the former one resigned but since two years there were fewer meetings with *kebele* residents so they did not know.

The opinion of this woman 1-5 network leader is fairly representative:

"Kebele cabinet members are involved in deciding programmes and implementation in the community and following up kebele officials' and employees' performance. However, currently they are not as much involved in those activities as in past times. They only gather for infrequent meetings. It is difficult to find them in office. Community members struggle too much to meet them. They are not available and not committed to serve the community. The cabinet and the kebele chair do nothing else than informing the lower organizations such as women association and development army groups about activities to implement. It is difficult to improve their service except excluding them and replacing them by other individuals who are more responsible for the community's benefit. I am happy that the kebele leader was excluded from his position by the recent gemgema".

Even a woman development army group leader and living in the *kebele* centre had "*heard about the cabinet and basic organization meetings*" but she did not know about their activity and role. The same woman had good things to say about the *kebele* manager (and this was shared by most respondents) but, she said, as a lone individual he could not change the fact that the *kebele* administration was not serving people properly (see below).

Male respondents, several of whom were members of the *kebele* council, were generally more knowledgeable about the role of the Cabinet (executing the *kebele* development activities in the *kebele* plan, following-up the performance of sector offices, nominating voluntary officials for the different community structures, presenting quarterly, biannual and annual reports to the *kebele* council). Several men were no less critical of the Cabinet than the women, talking about 'negative influence', lack of effectiveness, and not achieving any of the main activities planned for the *kebele* in the past year – which some of them said was due to the big disagreement between and among officials and the community about the sketch plan town.

The *kebele* manager was fairly critical as well, explaining that

Members of the *kebele* cabinet have a responsibility to lead and manage all *kebele* activities. Each cabinet member is working with one specific sector office, and she/he reports for her/his respective sector. The *kushet* are divided between *kebele* cabinet members with regard to meeting the community through development teams and 1-5 networks. They lead every activity in their *kushet* in this way. The cabinet implement activities and tasks approved by the *kebele* council, and they report about performance to the council. Government employees working at *kebele* level support the cabinet on technical matters and in planning.

But there are serious problems and 'gaps'. First, the council no longer meets regularly. They also are partial to their individual *kushet* and *got*. Also, as the cabinet members, except government employees, serve without payment, most of them are bored and not interested

in being in charge, and sometimes they give their work for paid workers. In turn, these 'gaps' lead to ineffectiveness of the development teams and 1-5 networks.

Meanwhile, from the data '*kebele* officials' still appeared to be very much at the forefront of all the initiatives that higher levels of government 'step down' onto the *kebele* for implementation. As in 2012 this includes meeting targets with regard to fertilizer uptake, with pressure exerted in various ways including food aid at least in 2007/8 EC and, when the dam was still in operation, access to one's water turns. A new target-driven high priority initiative is the rollout of the CBHI, for which several respondents said they had been approached insistently and continuously by *kebele* employees and high officials, although it did not seem that the same kind of 'convincing' techniques were used. The construction/ maintenance of latrines was still mentioned but seemed to be a less pressing issue than in 2012. Birth delivery at health centres also seemed to be less of an issue for those officials, compared to the CBHI at least.

The *kebele* Cabinet continues to play a ubiquitous role in access to credit (through letters of support) and approval of lists of beneficiaries prepared by development army groups and *kushet* (e.g. for PSNP and EFA).

With regard to PSNP, most respondents also did not know about a special appeal committee and said that people with a complaint presented it to the '*kebele* administration' (manager and officials).

Kebele leader/chairperson

The *kebele* chair, a 37-year old man grade 8 complete, served as a *kushet* leader and deputy *kebele* leader and propaganda leader for a long time before being appointed in December 2008 EC, when his predecessor resigned. He was recommended by his predecessor, approved by the *wereda* administrator and the *kebele* council then elected as *kebele* chair. He is also a member of the *kebele* council and of the ruling party, and the secretary of the credit and saving cooperative. He has no farmland but his wife has 1 timad, he rents- and sharecrops-in 5 timad and he fattens oxen.

He explained that his responsibilities are mainly about coordinating the different sectors, assigning the duties given by the *wereda* to the relevant sector offices, and motivating people for development interventions. The *kebele* administration works as follows:

- There are two types of *kebele* level meetings. Meetings of *kebele* officials are held to plan, evaluate and follow up the activities of the *kebele*. Meetings with the community are held to announce what the *kebele* council approved to be done, to discuss about the expected contributions from the community and to listen to demands of the community.
- All sectors report to the *kebele* cabinet and the *wereda* according to an agreed schedule. When there are complaints from workers or from the community, the *kebele* officials refer the complaint to the relevant sector for suggestions and the concerned officials discuss the issue and report.
- Community mobilization is mainly done by cabinet members assigned to each *kushet* and by the development teams and 1-5 networks, as well as the women and youth associations.
- *Kebele* officials are also involved in credit. Besides letters of support for those deemed eligible, they intervene when community members fail to pay their debt on time, working with the experts from the credit institution. They take those unable to pay to court, where they are given extra time to pay by selling their property or by renting out their land.
- Contributions and fees are collected by the concerned sector or association. For instance, the youth association collects its annual membership fee from the youth.

What he enjoys from the job is the experience he gains from experience-sharing stages, the chance of seeing other places and the community's respect. But he has no interest in continuing for a long time and he has already prepared a letter of resignation to send to the *wereda*. The problems with the job are a) the workload and the time spent on *kebele* activities at the detriment of his own

economic activities; b) the lack of commitment of cabinet members due to the absence of payment for their tasks; c) in turn, the community frustration (hence, they are not willing to attend meetings) due to the poor performance of *kebele* officials. Besides, he is frustrated because of the *kebele* administration's failure to properly address the demand of the community due to lack of resources.

With regard to the *kebele* more broadly, the *kebele* leader highlighted the shortage of personnel in the *kebele* health and agriculture offices, and that the *kebele* budget, funded from community contributions, is insufficient. There is severe drought and youth unemployment. There are conflicts especially related to land, and this is creating problems between the community and the *kebele* administration. Quotas for the women and youth packages are not sufficient. The community has a tendency of resistance to change, which is an obstacle in implementing new government development programmes. There is workload for all sectors at *kebele* level, and also overlapping between them for some tasks. The relation between *kebele* and *wereda* is good except for the workload "arising from the *wereda* ordering the *kebele*".

As noted in *Box 1* above, opinions about the *kebele* leader who was in charge at the beginning of the fieldwork were polarized, with some people blaming him for bias, partiality and lack of effectiveness, and others thinking he had the potential of being a good leader and explaining the rationale behind the decision he was heavily criticized for, i.e. the location of the sketch plan town. Whilst in our interviews, there are many more critical of him than supporting him, it is impossible to ascertain that this can be generalized. However undoubtedly, he was a major factor in deep divisions within the *kebele* administration and the community as a whole, and he was seen as such by several respondents as well as by the Research Officer who was in Harresaw in 2012.

He was also deemed to be weak and ineffective by several *wereda* officials (see *Wereda view of the kebele* below). He was removed in the course of the fieldwork. Community respondents explained that his removal from the position was decided through the *wereda* level *gemgema* then it was approved by the *gemgema* of party members at *kebele* level. By the end of the fieldwork he had been replaced by the *kebele* propaganda leader.

Kebele Council

According to the women affairs' leader, the *kebele* cabinet and council are interrelated and "what is selected by the cabinet is confirmed by the council. They work together on allocating the budget, as well as selecting and confirming positions of *kebele* officials such as social court and land administration leaders." They review the reports from the *kebele* administration.

There is little information in interviews on how functional the council is, beyond references to a role they are said to have played – e.g. approving the *kebele* 'land use plan' etc. A number of male respondents were members of the *kebele* council but they did not elaborate on its role or any recent activity. Several respondents (especially women) said they heard about the council but had no idea about its role and activities.

Development Teams and 1-5 networks

According to *kebele* officials there are 72 development teams in Harresaw (more often called development army groups), involving a total of 1,290 individuals. There are also 460 1-5 networks. Like in 2012 men and women are organized in separate DTs and 1-5 networks. Both men and women groups are involved in development activities, but women groups focus more specifically on health-related activities.

On the men's side, the DT leaders report to the *kebele* cabinet members who are assigned to their *kushet*. They direct the instructions and programmes that they receive from the *kebele* to the leaders of the 1-5 networks who in turn direct the messages to their members and the community. The development teams also identify and report to the *kebele* administration the list of poor households to get food assistance; and organize and monitor the implementation of the PSNP public

works and voluntary community labour. They report accomplished tasks to the responsible cabinet members. In the views of the male DT leader interviewed in this capacity, the DTs are effective, but their main constraint is that many of their members migrate to Saudi each year, thus reducing the number of members.

The leader, a 43-year old man who was appointed in 2008 EC and is also a militia, member of the *kebele* council and of the ruling party, was given this responsibility because the members in his development team trusted and selected him to lead the team. When he needs something, wants advice or has a problem with his work, he first consults the *kebele* agriculture experts, and members of the *kebele* cabinet who are in charge of activities in his *kushet*. He also asks for advices from the community leaders and party members. As a leader, he has no specific working days and hours per week. He is available only when there is work to be done through the DT. He dislikes the workload but he likes serving the community and implementing the development activities in his *kebele* and he wants to continue and serve his community.

On the women's side, development army groups and 1-5 networks appear to be mostly linked to the HEW and women association leaders, and according to the Women Association leader, they are organized by the latter.

Two women interviewed in other capacities were DT leaders. One of them is a woman living in the centre of the *kebele*, second 'wife' of a man who has an official wife, and who in spite of being DT leader is not a member of the CBHI. As DT leader she said she is involved in training programmes at *wereda* level then she teaches her development army group members what she learned. She calls for meetings, passes the messages that she gets from the *kebele*, teaches about new interventions and convinces her members to implement programmes. The groups work in collaboration with the HEW to pass health messages and facilitate the implementation of health interventions; for instance, group leaders tell women about vaccination days for their children and themselves so that they come to the health post. In her views, the 1-5 networks are also among the useful methods to transmit government messages and implement government programmes in the community. Her involvement in meetings of these groups is not optional, because she is party member.

The other woman is living in Harresaw *kushet* and she was interviewed as leader of a strong *equub* and a *mehaber* association (see below). She explained that the members of all three organisations are the same. The development team established the *mehaber* association six years ago, and the *equub* one year ago. She explained that both the *equub* and *mehaber* association are very effective in making women socialize with each other: this helps the development army group's work because they gather frequently for the purpose of the associations; as a development army group leader she uses these gatherings in addition to the development army group meetings to implement government activities such as health interventions.

From the range of respondents who mentioned development teams/army groups and 1-5 networks, the general impression is that they are still a comparatively effective way of passing messages and mobilizing the community (or trying to) for activities, compared to general *kebele* meetings. This may be due to a mix of a) the reportedly fewer general *kebele* meetings called by a weaker *kebele* administration (see above) and b) people being less reluctant to attend meetings held nearer their house, especially if these are combined with something else as in the case of the development team-*cum-mehaber-cum-equub* just mentioned. For instance, just about every respondent talking about the newly introduced CBHI said she/he heard about it through a range of sources, including development teams. However, most respondents also said that development teams and 1-5s were less effective than in the past. The *kebele* manager and the HEW had mixed opinion about them.

Possibly relatedly, one respondent said that previously it was compulsory to attend, whereas "currently it is no longer as strong". From a few other interviews it seems that attending DT and 1-5 meetings is still not optional for party members, as the woman above said, but it is less strongly so

for other members. However, one woman said that absenteeism from meetings “*had effect later on*” so that she is not selected “*whenever there are benefits in the kebele*”.

Indeed, development teams seem to have a ubiquitous role in ‘selection’ of people for a range of ‘benefits’. In addition to the selection of ‘food aid’ beneficiaries mentioned by the DT leader above, which was already one of their tasks in 2012, development army groups are now said to also be responsible for identifying and proposing poor/vulnerable households to be registered as non-paying members of the CBHI (see [p.208](#)) and/or to benefit from assistance from the Community Care Coalition (see [p.210](#)); for the selection of model farmers (though reportedly, there have been no recent award with the decline in agricultural production due to the drought, see [p.120](#) in chapter); to identify group members to attend government or NGO training (including a training organized by an NGO which paid a 500 *Birr* per diem for a one-day training, much talked about – see [p.121](#)); and for the selection of beneficiaries for other forms of NGO activities such as support to poor malnourished mothers and infants (see [p.183](#)).

The selection process looks similar, at least for the important benefits such as food aid and exemption from CBHI payments: it generally starts by the DT members to discuss and leaders to make a list which is sent to *kushet* leaders, the list is discussed there, then sent to *kebele* officials for final approval. It is of course possible that shortcuts are applied. In turn, there were a number of respondents complaining about lack of fairness of the DT leaders and this was even one of the topics for discussion during the *kebele gemgema* process.

Militia

At the *wereda* level, there are around 1,880 militia in all *kebele*, and six officers in the *wereda* militia office. Militia members are recruited by the *kebele* security committee and *kebele* security and administration leader/cabinet member. They must be over 18 and under 45 year-old, and they should be known for good behaviour in the community. They are then sent for a seven-day training by the *wereda* security and administration office. The *kebele* militia commander reports to the *kebele* security administration, *wereda* militia office and *wereda* security and administration office. Besides the local security protection work process and the human resource management/training work process, there is a ‘military equipment and maintenance’ work process, implying counting bullets every six months and ensuring weapons are maintained.

In Harresaw there are 109 militia members according to the militia leader, 126 according to the *kebele* administration’s records, 145 in the *wereda* records; and a *kebele* militia office, organized by the *kebele* security and administration leader and the *wereda* militia office. There is one woman militia in the *kebele* (see picture below). She is poor, divorced from a Saudi returnee whom she says denied her the share of the house in Atsbi they had built together (with his money but her work), and also a water user committee leader and 1-5 network leader though quite critical of the current *kebele* administration.



Woman militia in Harresaw

All militia members are armed. The main task of the militia is keeping peace and security, patrolling around to prevent any potential danger within the *kebele*. In the past, any militia member used to serve anywhere. However, since two years militia members have been assigned to and serve only 10 households living around their neighbourhood. This helps each militia to manage his/her own responsibility. There is no any incentive to join the militia or while working. They also work with the social court and land judges in that, offenders are presented to them by the militia if they refused to present themselves voluntarily.

The militia works together with the community policeman (see below) and under the umbrella of a technical security committee. The committee includes three *kebele* militia commanders (one for each *kushet*), the *kebele* security and administration leader (chair of the committee, cabinet member), the community policeman (secretary) and the community forum leader. The committee leads the peace and security activities in the *kebele*. They meet every Sunday from 7am to 9am in the morning; there is a general meeting of the community forum every 24th day of the month, and; the executive members of the community forum meet on every 14th day of the month. The committee and the forum were not mentioned by anyone else.

The militia leader is a 32-year old man recruited as militia in 2009 EC and appointed to the position in 2010 EC. He is also leader of a development team and member of the ruling party. Besides coordinating the work and evaluating militia members' performance, he also investigates criminal cases in the absence of the community policeman and *kebele* security and administration leader. As he does not have much work experience, he works closely especially with these two people. There are no specific working hours. He gets no salary, incentives or other benefits. He likes working for the community's benefit, but he dislikes that the tasks negatively affect his life: "As I am landless, unless I migrate to Saudi or any other place to improve my life, I will keep serving the community". In his views, it would be better to hire a salaried militia leader to improve the work and reporting.

In his opinion, peace and security has improved and the number of criminal cases has reduced in the *kebele*, and this is an achievement of the militia. The existing problem is related to the unemployed youths who disturb and create security problems especially a lot in the *kebele* centre. So, the work of the militia would be improved and peace and security would be better ensured if job opportunities were created for the unemployed *kebele* youths.

The one young woman who is closely involved in *kebele* affairs and generally positive about the *kebele* administration also explains that there is no risk for young women in the *kebele* thanks to the good security system and performance of the militia, including in handling the few cases of husbands

beating their wife especially in the *kebele* centre. She highlights in particular the great contribution of the woman militia in solving women's problems in relation to security.

However, other respondents have more mixed opinions about the militia. Some think they are good, some women do not know anything about them, some think they are not effective, in particular, in handling the group of drinking and gambling youth regularly disturbing the centre of the *kebele*. One man noted that the militia recently arrested two young men disturbing the peace and security and bearing knives with them, who were penalized 500 *Birr* each; but it is difficult for the militia to catch young men red-handed in gambling as they do this in hiding.

Social court

According to its leader, the social court comprises of three permanent judges (two men and one woman) and three reserve members (two women and one man). They are all nominated by the *kebele* cabinet and approved and assigned by the *kebele* council. They see cases of civil code offences, property-related cases worth up to 10,000 *Birr*, marriage/divorce-related cases, and simple crimes such as insults. The social court advises cases to be seen first by the community elders before they are taken to the social court. If a case is beyond the jurisdiction of the social court, it is referred to the *wereda* court. In cases of divorce, the social court asks land-related evidence from the land administration committee. Other land cases are seen by the land judges (see p.234). Since this year (2010 EC) the social court does no longer handle cases related to deforestation, that are seen directly by the *wereda* court. The social court is working two days a week but they do not have specific working hours, it depends on the number and type of cases. According to the directive, social court judges should be paid 50 *Birr* per trial. But due to financial constraints, most of the time they do not get paid.

The current leader (45-year old, grade 8 complete) was appointed in 2008 EC, a few months after he resigned from his position of *kebele* leader. He is member of the *kebele* council, ruling party and CCC committee. As social court leader, he chairs members' meetings and leads the court's trial process. He has no regular salary or other benefits. For professional issues or questions, he consults the lawyers and judges at the *wereda* court, and also the community elders for simple cases. Whilst he did not comment on his own willingness to continue in the position, he had this to say about young people's participation: *"there are lots of talks on the media, by government etc., but how could young people be attracted (to take kebele positions) when even the position of the kebele leader is not paid, whereas they struggle to secure a decent independent livelihood?"*

The woman association leader indicates that many conflict cases in the community are solved by elders, unless they are serious crimes. She believes that it is better to solve conflicts by elders rather than going to the social court. However, the social court is very important to handle serious cases that elders fail to resolve. There are cases taken to the elders from the social court, as well as cases taken to the social court from the elders; they keep in close communication with each other. Also, party members who do not attend party meetings are accused by the *kebele* propaganda leader and their case is handed over to the social court. They are penalized 20-50 *Birr* if it is their first time; they are fired from membership if they repeat this offence.

There is very little information about what the community thinks of the social court. The *kebele* manager considers some of the social court and land justice committee former members as responsible for lack of governance in the *kebele* because of their partiality and bias in their decisions. One rich woman farmer head of household similarly had a very poor opinion of the justice services in general, saying that in her views, it is the worst service in the *kebele* and that *"many people suffer with the social court, land judges as well as wereda courts to get justice, because of the long process to close cases as well as corruption and partiality of the judges"*, though she does not give any specific cases to justify her statement. Unlike the land justice committee for which several respondents give specific cases to vindicate their opinion, for the social court there is no specific case mentioned in any interview.

The *wereda* court is in Atsbi. However, there is a mobile court coming once a week to Dera town. The *kebele* residents use the *wereda* court for appeals from the social court and the land justice. The *wereda* court also sees any severe criminal and civil acts beyond the jurisdiction of the *kebele* social court and land justice. As noted above, deforestation-related cases are now considered in this category and can no longer be seen by the social court. According to respondents talking about land inheritance, the process requires potential heirs to submit their claim on the land concerned to the *wereda* court, which requires four witnesses to ascertain the status of the heirs in relation to the deceased person. Two women who had harsh words about the *kebele* social court and land judges added that the *wereda* court was no better, and that “*justice is the worst service in the kebele and the wereda.*”

Social work sector

The *kebele* social worker is not a government employee as said above. She is a 38-year old woman who held other *kebele* positions in the past, though according to ROs she is not among the most active, leading women. Her main tasks appear to be related to the Community Care Coalition (CCC). She collects people’s contributions for the CCC and also for membership payments for the party and the different associations as well as the Tigray Development Association in the *kebele*. The CCC, involving a ‘voluntary’ cash contribution of Harresaw residents to help poor and vulnerable community members, is described in the *Social protection* chapter.

Women affairs and association

The **Women Association (WA) leader**, in this position since 2008 EC after being development army group leader and *kushet* WA leader, explained that there is no special programme for women, but the WA ensures that *kebele* interventions focus especially on them. Women come to the association for appeals; they pass the case to ‘upper concerned bodies’ if it is beyond their capacity. Programmes come down to women development army groups and the WA leadership coordinate implementation. Her responsibility is about following up women in their implementation of the *kebele* programmes as well as assuring the benefit of landless women in the community. She reports progress and problems to the *kebele* administration and *kebele* manager.

Most of the *kebele* activities are implemented through the development army groups. In her views, the development army groups and 1-5 networks of women are more active and committed than men’s groups in the *kebele*. Men are weaker than women in taking responsibilities for *kebele* interventions whereas women feel responsible. She has good relationships with the *kebele* manager, the *kebele* cabinet and council (she is a member and she said 50% women are councillors), the extension workers (health and agriculture), and customary organizations. With community members there is sometimes disagreement about the association membership fees. The relation with the *wereda* is good although “*the wereda have a problem of ordering the kebele, sitting on their chair without going down and experiencing the situation here.*”

The association has a challenge of lack of resources, especially during drought when members cannot pay the membership fees. As a result, they lack resources such as pens and notebooks to do the work of the association. They appealed to the *kebele* and the *wereda* about it but the *wereda* said the association is under the *kebele* administration, which is responsible to provide it sufficient resources; and the *kebele* said they have to be independent. She resents this as she sees that the party basic organization (*meseretawi aderejajet*) is provided notebooks by the *kebele*.

She considers as her achievements the work she does in organizing and managing the women development army groups as well as making women active participants in all government programmes. Women are less resistant to change nowadays. Workload is an obstacle; they cannot do all programmes timely and effectively so that they focus on what is prioritized by the *kebele* administration. What she dislikes is the lack of resources; and the fact that neither *wereda* nor *kebele* leaders are willing to consider root causes of problems. In her views, “*people in upper*

positions should come to us and discuss to solve the problems at the grassroots rather than ordering us as an association to do this and that”.

Her personal challenge is the workload and how to combine it with her domestic and livelihood responsibilities as a mother of three children (one under 15) and female-headed household. She would like to leave her position, but she continues because she thinks it is good at handling the responsibility given to her by the people, and this gives her satisfaction.

Several women spontaneously mentioned the Women Association leader as one of the influential women in the community. One woman also referred to her as the person she would go to in case of problems, rather than *kebele* officials. Another woman also highlighted the influence of the former WA leader, and the current **women affairs’ leader** (*kebele* cabinet member). Both are closely involved in all *kebele* affairs, active, and reportedly ‘trusted’ by community people. The WA leader is the role model of a young woman, development team leader and generally positive about the *kebele* administration, who “*want to become a famous politician and woman leader in the kebele like AAA*”.

In the views of this young woman, “*youth and women associations are active in the community, working on improving youth and women livelihoods...*”. However, among the respondents she is the only one to be so positive. Several other women know very little and/or are not involved with the Women Association, or only pay when they are told to pay. Meanwhile several others indicate that the Women Association “*only hold meetings and collect contributions*” and “*do nothing for women’s benefit except collecting membership fees*”.

Youth affairs and association

The Youth Association and youth affairs’ leaders were not interviewed in these capacities. One interview was conducted with the **youth affairs’ leader**, focusing on migration. He is a 30-year old man, landless, doing daily labour, and unsuccessful returnee migrant (he was in Saudi for two years then deported and was unable to change his life) hence now against migration. He is in this position since approximately 10 months. He said there is no salary for the job, but he is fine as this is to serve his community. As cabinet member for youth affairs he is working with the Youth League to try and address any issue facing the youth in the community, like land for instance. He recognizes the challenges facing young people in Harresaw and pushing them to migrate; however, somewhat exonerating himself at the same time, he insists that the solution cannot be brought by the *kebele* and *wereda* levels alone (see **Migration** chapter).

The **Youth Association** was generally poorly considered, with the single exception of the same young woman who takes the WA leader as role model. A poor young woman in her early twenties said that “*they only focus on collecting membership fees and transmitting government and political messages such as involving in the voluntary public works and being a party member*”, reflecting well the more general position. Among the six young men of different ages and wealth status interviewed, one said he is a member but ventured no opinion, a poor young man under 18 said he and people of his age cannot join until reaching 18, three said they are members but have nothing to do with it apart from paying the annual membership fee. Young women explained that the YA only comprises of male members, young women who wish so are members of the Women Association.

One knowledgeable young man reckoned that “*a great number of youth are members of youth association because being a member makes them to easily get benefits being given to organized youth groups such as getting land to plant trees, fattening and quarrying. The members of youth association do not do any work except paying annual contribution.*” He also knew about the youth league and youth federation. Together, the three organisations and the youth affairs office form the “*youth coalition*”, spearheaded by the youth affairs leader. The primary role of the coalition is to “*gather and discuss with the youth about the peace and security in the kebele and advise the youths to distance themselves from crime.*” However, he added “*these days, most of the youth do not want to be involved in politics. They only focus on changing their livelihood for better.*”

Other 'official' positions

The **multiservice cooperative, savings and credit cooperative and irrigation water users' association** are described elsewhere (p.116 and p.115 respectively). Their leaders are all three well-established people in the community.

- The irrigation users' association leader, appointed in 2006 EC when irrigation was booming after being nominated by the DAs and *kebele* officials and accepted by the water irrigation beneficiaries, is reserve member of the *kebele* land justice, and member of the *kebele* council and the ruling party.
- The multiservice cooperative leader, who as former *kebele* leader, founded the cooperative and was its first registered member, was elected in the position in 2002 EC when he resigned as *kebele* leader. He is leader of the cooperative union to which the cooperative belongs, religious leader, ruling party member and member of the *kebele* council, and member of the irrigation cooperative management. He has many relatives in official positions including the *kebele*, and social court leaders.
- The RUSACCO leader has been a member since 2003 EC. He served for three years as deputy chairperson before being elected as chairperson and he is currently serving his second term. He was in the army and he is a member of the *wereda* council, the ruling party, the disabled veterans' association and the farmers' association.

None of the three wants to continue because of the absence of or low payment for the workload they face: the irrigation committee leader gets paid from the PSNP transfers so only when they are made; the multiservice cooperative leader gets 70 *Birr* per diem every six months like all other cooperative executives; there is no payment at all for the RUSACCO executives. In the case of the irrigation association leader, he also resents the interference by the *kebele* leaders demanding that the committee refuses water turns to farmers who did not buy fertilizer. All three are of the opinion that their work should be done by a 'salaried and educated person'.

The **Land Administration and Land Justice Committees** are described in the *Land administration* section in the relevant chapter. The LAC member and land justice lead judge interviewed similarly did not want to continue and thought the work required salaried positions.

Crosscutting issues

As seen from the above, in a context in which workloads do not appear to have reduced, **the policy of non-payment of *kebele* positions** was repeatedly raised as an issue by those concerned – and by several other community members. As noted earlier, some of these officials thought that as a result, it was difficult to attract younger and possibly better educated people into positions of responsibility.

Some community respondents also highlighted that as '*kebele* officials' are most of the time among the 'early adopters' of modern agricultural practices, sometimes this is beneficial for them (as for instance with regard to involvement in livestock production), but it may also harm them (as for instance, in the case of improved seeds that turn out to be not suitable for the area).

Nonetheless, according to the ROs there is a sense among community members that there is a **bias** how the **volunteer positions** are filled and this is resented. Most cabinet and other positions are allegedly taken by people from the Lima't *kushet*. In an informal conversation a man said at least the *kebele* leader, the former leader which became social court leader, the *kebele* manager, the PSNP coordinator and the land justice committee leader are all from Lima't.

Government employees at *kebele* level

According to the *kebele* manager, there are 82 salaried civil servants in the *kebele*, most of them teachers and health workers. No new position has been established in the past five years. In his views, the community police is the most effective, due to his great personal effort in accomplishing

his duties; the least effective are the agriculture office workers, partly due to the stopping of irrigation and also, they do not work jointly with others.

As the *kebele* leader pointed, there are unfilled positions especially in health (only one health extension worker) and agriculture (by the end of the fieldwork, the NRM DA and irrigation DA positions were vacant). There is high turnover and the rate is increasing: no one resigned, most are transferred to other *kebele* and as this is decided between the worker and the *wereda*, their reasons are not known in Harresaw (the NRM DA was transferred between the first and the second fieldwork, for instance). Moreover, some positions depending on the *kebele* budget are also not filled due to constraints on the *kebele* budget.

There is no government employee at *kebele* level working on social affairs. The social affairs' representative is a volunteer (see above). There is also no 'youth livelihoods support' position. The *kebele* cabinet, youth affairs and association, women affairs and association, and land administration are involved and responsible for organising support to young people livelihoods at the *kebele* level.

There is very little information on the teachers in the *kebele*.

A few women were forthcoming in giving their opinions on civil servants in the *kebele* in general. For one of them (poor woman living in the *kebele* centre), the *kebele* manager is good and hardworking; the HEW seems to be good but is fairly new to the area; DAs are weak; teachers are no good, just there to get their salary – though better than *wereda* civil servants as at least they do something. Another (a farmer head of household) had a slightly different ranking, putting teachers ahead of the weak DAs and at par with the HEW. However, for both, the main issue was about how the civil servants provided services.

"... even though the services they provide have benefits to the community there is a problem in how they provide them. Some of them are providing the services only because they are directed by the upper authorities. Instead, they should provide services aiming at really supporting the community and to bring change in different ways" (first woman).

"Kebele employees should be responsible and kind in serving the community rather than just implementing programs without considering people's needs and benefits. They should act as government employees who serve the people rather than acting like politicians who serve the government and the party" (second woman).

The rest of this section focuses on the *kebele* manager, the health extension worker, the development agents and the community police.

Kebele manager

The role of the *kebele* manager, for community respondents, is about provision of ID cards, registration of vital events, receiving appeals from the community on various issues (including PSNP, EFA and CBHI), and, a few added, managing *kebele* activities and leading sector offices. The manager also emphasized his role in organizing the *kebele* plan (see p. 76), supporting and following up all sectors in the *kebele*, and supporting the sector offices in their quarterly, biannual and annual plan execution reporting to the *kebele* cabinet then council. In this way he is key to the submission of the cabinet activity report to the council. The *kebele* manager attends and takes minutes of the meetings of the *kebele* council but has no voice on the council's decision.

Compared to 2012 (WIDE3 fieldwork), two responsibilities added to the *kebele* manager portfolio were the vital event registration (no comment from anyone) and the CBHI, in which he appears to be at the frontline, with the HEW. Together with her and other *kebele* officials, he is involved in the big drive to rollout the CBHI (informing and convincing people to register), in the collection of premium, in the registration of new members and processing requests for new members' cards to the *wereda*, in the renewal of membership and appeals for non-payment membership. The *kebele* manager was mentioned by almost every respondent who talked about CBHI.

The person in charge at the time of the fieldwork was a 28-year old man from Harresaw *kebele*, whose father, a soldier, died when he was one month old. He was raised by his mother and five brothers, the oldest of whom studied to diploma level and encouraged him to follow his steps. He could not make it to preparatory but he was selected as one of 14 young people to train as teacher at the Abi Adi TTI (out of 300 applications). He taught for a year and a half at the Abidera school of Harresaw, then decided to apply for the *kebele* manager position which was vacant (his predecessor was transferred at the *wereda* level) and got the job. At the time of the fieldwork he had been in the position for a little less than two years. He is the husband from the HEW, and they have a daughter who at the beginning of the fieldwork was 4-month old.

He considers as his main achievement the immediate response he is trying to give to the complaints and requests from the community. There are challenges, such as the fact that the government does not provide accommodation for this position, the workload which means little time for social responsibilities and leisure, the small salary compared to the workload and responsibilities, the shortage of budget and manpower in the *kebele* and various dis-functioning of the *kebele* administration (see p.40). He also dislikes the responsibility of providing ID cards as many try to cheat on the 18-year age limit. But he likes his job. He said he feels honoured and empowered to have been appointed to this big responsibility in his community and he is happy to fulfil it. At least for the time being he does not want to change his position.

The community appears to have a generally favourable opinion of him. None of the respondents was outright negative. Most only had good words, highlighting hard work, commitment, timeliness, that he served people with respect and patience, knew people and listened to them and was always willing to accept people's complaints. One man highlighted that he does not present false reports, unlike his predecessor; though his weakness is lack of coordination capacity. For one of the women who had good things to say on him, the issue is that *"he is the only good person in the kebele administration. So, personally, he tries his best to serve the community responsibly. But there is a problem of good governance as well as delays in providing services in the kebele administration, and he is dominated by the rest of the kebele officials so that he cannot bring dramatic change in spite of his efforts"*. Non-married young women blamed him for being difficult in relation to giving them ID as he was always suspicious of their age.

Health Extension Worker

At the time of the fieldwork there was only one Health Extension Worker (HEW) in Harresaw and this had been the case for a while. The other HEW was pregnant first, then she was transferred, another was assigned but she was currently on maternity leave.

Women respondents asked about health issues all highlighted the key role of the HEW with regard to health information about family planning, maternal and children health, hygiene and sanitation, etc. Several added that they trusted the HEW most with regard to information, and that it was beneficial for the community. The interviews also reveal she has a ubiquitous role in the CBHI rollout, at the frontline with the *kebele* manager; this was noted as a recent addition to her responsibility. One of the women said, she is also organizing the women development army groups.

The HEW described her role as summarized in **Box 2** below.

Box 2. The multiple roles of the one Health Extension Worker in Harresaw

She is responsible for nutrition of children, pregnant and lactating mothers; the CBHI; the service of ambulance for women to return back home after delivery; Communication for Health – in addition to the previously existing programmes (maternal and child health, sanitation, awareness creation about overall health issues). She also provides services to under-five children and women through home to home visits as well as at the health post. These include education to create awareness about children's illnesses; the provision of vitamin A, deworming, vaccination and MUC measurement for under-five children; ANC, family planning and MUC measurement for pregnant

and lactating mothers. Other responsibilities include coordinating community discussions on various topics (malaria, HIV/AIDS and TB, CBHI awareness raising, nutrition etc.). She is also responsible for organizing discussion sessions for/with pregnant women – which in the past were done ‘on and off’ but are now regularly organized currently it is conducted properly.

With regard to CBHI, together with the *kebele* manager her role is awareness-raising in the community, at the health post and home to home, identifying and registering members, managing the card signing and stamping process (involving the *wereda*), and distribution of cards.

She also has additional responsibilities with regard to the PSNP. She informs women about the new PSNP rule allowing them to be exempted from Public Works (PWs) as soon as they have evidence of their pregnancy (laboratory result from health centre) and for 11 months after delivery. When women under the PSNP PWs programme bring this evidence, the HEW writes an application letter to the PSNP public works coordinators. She also writes evidence letters for women who have malnourished children, based on her MUC measurement.

The HEW is also involved in several health/nutrition-related NGO interventions including by an NGO called SURE (see [p.121](#)), which implies home visits to the selected poor pregnant or lactating women to teach them how to prepare the food and follow up on their progress, in addition to the regular (monthly) nutrition demonstration sessions organized at the health post.

The HEW is a 24-year old woman, TTI graduate and she took the COC for HEW. She is from the neighbouring *kebele* G/Kidan and is the wife of the *kebele* manager. She served elsewhere before coming to Harresaw a bit more than a year before the beginning of the fieldwork. She said she has a good relationship with the *kebele* administration and other sectors, such as the DAs in relation to nutrition (though she recognized that there are some issues with the DAs not coming to scheduled meetings) and the teachers on the provision of tetanus vaccination for students, and awareness creation with regard to HIV/AIDS and underage marriage in schools.

She found the women in Harresaw “weaker than where I was before in terms of health awareness” but she has good relations with the community. She highlighted a mix of progress (with coverage in children’s vaccination, vitamin A and deworming, and ANC, and in nutrition activities and discussions with pregnant women) and challenges – notably with regard to family planning, CBHI and household contributions to the ambulance service to bring women back home (only 243 households out of 1,339 agreed to pay). One big headache is the CBHI, which creates a huge additional workload, which negatively impacts the effectiveness of other health services. She suggested to the *wereda* to give the responsibility to other people or officials, but this was rejected and she was told that she has to take the responsibility because it is part of the health services.

Workload is also created with all the reporting she has to do:

Progress on all programmes is reported to the health centre administration. She reports orally on a daily basis on the progress with CBHI; weekly in writing about vaccination, CBHI and discussion of women development army groups on health issues; monthly in writing on all programmes. She also reports weekly orally, and monthly in writing, on the progress of the SURE programme to the NGO agent in the *wereda*. In addition, the health centre calls her every week for the surveillance of holy water centres, so she surveys them weekly to spot anyone affected by rabies virus and other diseases and to report it to the health centre.

She said she likes her job, and especially, her role in relation to maternal and child health. But the workload is huge, especially with the absence of the other HEW. There are too many programmes to implement all at the same time, which undermines the effectiveness with which each can be carried out. She recommended to the *wereda* that a second HEW should be deployed as soon as possible.

At a personal level, the government house she has is very small, though she appreciates that it is electrified and she got a solar light from the government to use when the power is off. She also appreciates the priority given by the community to civil servants for drinking water. She is content

with her salary, which was raised from 800 *Birr* when she started to 2,700 *Birr* now. She would like to upgrade her education and to “*grow in her job and salary*”, and she would also like to learn accounting in a private college. She was quite upset that she just missed an opportunity to go for advanced education, just because unlike other HEWs she had not given false reports on the number of households registered for CBHI.

It is mostly women who had an opinion on the HEW, and it generally was positive. She is less well-known than the *kebele* manager as she is from another *kebele* and relatively new in Harresaw; one woman noted she was “*not sociable with community members*”. Also, several women mentioned that although she was hard working and committed, they could not get the services they want on time because she is alone and has to both be at the health post and do home to home visits. However, all women said she was respectful; one added that she has a good approach both in her home visits and face-to-face conversations (e.g. when she came to the woman’s home to try and convince her on the CBHI), and in women’s gatherings at the health post.

Development Agents

At the beginning of the fieldwork there were three DAs. The *kebele* manager suggested there should have been a fourth one focusing on irrigation but the position was vacant. The lead DA (head of *kebele* agricultural office), in charge of Natural Resources Management, did not mention this. By the end of the fieldwork the NRM DA position was vacant too as the incumbent in Harresaw had asked and obtained his transfer.

The lead DA described his role as following up and evaluating the jobs of all DAs and implementing the work sent by the *kebele* administration to his office. He assigns jobs to development teams through the *kebele* cabinet members in charge of the different *kushet*. He shares experience with model farmers. See his explanation of the *wereda* priorities for the *kebele* (alternative water sources for irrigation, beekeeping and livestock fattening, environmental conservation) and the challenges faced (declining use of agricultural inputs, drought, reluctance to engage in environmental conservation activities, budget constraints) in the *Farming* chapter (p.117).

From the interviews, DAs appear to continue to play a key role in the PSNP PWs (selection of activity, following up of progress). They are also supposed to work with the HEW on nutrition activities, and with the social worker to provide seeds free of charge to poor and vulnerable people identified by the CCC committee. Both women noted problems: DAs were not available as per the schedule for the nutrition activities, and “*they did not work practically*” on the provision of free seeds.

The lead DA, a 27-year old diploma holder who in January 2018 had been in charge for a little more than a year, competed for the position of head of office as it was better paid. Before this he served for a bit more than three years as irrigation DA in other *kebele*. He is from Kal’amin *kebele* in Atsbi *wereda*. He said he appreciates the fact that he lives in a government house, but the workload (especially as a head of office) means he has not enough time to spend for leisure, family and social responsibilities. He likes the agricultural profession, but he feels frustrated that he could not bring the expected results. If he could get a better job he would “*leave any time*”.

Generally the DAs seemed to be poorly appreciated in Harresaw. Most respondents had fairly negative views, a few were neutral (just mentioning reasons why they had been in contact), and only one or two had something positive to say (one, a woman farmer head of household, just said they did their best; the other, a man, said he got good advice on poultry). Most respondents said they are less active than the previous DAs; some of them linked this to the decline in agricultural activities with the almost complete stop in irrigation. Several women said they were also never on time for scheduled meetings – Indeed the RO observed a case in which a large group of women had been called at the FTC for a meeting on nutrition and were waiting for the DAs. She left for an appointment before they came, the women had been there for two hours.

The harshest critiques, as also outlined in the *Farming* chapter (see p.118), were about the mismatch between what the DAs were promoting and the reality on the ground, especially with regard to crop production. This seemed to arise partly from their being squeezed between *wereda* priorities and targets and what is realistic in a place like Harresaw. However, several respondents also highlighted a lack of commitment which, some said, was a more general problem in the administration as a whole. Taking the case of the dam and the very small amount of water left, one respondent explained he doubted this was reported anywhere: *“the wereda head of agriculture never came to see the dam. Even DAs do not come, they sit in the kebele and write reports. They are like pregnant women who do not move away from their home.”*

Community Police

The *kebele* manager described the role of the community police as *“teaching the community about criminal prevention; investigating criminal acts, passing orders from social court and land justice to the community; inspection of case documents and others. He works in collaboration with kebele militia and security affairs administration in securing kebele’s peace.”*

According to the community police, the community policing structure indicates that there should be three community policemen in a *kebele*. However, there is only one community police in Harresaw at this time. He is equipped with one gun and 30 bullets given by the *wereda*. He works together with the *kebele* militia and *kebele* officials to keep security and peace, prevent crimes etc. He reports to the *wereda* police office and to the *kebele* security and administration office.

His role includes crime prevention through awareness-raising education. In case a serious crime is committed, the community police puts the accuser’s statement on record and takes the suspected criminal to the crime investigation department in the *wereda* police office. For less serious crimes, in case offenders refuse to obey the orders of the militia, the policeman arrests offenders and presents them to the *kebele* social court. He identifies potentially problematic individuals and areas and does close monitoring. He participates in resolving conflict and crime prevention activities with community elders. When people present their worries and suspicion of potential criminal acts by individuals, the policeman calls and talks to the suspected individual and gives advice accordingly.

The community police is a 36-year old man, grade 10 completer, and he is from Hadinet *kebele* in Atsbi *wereda*. He lives in the *kebele* in a house provided by the government. He was trained as police for six months when he joined the military. He started in the police in 2002 EC and served as community police since 2003 EC in different *kebele* in another *wereda*. He came to Harresaw in 2007 EC (so at the time of the fieldwork, he was in post since a little more than three years)⁷. As community police he is a member of the *kebele* community forum (see above). He is also a member of the CCC committee.

He highlights as achievements a reduction in the number of criminal cases, greater awareness of the community against crime, and a complete stop to using knife. He added that he worked to bring a transparent food aid distribution system because the community was suspecting that the *kebele* officials, who used to deduct grain from the food aid without public consensus, were corrupted. This has now stopped. In his opinion the main problems of the community are land related conflicts and the long time taken by the LAC and land justice committee to solve the cases, which then lead to people taking things in their hands.

At a personal level, he is content with his salary. Community policemen’s salary has improved in the past five years compared to *wereda* policemen. He earns 4,535 *Birr* gross (4,100 *Birr* net) whereas a policeman of his level working in town gets around 2,200 *Birr* gross. He likes the respect and trust of

⁷ There was a community police for Harresaw in 2012 (WIDE 3 fieldwork), who had been assigned to Harresaw only four months before the fieldwork.

the community but dislikes when people bring to him cases that could be resolved at their level. His workload also means he does not have time to study and upgrade.

For the *kebele* manager, the community police is the most effective civil servant in the *kebele*, due to his “*great personal effort to implement his duties*”. There are few respondents who gave an opinion. The ‘pro-government’ young woman was of the view that security is good in the *kebele* for young women thanks to the militia and community police, as mentioned above. One young man attributed to the presence of the policeman the fact that fighting between young men (including the use of penknife and other objects to stab each other) had reduced in the *kebele*. A destitute woman who in the past was beaten by men with whom she had sexual relations said this was no longer the case as the police was preventing this.

In contrast, several respondents complained about the lack of peace and security in the *kebele* generally, including the man who said that militia and police could not contain these drunken youth going to the extent of disturbing a *kebele* council meeting, which he linked to the weakness of the *kebele* administration more broadly (see p. 38). One woman suggested he was unhelpful and rude to her whilst she was trying to get the 1983 EC land distribution elders to provide evidence in her inheritance case (see p.238).

The community police was also interviewed in relation to migration and whilst he did not deviate from the government position with regard to especially migration to Saudi, he also demonstrated a good understanding of the local realities and openly recognized that not enough was being done to effectively stop it (see p.151).

Kebele political structures and party membership

Kebele party structures

As described by *kebele* officials, the *kebele* structure (of the ruling party) is similar to the government structure. It comprises of the ‘basic organisation’ (*meseretawi wudabe*) at *kebele* level, cells at *kushet* level, and 1-5 networks under the cells. The government and the party structures have each their own activities. The government structures mainly emphasise development activities; the party structures work on political and organizational matters. However, “*as the ruling party is in position of government authority, most of the government employees are party members*”. A *wereda* official further explained that party structures focus on the party programme and members while government structures focus on government work and both party members and non-members.

The WA leader indicated that *kebele* and *kushet* party meetings are held every 29th and 14th day of the month respectively. In her views, attendance at party meetings is better than at general *kebele* meetings, with perhaps one out of eight people being absent in party meetings. There is a system of fines, as explained above. This was confirmed by the woman development team leader who said not only she attended her 1-5 networks’ meetings and it was compulsory because she is a party member, but it is also compulsory to attend party members as they are evaluated on their performance based on attendance to meetings.

The WA leader thought that the party structures were as effective as the 1-5 networks but focusing on delivering political and party messages to party members as rapidly as possible. Another woman was of a different opinion, saying that “*currently party meetings are not strong and effective*”.

As shown by the example given by the WA leader, party structures are given priority by the *kebele* administration in terms of resources, getting notebooks and pens that the WA is refused. The party is also involving in monitoring at least some of the same important activities as the government: there are for instance ‘agricultural cadres’, who are political appointees from among party members selected by the party ‘basic organisation’ to oversee the agricultural performance of their *kushet*. One man, leader of a large *iddir* at the same time as leader of a large *Meskel* association with the

same membership (see below), is conveying party meetings when the *iddir/Meskel* association members are meeting and there happens to be something to announce to party members.

The 'big thing' during the fieldwork was the annual *gemgema* process. See p.86 for more on this.

One ex-fighter explained that recently the ruling party and veterans' associations joined efforts to support two households who had lost their household heads, both veterans. The *kebele* level 40-member veteran association had given them 1,000 *Birr* each and the party gave them 10,000 *Birr*. It is a support which he said is available for all veterans.

A male farmer mentioned a quite exceptional meeting that took place during the 2nd fieldwork, held for only non-members of any political party; neither ruling party nor Arena party members were allowed to participate. This was related to the dispute around the water pipes and borehole (see p.21) and the *wereda* and *kebele* administrations had decided to discuss and investigate the issue with only politically neutral *kebele* residents.

Party membership

Kebele officials said there were 580 party members in the *kebele*. As noted earlier, they and *wereda* officials said that all official positions (*kebele* cabinet, council, DT and 1-5 networks, social court, land justice) were filled with party members and this was supported by the interviews of people in these positions. Women like the WA leader and *kebele* women affairs' cabinet member are party members too. As for general membership, in one development army group of 38 men, 13 of them were party members. The DT leader said party membership did not bring any special benefit.

There were two well-known 'political activists', both men. Those describing them meant that these are men able to "reconcile when there are differences about political issues among residents... by giving wise intellectual opinions on the issue, entertaining the different views" (group of knowledgeable men). They are both veterans, militia members and members of the *kebele* council (hence of the ruling party).

With regard to young people, most of those interviewed have similar opinions about government and about the (ruling) party. They either know little about them (especially young women), or they are not interested by them (some young men), or they are unhappy about them. However, with one exception, young people also said that their peers are also not interested by 'opposition' politics. See more in *Young people's economic and other experiences* chapter, p.270 and p.271.

Government financing

Taxation and contributions

With regard to taxation, the data indicate that the only tax collected at *kebele* level is the land tax. All other taxes are collected

- 1) For urban properties by the municipality in which the property is located, as well as taxes on rent income.
- 2) For businesspeople (including traders),
 - a) For those with a license for an urban-based business, by the concerned municipality. The municipality is also in charge of assessing the revenue base and tax amount to pay - for the businesses under the threshold for full accounting and taxation based on actual profit. (According to Harresaw's investor this is under the supervision of the *wereda*).
 - b) For those with a license for a business established in a rural *kebele*, by the *wereda* taxation office which is also in charge of the revenue base assessment and decision on tax amount to be paid.

According to *wereda* officials, business licenses are provided by the trade and industry sector for businesses established in rural areas and the urban development sector for businesses established in urban areas.

All taxes other than rural land tax are collected early in the (Ethiopian) new year, on the previous year of activities (October). Land tax is collected after the harvest, in January-February. In Harresaw the contributions to government-associated organisations and programmes (i.e. excluding contributions to community organisations such as churches, *Meskel* associations, *mehabers*, *iddirs* and *equubs* described above) are paid separately from the land tax at the beginning of the (Ethiopian) new year, and reportedly all at once. Several respondents including the *kebele* manager noted that paying all at once is an issue, especially for poor households and as contributions are collected during the 'lean season'. This is aggravated in times of drought.

The *kebele* leader said each sector and organisation collects its fees. Several others said that all contributions are paid at once to one person designated for each *kushet*. In one *kushet* the person is the social worker, in another it is the finance *kebele* leader (cabinet member). They might have been talking about different kinds of contributions: water user fees, the CBHI annual insurance premium and school contributions appear to be each separately managed; contributions for the women, youth and farmers' associations, the Community Care Coalition and the Tigray Development Association seemed to be collected together.

A number of interviews suggest two trends worthy of note with regard to taxation in Harresaw:

- 1) Business/trade licensing and taxation was "*becoming serious*" for the businesses and traders (group of knowledgeable women) (more below).
- 2) Contributions in-kind (e.g. grain taken from PSNP transfers) were no longer practised.

With regard to the latter, this shift from in-kind to cash did not apply to the 'voluntary community labour', to which participating, together with paying one's land tax and contributions such as FA, WA and YA, was a condition to continue to be considered as a *kebele* resident and keep one's farmland (see p.217 in land chapter).

Land tax

There was no change in the land tax rate in the past three years (20 *Birr/timad*, 80 *Birr/ha*). Only farmland is taxed; there is no tax on residential plots and houses on them, and no one mentioned a tax on rental income from these either. Land tax is paid in December-January, and there is a system of penalty (e.g. one pays 25 *Birr* for one *timad* after a month delay). *Wereda* officials explained that the land tax is collected by *kebele* people delegated by the tax office and they get an incentive of 5% of the amount collected when they deposit the money at the *wereda* (which increased from the previous 2% incentive). Respondents in Harresaw knew the person delegated in their *kushet*, and that she/he deposited the money at *wereda* level. *Kebele* officials knew about the incentive system and the new 5% rate. Women in general were not aware; male farmers knew about the incentive but thought it was 2% (which it used to be).

Officials at *wereda* and *kebele* levels said that people thought the land tax was fair and there were no complaints. Among respondents, several farmers, poor and rich, said it was not fair. Whilst the men saying so complained about the rate in relation to land size, the rich woman farmer head of household said this is because "*no works and infrastructure are done for the kebele*". Other community respondents said they thought taxes (including land tax) are being used for public services; the wife of a poor farmer said that "*the government spend it back to support the people in many ways such as PSNP and food aid support*".

Licenses and business/trade taxes

A good number of respondents in Harresaw, including women and farmers, noted a change in that traders and businesses are now 'forced' to have a license and pay taxes on their business/ trade.

Otherwise, “the follow-up became strong compared to the past” (woman living in *kebele* centre) and (if they do not get a license/pay) “their business will be closed rapidly” (two women farmers). A *wereda* official noted as a change that since last year (i.e. taxes collected early 2010 EC on the 2009 EC activity) people should pay taxes on traditional drink trade such as *tej* houses.

Among the traders and businesspeople in our respondents (see the **Non-farming** chapter for more on their profiles), the larger and better-established ones had a license and paid taxes (including for leisure businesses, see box below); many others did not, even though in some instances, the difference in turnover/profit with a tax-paying business was not that high, or the informal business was reportedly doing better than the informal one (see cases of the snack-bar vs the elderly lady’s *tella/areki*/beer business below). A number of examples are given in the box below.

Box 3. Business/trade taxation in Harresaw

Among those with a license and paying taxes is the young successful businessman with the bakery, largest shop and largest snack-bar. At the beginning of 2010 EC he paid 6,000 *Birr* on 80,000 *Birr* profit just for his bakery – which he thinks is fair. He has a license for each business, no big deal financially (e.g. he paid 300 *Birr* for the license for the bakery). But it was hard to get the bakery license as established bakers in Dera tried to prevent it.

The 35-year old ‘bigger trader’, who also has a beer distribution and a billiard business, has a license and pays taxes for each. Last time he paid 1,500 *Birr* for crop trading, 1,000 *Birr* for beer distribution and 800 *Birr* for the billiard business as annual taxes. He thinks it is fair as tax amounts were revised downwards from the previous year (e.g. the year before he paid 3,100 *Birr* annual tax just for the crop trading). But getting a license is a long process and this has not improved.

The young woman who runs the second largest snack-bar in the *kebele* centre has a lot more trouble. She said she makes a profit of 100-200 *Birr*/month; she paid taxes for the first time last year and was asked to pay 1,860 *Birr*. She had to borrow money to pay.

Meanwhile, the elderly lady running a successful ‘local drink house’ also in the *kebele* centre, does not have a license and does not pay taxes even though she estimated her profit to be around 800 *Birr*/month (she produces and sells *tella*, and also sells beer ‘illegally’). She did not seem to be aware of the change highlighted by the *wereda* official concerning traditional drink trade.

Another comparatively larger and licensed crop trader said he made a 37,000 *Birr* profit and paid 2,700 *Birr*. In contrast, a smaller crop trader who said he made 15,000 *Birr* profit does not have a license and does not pay any tax.

Among other small business owners in our respondents, the tailor, working ‘on the street’, does not have a license. The shoe shiner does not say anything, but he too does not have dedicated work premises. The young woman involved in petty trade on market days and the smaller traders do not have licenses/pay taxes.

None of the youth associations recently or being established paid taxes as most had not yet started producing. But as being licensed is among the condition to get access to credit, even those which had not yet started production ‘had their stamp’. The two associations that had started production (stone and sand production) did not yet have one full year of activity. It is not clear, and no one mentioned from among the officials or the young people, whether they will be asked to pay taxes in October 2018.

According to the young woman running the snack-bar in the box above, annual business/trade taxes are paid in Dera to *wereda* officials there. Before they go, a woman from the taxation office comes and informs the business owners to go and pay their taxes. *Wereda* officials come to warn those who do not pay on time, and if they do not pay promptly their business is closed.

Whereas the two businessmen mentioned above thought the amount they paid last time was fair, many respondents, including *wereda* officials, noted that there are many complaints. For the young woman with the snack-bar, she said the amount she was asked to pay was unfair and “the real

situation of the market demand and business owners' earnings should be studied before deciding the amount of tax to be paid". Some respondents mentioned their desire to expand their trade or business (e.g. a small crop trader, a young woman offering 'modern hair braiding services' and who would like to open a modern hair dressing salon with more services) but that they are afraid of being asked to take a license and pay big amounts of taxes.

Wereda officials noted that one issue of particular concern is the lack of reliable electric power supply. Service businesses such as grain mill houses, bakeries as well as others requiring electricity regularly complain that they pay high tax amounts yet they cannot work effectively because electricity is on and off. The *wereda* cannot raise business taxes if the issue of electric power supply is not solved. In Harresaw this issue was not mentioned by any of the licensed businesspeople among our respondents, but the tailor noted that it is an issue for him and at times he has to work with a torch when he has to finish an urgent order.

Paying land tax and tax in town

As further explained in the *Land use and urbanisation* chapter), there are a good number of farmers with houses in towns (Dera, Atsbi and even Wukro for a few) and living part or most of the time there, and yet keeping farmland in Harresaw *kebele* (see p.217). They pay land tax and pay or make the necessary contributions to retain their rural *kebele* ID and their rural land. All respondents talking about it or who were themselves in this situation said that a) they did not have an urban ID as one cannot have two IDs; b) they paid taxes on their urban property to the relevant municipality – which is required, among others, to get water and electricity.

To this, *kebele* officials added that those who want to "trade in town" should have an urban ID in order to get the trading license as a business established in town. If so, they have to return their rural *kebele* ID. If they live permanently in town for two years, then they lose their farmland. Until then, they pay both the land tax to the *kebele* and the trade/non-farm income tax to the municipality. They did not say what happens to an individual with an established business in town, hence an urban ID, but who does not 'live permanently in town for two years' and who wants to continue to pay land tax on farmland and pay/make all other necessary contributions to the rural *kebele*, to keep farmland. One example is the honey production investor of Harresaw, with a shop in Dera where he also resides, as well as farmland and his investment land in Harresaw. He said he paid land tax on his farm land. His honey production investment is a rural business. His shop is an urban business. He said he and everyone in his household has an ID from Harresaw.

The issue of ID cards is further addressed in the section on *Government services and interventions in the kebele* in this chapter. In summary, no one should have more than one ID and none of the respondents, reportedly, knew someone having more than one ID. However, the issue of individuals with multiple ID cards was one of the points raised at the *kebele gemgema*.

Regular contributions

The following 'regular' annual contributions were mentioned:

- Tigray Development Association: 24 Birr/year (another respondent said 20 Birr)
- Women Association: 10 Birr/year (a couple of women said 11 Birr)
- Youth Association: 10 Birr/year
- Farmers' Association: 24 Birr, raised from 10 Birr/year in 2010 EC
- Party membership: 24 Birr/year, raised from 12 Birr in 2008 EC
- Community Care Coalition (CCC): new since a couple of years (see below), 24 Birr/year.

These contributions are receipted. The HEW and the woman leading a development team and an *equub* and *mehaber* with the same membership said that all these organisations as well as religious leaders are used to pass messages about the need to pay them.

A group of knowledgeable women said that paying the TDA, WA, YA, FA and party membership contributions was mandatory to get an ID from the *kebele* and that *“it is getting more serious to have to pay these than in the past”*. A rich woman farmer head of household said that at least the contributions to the WA and YA are ‘prerequisites’. The woman leader of the development team explained that to get an ID card, in addition to their written application people need to show the receipts for their membership fees. One knowledgeable young woman, 23-year old and grade 10 completer, explained that many youth are members of one or the other organization, even those who migrated, as they want to get an ID before migrating. Having a *kebele* ID is also indispensable to be eligible for any kind of land (re-)allocation for young, landless or homeless people in the *kebele*.

Apart from this, as seen earlier (see p.48), among the respondents most could not mention anything positive achieved with the WA/YA membership fees, and several people were indeed critiquing these organisations for doing little else than collecting fees. The only exception is the young woman generally supportive of government who explained that *“contributions collected from members are a great income for the government to be involved in infrastructure and improving health and education services.”* For others, more realistically, it was indeed down to getting an ID and possibly, one day, land (for which YA membership was a pre-requisite) (poor young man in his early twenties).

The **contribution to the CCC** was the only new item on this list. A few women explained that the cash contribution replaced a former practice whereby poor people were present when the PSNP transfers in grain were paid, and those willing were giving them a small grain gift. The social worker explained that as it is raised at the same time, it is a problem for people to pay the CCC money in addition to all the others. So, she said, even though people agree with the idea of supporting vulnerable people of the community, *“their view toward the CCC contribution is not that good because they are stressed to afford the payments of all memberships and contributions at once”*. (See more on the CCC in general in the *Social protection* chapter below).

In addition to the list above, the issue of the contribution for the **Red Cross/ambulance service** (30 *Birr*/year and per household) was ‘hot’ in the *kebele*. The idea is that if enough households contribute, the *wereda* ambulances will not only take women for delivering at the health centre but also bring them back home, and, some respondents said, take other patients such as old people and children to the health centre. But very few households have paid (the HEW said 243 out of 1,339 for the *kebele* as a whole). One woman, formerly a TBA and also the *kebele* finance leader, said this is because men are irresponsible and prefer drinking beer, on which they may spend up to 300 *Birr* in an evening. For other respondents, this reluctance to pay arises from the fact that the ambulance service is not reliable. First, if the road to access the *kebele* centre is too muddy ambulances cannot reach most of the *kebele*. There is also an issue with ambulance maintenance, as recognized by the health officer in Harresaw health centre (soon transferred to Dera municipality). He explained that although there are four ambulances in the *wereda*, for three weeks in the last month before the interview only one was in service: the other three were all at the garage, two for maintenance or repairs and one had an accident.

Another ‘hot’ issue in the *kebele* was the Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) ‘contribution’. The payment of the CBHI annual insurance premium is separately managed and is discussed in the CBHI section in this chapter.

Water user fees were an issue as well and especially, the recent increase from 10 *Birr*/month to 1 *Birr*/jerrycan which was decided after the maintenance of the big borehole.

In relation to **education**, the group of knowledgeable women said there was no regular payment, but students are told to contribute 5 *Birr* or 10 *Birr* for this or that. *Kebele* officials said that in the Abidera school (also on land soon transferred to Dera municipality), since 2007 EC students are paying 20 *Birr* each semester for sanitary services.

Like for the CCC, cash contributions had also replaced former ways whereby the **community contributes to the kebele budget**. The interviews of the *kebele* officials and of the policeman (see p.54 above) suggest that in both cases this came from a drive by the *wereda* to clean up the system of PSNP transfers. However, in Harresaw this remained a bit of a grey zone, as **Box 4** shows.

Box 4. Community contribution and kebele budget

In 2012 there used to be an in-kind contribution for the *kebele* budget, to cover regular expenses such as stationary and others. In that system, 1 kg grain was deducted from the PSNP in-kind transfers and the grain was then auctioned. The money raised in this way was reportedly used to, among others, support the secondary school costs of a few orphans in the *kebele* (WIDE3 Harresaw community situation report, 2012).

In 2018, both *wereda* and *kebele* officials said this system stopped as it was “a source of corruption and created governance problems” (*wereda* officials); “it was banned by higher authorities as bad governance” (*kebele* officials). An authorized source of revenue for the *kebele* budget is now the sale of food aid sacks. However, said *wereda* officials, “in some *kebeles* the community still agree to contribute to support activities such as construction of FTC and schools when they receive food aid”.

Meanwhile, *kebele* officials explained that “starting from 2009 EC, the *kebele* collects one Birr per month from each beneficiary of food aid. This money is collected only when the aid is given in kind. When the aid is in cash, as it is paid by the *wereda* finance, the *kebele* is not able to collect this contribution”. This cash contribution complements the revenue from the sale of food aid sacks to cover regular expenses such as stationary and, they added, “the *kebele* contribution to strengthening the party, sent by the *kebele* to the *wereda*”.

There is little data on exemption. Vulnerable/poor people are reportedly exempted from paying the CCC contribution. There were a couple of mentions of poor people being exempted from paying water user fees. However, there did not seem to be any system underpinning these. A very poor woman living out of charity and petty trade, in a room she is renting for 50 Birr in the *kebele* centre, explained that “the water committee leader who is my neighbour does not force me to pay every month. I only pay when I get the money.”

In addition to these contributions related one way or another to ‘government’, households also have social and religious obligations, such as the ‘church tax’ which all households attending church pay annually (48 birr in one of the largest churches of the community), and mehaber and Meskel association contributions. There were cases among interviewees of people or households who were not member of a mehaber as they could not afford these.

Community contributions of labour

The annual community voluntary work continues to be practiced. It is scheduled in February every year, which in Harresaw also coincides with the period during which PSNP Public Works are carried out. Both were in full swing at the time of the second fieldwork (end February/early March 2018). Community respondents were not clear about the duration of the campaign; some said it lasted for 25 days, other said 40 days. *Kebele* officials said it is for 25 days. There was a change in the way the work was scheduled. Last year people were working in the morning on the voluntary work and after lunch on the PSNP PWs for those concerned, from Monday to Friday. This year it was decided that the community work would be every day except Tuesday, and PSNP PWs would be done on Tuesday. The way work is planned and allocated seemed to also have changed, at least for the PSNP PWs: there is no longer a fixed duration of work per day, but people are given work pieces and they work flexibly to complete them. It is not clear whether this also applies to the ‘free labour’.

The focus of activities under both the PSNP PWs and the ‘free labour’ has continued to be on soil and water conservation, and road construction. *Kebele* officials highlighted that “the community appreciates the changes being seen in their localities”, although there are many complaints when

work is done in mountainous areas and planned on a whole-*kebele* level. People prefer when work is planned and allocated at *kushet* level, and on farmland.

The community work is supposed to be voluntary. In the words of the *kebele* officials, “in this voluntary work, except disabled persons, pregnant women, patients and old people, all should participate”. As seen above and in the *Land use and urbanisation* chapter (p.217), farmers with town houses and residing partly or mostly there have to make sure they/their household participate, as one of the conditions to keep their status of rural *kebele* resident and their farmland. Also worthy of note, when the ROs returned in late February/early March several respondents commented that many of these young people who had created a lot of troubles had disappeared on migration because they did not want to participate in the free community work.

*Debt and insurance*⁸

Wereda officials explained that the *wereda* is among those severely **indebted** in the Region. However, Harresaw is the least indebted *kebele* compared to others: its outstanding debt only amounts to 700,000 *Birr* whilst the *kebele* with the poorest repayment rate has 5.2 million *Birr* in outstanding debt. In Harresaw, *kebele* officials reckoned that in early 2018, around 500 households had loans out of the total number of household heads in the *kebele*.

Wereda and *kebele* officials described efforts to recover bad loans in similar terms. First, a discussion session is held with the community. A campaign is carried out through coordinating efforts by MFI experts and *wereda* and *kebele* officials. Following consultation and discussion with the community, officials approach individuals and order them to sell properties as needed to repay their debt. The final step when these means do not work is to take legal steps and accuse the person before the court. In this way, according to *wereda* officials a total of 12 million *Birr* was recovered for the *wereda* as a whole.

They added that people who have bad loans cannot get other loans but also, the amount of lending capital allocated to the *wereda* by Dedit is low. This has negative implications in terms of access to loans for residents of all *kebeles*, including Harresaw in spite of its comparatively better track record in terms of loan repayment. The issue of low quotas for the youth and women packages was indeed raised by both the *kebele* leader and the *kebele* manager. Meanwhile, whilst many community respondents were unhappy with the ‘loan service’, few seemed to know about this reason.

As is further discussed in the *Land use and urbanisation* chapter, the data suggest that many people who find themselves ‘the back against the wall’ with a bad ‘government loan’ either migrate, often taking an informal loan to do so with the hope of repaying both; and/or rent out their farmland through a ‘loan access’ agreement of an indefinite duration, whereby their land is ‘de facto’ used as a collateral by the party lending the money and renting-in the land; and/or informally/illegally ‘sell’ their plot of residential land. Neither *wereda* nor *kebele* officials appeared to know about these practices or if they knew, no one at these levels mentioned them.

There is no crop or livestock **insurance** in the *wereda* or any of the *kebele*. *Kebele* officials in Harresaw said that REST is interested in starting both types of insurance. A *wereda* official said that training on crop insurance was recently provided and training on livestock insurance was being provided at the *wereda* level, and both were planned to be implemented soon. Officials mentioned the Community-Based Health Insurance and that good progress was being made. This is discussed in the CBHI section in this chapter.

⁸ This section does not cover debt by individuals to other individuals.

Wereda policies and budget

Wereda priorities are outlined earlier (see *Wereda successful and problematic programmes* section). In terms of budget, *wereda* officials explained that the lion's share goes to the education sector, primarily to pay the salaries of the 800 teachers among the 1,600 *wereda* civil servants. The remaining funds are allocated in priority to "poverty reduction activities based on agricultural works". Next to Agriculture and Rural Development come the water and construction sectors. *Wereda* officials explained that health is getting 'limited' support through the budget "because it is thought that the sector has a better opportunity of being supported by NGOs" compared to for instance, irrigation and water harvesting activities. Activities to expand irrigation with various water source options were carried out last year through campaigns and voluntary contributions of labour.

They added that many programmes suffer from budget constraints, highlighting in particular a shortage of capital budget and of funds for capacity building, as well as insufficient budget for irrigation expansion and the quality education programme. They indicated that the MDG Fund is applied particularly for the food security and health sectors, but they did not give any other detail.

Kebele budget

Wereda officials explained that there is no regular budget assigned to *kebeles* by the *wereda*, and *kebeles* do not have a formal budget. This is because their tasks - mobilizing the community for development works, organizing voluntary labour contributions and following up on activities carried out through *wereda* and regional budgets – do not require a regular budget. If there is a community contribution collected at *kebele* level, the *kebele* uses it for its own activities. Institutions like FTCs, schools and others may collect revenue from land rent and selling grasses, and they also use the money for their own purposes.

In Harresaw, as seen in *Box 4* above, the sources, nature (voluntary or not), and uses of community contributions raised in the name of funding the *kebele* budget are a bit of a grey area.

The *kebele* leader highlighted that shortages of budget (arising from the fact that the *kebele* budget depends on people's contributions) and of human resources is a cause of personal frustration as it means that the *kebele* cannot meet people's demands. He highlighted that for instance, less road construction works were done than planned in the *kebele* plan, and it had also not been possible to dig some ponds and fence the health post and *kebele* office due to budget shortages.

In terms of financial transparency, two male respondents said that the *kebele* budget is posted in a place where the community can easily see and read it. Two women said the community is not informed on the *kebele* budget and what it is spent for, there is no financial transparency. Four respondents explained that *kebele* officials give information on the *kebele* budget at *kebele* meetings together with new initiatives like the CBHI. But, one woman said, this was done under the previous *kebele* administration but no longer since the current *kebele* leader (removed at the end of the fieldwork) is in post.

Government services and interventions in the *kebele*

Perspectives on progress and problems

Strikingly, there were practically no mentions of 'progress' with regard to government services and interventions. This dovetails with the prevailing perception, noted elsewhere in this chapter, of a general weakening of local government and of 'one-way' links with higher government levels, with 'instructions' and targets coming down and practically no channel to raise issues of major concern to the community as the *kebele* and *wereda* administrations acted as 'filters' to avoid blame.

Problems with government services and interventions are described in the next section under each heading. The most problematic areas, ranked from the top most, were perceived to be: drinking

water, internal roads, justice services, 'peace and security', and inactivity in agricultural development.

Public services and sectoral interventions

In early 2018, the following public services were available to and accessed by community members, and/or sectoral interventions carried out.

Education

There were two primary schools (grade 1-8 and grade 1-7, the latter having expanded from grade 1-4 in 2012) in the *kebele*, and a primary school attended by many children from Harresaw in Ruba Feleg *kebele*. The general secondary school (grade 9-10) in Dera, newly constructed in 2011/12, had expanded in terms of enrolment; the only complete secondary school of the *wereda* (grade 9-12 including preparatory) was located in Atsbi.

No new intervention was mentioned. The self-contained system in primary schools was no longer practised; the schools were letting teachers focus on one or a few subjects. With regard to early childhood education the *kebele* administration said there was child-to-child education and 0-grade class. At the last school year opening there were few children enrolled (46) and very few of those enrolled (10) attended. The HEW said parents preferred child-to-child but this was not mentioned by any of the community respondents interviewed by the ROs, nor was the 0-grade class.

There is a new university in Adigrat but as in the past students are assigned across the country regardless of their region of origin, so the presence of this new university does not directly make a difference for students from Harresaw. In the *kebele* records, 36 students from Harresaw scored results high enough to join universities, in the summer 2017. There was a newly established TVET institution in Atsbi – which one headteacher in Harresaw described as 'not mature'. There was also one new private college in the *wereda*, called Mehari Tsegay College, located in the same compound as Atsbi High School and providing distance education in accounting, economics and management. A few young people studied in private colleges in Wukro and Mekelle.

Health

There was no new health institution. The health post in the *kebele* centre was staffed with only one HEW since many months, which was problematic. There was a health centre located in Abidera got, on land now demarcated to be annexed by Dera; and a public hospital in Atsbi.

Several respondents were not very happy with the services at the Dera health centre (e.g. examination machine not working due to lack of electricity, long wait including because of staff lunch pause; woman coming for pregnancy test, sent back because the health worker said she did not seem to be pregnant; CBHI members allegedly discriminated by health staff giving priority to patients paying directly from their pocket; health staff giving the same medicines to everyone regardless of the symptoms). The health officer managing the health centre listed as problems the lack of a dedicated waiting room for women pre- and post-delivery; the insufficient ambulance service; insufficient staffing (only one 'delivery coach' and sometimes 10 women coming to deliver at a time); shortage of water with ensuring infection risks; no technician for the lab; and community perceptions that services are inadequate if they are not diagnosed for some specialist examination. Services at the health post had limitations as well, including that there is no refrigerator, so PLWHAs have to go to the health centre in Dera to access their medicines. HIV/AIDS test and advisory services are also available only at the health centre.

The main new health-related intervention was the rollout of the CBHI, a very high, campaign-like *wereda* priority, which was received with mixed feelings by the community, and which represented a significant additional workload for the HEW and also the *kebele* manager (see more in the *Community-Based Health Insurance* section below). Earlier priorities like latrine use and other sanitation practices were mentioned rather like 'business as usual' by women asked about health;

one of them noted that the follow-up by the health post about latrine and hand-washing station use had reduced. With regard to latrines, whilst the *kebele* had 'graduated' in 2007EC, many of the latrines in early 2018 were no longer useable; people were supposed to reconstruct them and use a concrete slab, but this was an issue as it was said to be expensive. Similarly, whilst health extension activities such as vaccination, TB awareness etc. were mentioned like if 'routine', it is not clear that they still were very high on the HEW agenda, alone, and with a bigger pressure on her related to CBHI and to some extent birth deliveries.

Birth deliveries at the health centre continued to be a high priority intervention, although second to expanding CBHI enrolment. There was reluctance from many to pay contributions for the ambulance service, because it was said to be unreliable (see [p.60](#)). Family planning was mentioned as one of the services available at the health post and some women and the HEW said awareness was good. Some of the married women said they took or had taken contraception, and the HEW explained that like for vaccination, there is no shortage of such items because they are supplied from a non-government organisation (donor) budget. As discussed in the young people' chapter (see [p.258](#)), access to contraception remains somewhat taboo for young unmarried women.

The use of private health services was more frequently mentioned than for education services. People talked about private clinics and hospitals in Wukro and Mekelle, and private pharmacies in Atsbi. Abortion was mentioned several times as one of the services for which people in the community would rather go to private clinics.

Nutrition

Nutrition too was a lesser priority than the CBHI rollout. Women generally said they got nutrition-related information from the HEW as part of the mainstream health messages; the HEW said there were monthly nutrition sessions at the health post, and that regular measurement of arm circumference is carried out to detect malnutrition of young children and mothers. The women all said the information is useful, but most added that not everyone could implement the recommendations and drought made it more difficult. Several young women added that insufficient food results in young women having their first menstruations rather late.

As seen in the section on PSNP (see [p.199](#)), the only new (one-year old) nutrition-related feature of the PSNP was that mothers with an under-five malnourished child are transferred from PWs to Direct Support for as long as the child is under treatment. This, however, was mentioned only by the HEW. One NGO was active in Harresaw, focusing on nutrition-related support for poor lactating and pregnant women, working with the HEW and the DAs (the latter, not very motivated according to the HEW) (see [p.121](#)). There was school feeding in the *kebele* primary schools at the time of the 2015/16 drought although it came late, lasted only two-three months (April-June 2016), and was stopped reportedly without any prior notice given to the headteacher (see [p.292](#)).

Key infrastructures

Community respondents generally identified the provision of drinking water as the most problematic area in government services and interventions. A number of new water points were constructed since 2011/12 but many were not functional, and the management of access to drinking water and of water infrastructure was a frequent source of conflict in the community (see [p.20](#)). There were several mentions of lack, or poor quality, of internal roads – with implications for instance with regard to transporting pregnant women to health institutions for birth deliveries (see [p.19](#)). The limited access to electricity was also raised as an issue, and one of the tailors noted that as electricity was often interrupted, this was problematic for him to finish orders on time. There were also tensions between *kushets* about the prospect of expansion of grid connection which would be linked to the development of the sketch plan town.

Agriculture development and extension

Several respondents noted that there was little government activity in the agriculture sector, which they linked to drought but also lack of commitment of the DAs, reflecting the general local government weakening already mentioned. However, the vet service available in Dera appeared to have been strengthened (offering vaccination, artificial insemination etc.) and this was seen as positive⁹. This and other sectoral interventions related to modernisation of smallholder farming as well as how they were perceived by the community are further discussed in the Agricultural modernisation section below.

Environmental conservation/natural resource management interventions

Environmental conservation/NRM interventions included watershed management (see p.12) and terracing, check dam construction, tree planting etc.; water source development - a new high priority of the *wereda*, which did not seem to be guided by any prior water potential study; forest conservation - which seemed to have gained importance as any deforestation activity was immediately brought before the *wereda* court and could no longer be seen by the social court; and cut-and-carry on communal grazing land, which was still relatively new and attracted mixed feelings in 2011/12 and appeared to be better accepted in early 2018. There were many mentions of a training recently provided by an NGO called Green Diversity, and for which those who attended the one-day training got a per diem of 500 *birr*!

Justice, peace and security

In relation to peace and security one main issue was on people's mind: the militia, community police and *kebele* administration were failing to control a group of young men spending time idle in the *kebele* centre, getting drunk and at times, fighting with each other (including with knives at some point), and 'disturbing peace' more widely out of frustration (shouting at night) or to show their opposition to some of the actions of the *kebele* administration (such as about the decision of where to locate the sketch plan town, or enforcing farmers to take fertilizer).

Issues were also raised with justice services, both locally and in relation to the *wereda* court, including some allegations of corrupt practices at both levels. The *wereda* court has a new outreach service, with a mobile court available in Dera once a week. The main prison is in Wukro and there is a temporary jail in Atsbi.

Land management

Land management services and interventions are discussed in depth in the relevant chapter (see p.212).

Social protection interventions

The Productive Safety Net Programme, Emergency Food Aid, Community-Based Health Insurance and its associated subsidies, and the hybrid government-community Community Care Coalition are discussed in the Social protection chapter.

Job creation/youth livelihood support interventions

Youth livelihood support interventions are described at p.277 in the chapter on young people's experiences in Harresaw.

⁹ It was found after the fieldwork that this has been supported by Irish Aid through a programme focusing on strengthening veterinary services by better equipping a number of vet clinics which can then serve as 'hubs' for a wider range of services. The programme is designed as a collaboration between Irish Aid and the *wereda* – with the *wereda* having to contribute from its own budget and in terms of staffing, alongside Irish funding.

Gender equity interventions

At community level there was no mention of livelihood support interventions specifically targeting women – apart from some messaging encouraging women to get involved in chicken production. Gender was ‘mainstreamed’ so that, among others, the *wereda* insisted on gender-mixed youth groups. However, this did not help addressing the constraints that young women faced in this respect such as constraints on their time, their lack of trust in male group mates, and lack of options that would more easily fit with their other responsibilities, especially for those married and with young children.

Other gender-focused interventions also appeared to be limited, which may have reflected at least in part, the lack of ‘energy’ of the women association; and there was nothing new. Women’s rights in cases of divorce, inheritance etc. were said to be better known, but there were cases among the interviewees showing that it remained difficult for women to defend their rights when they lacked connections and that men often were better able to leverage the connections needed. There were mentions of measures such as enforcement of punishment in case of abduction and early marriage. Some respondents (including the only woman militia) thought that violence against women had decreased as the militia and community police were attentive to this; but interviews with young women show that other more subtle forms of violence such as harassment were common in the *kebele* centre (see [Box 38](#)).

In spite of *wereda* officials’ claim that there was a push towards gender parity in key local government structures, in Harresaw women’s participation to community management was low, with a few of them actively involved and most others limiting their involvement to the minimum required e.g. to get an ID card or be among the beneficiaries of subsidised goods distributed by the multiservice cooperative. This was even truer for young women, who as the Research Officer highlighted knew very little about the *kebele* activities and decisions, especially if they were not married and living with their parents. One young woman suggested that women’s participation goes against prevailing social norms, with husbands disliking it when their wife is seen to be much out of the house and the community gossiping about this.

Kebele administrative services

The administrative services provided by the *kebele* included the provision of ID cards and Vital Event Registration. Several interviewees mentioned the latter but none of them elaborated on what this was. In contrast, the provision of ID cards was often a relatively prominent topic in interviews. Men and women, adults and young people alike, elaborated on issues such as who is eligible to get one and who is not (e.g. migrant returnees get a temporary ID card for six months on return, which does not give them the same rights to services and protection as a ‘full-fledged’ one), alleged partiality in who gets it, delays in getting it when cards are not available, services that require having an ID card and other advantages in having one (often related to personal safety and right to protection when travelling). All said that one could not have two ID cards and all farmers with houses in towns were said to have only a rural *kebele* ID card.

Use of government services

Issues of in/exclusion in access to and use of government services are discussed in the section on [Inclusion in government public services & interventions](#) below.

Services and interventions by NGOs

A small number of NGOs were active in Harresaw but had by early 2018 stopped activity. This included World Vision, which in 2011/12 was suspected of proselytising and not trusted because of this, and which reportedly was in the past involved in encouraging people in adopting hybrid cows; and Adonay which used to support orphaned and vulnerable children with cash and clothing, but which has already stopped activity in 2011/12.

A few respondents mentioned activities by NGOs without specifying their name – such as an NGO which supported households to procure latrine slabs, but this seemed to have stopped too. Another mentioned an NGO which reportedly promised to build a meteorological centre in the *kebele* (which would have given opportunities for youth groups to sell stone and sand) but this had not started yet. The HEW mentioned that there was no shortage of some medicines and items because these were funded with NGO support. Respondents also mentioned UNICEF financing for the borehole and water infrastructure which the Region has invested in – and which was partly dysfunctional. As noted above, one NGO called SURE (Sustainable Under-nutrition Reduction in Ethiopia, perhaps the name of the programme) focused on nutrition support to poor lactating or pregnant mothers; another NGO called Green Diversity (again, perhaps the name of the programme) had given one training session on environmental conservation.

Community management structures

There are no clans and no ‘customary networks’ in Harresaw. Important social organisations in people’s life are the *mehabers* and the *Meskel* associations. There are no new community-initiated organizations or networks. The Community Care Coalition (CCC), although it is supposed to emanate from the community as a ‘self-help’ social protection structure, is perceived as part of the ‘official’ structures and is described in the *kebele* level **Government management structures** section above.

Elders

There are four types of people whom respondents refer to as ‘elders’ in Harresaw:

- (a) The elders who are members of an elders’ committee that is formally recognized by the government, which respondents sometimes called ‘*shimgilina*’;
- (b) People chosen by each party in a dispute or conflict to help resolve the case through mediation;
- (c) The people who were on the land distribution committee in 1976 EC and 1983 EC;
- (d) People who witness the many informal land transactions concluded about farmland and residential plots.

According to the HEW, there are also elders on the PSNP appeal committee. However, as seen elsewhere, this committee is not very active and not well known, and there is no information on who these elders are in relation to the elders’ committee.

The elders’ committee ((a) above) is more formal and it is a permanent organisation; whereas elders called to resolve a specific case ((b) above) may be (and presumably often are) different for different cases. The ‘land distribution’ elders ((c) above) and land transaction witnesses ((d) above) are also called as and when needed. According to the ROs, elders on the elders’ committee command as much respect as the case-specific elders involved on an individual basis. Meanwhile, the ‘land distribution’ elders are important providers of evidence on land-related issues but, some respondents alleged, prone to bias and corruption. The land transaction witnesses are also key in case of dispute arising once the transaction is signed. See the **Land use and urbanisation** chapter for more on these two types of ‘elders’.

Elders dealing with individual cases and called by one of the parties can be anyone trusted by that party. They are said to mediate disputes between neighbours, husband and wife etc.

The member of the elders’ committee interviewed in this capacity is an ex-fighter involved in the guerrilla against the Derg and he is also leader of a large *iddir* and of a large *Meskel* association and interviewed in these capacities too (see below). He explained that

The elders’ committee consists of three people from each *kushet* (9 in total). They do not have a leader, they all have equal power and role, and they consult and agree to carry out their work. The *wereda* asked the *kebele* to identify three elders from each *kushet* and the *kebele* did this through public consultation. They were chosen for their age and experience

of informal eldership in their *kushet*. They received a three-day training at the *wereda* level about security issues and how and what kinds of disputes and conflicts they can and should be involved in. They also have refresher training by the social court, once or twice a year. The elders are involved in mediating conflicts regarding land boundaries, conflict among individuals as well as any fight among community members which does not cause blood and is not a 'severe physical attack'.

The elders' committee members meet every weekend and on the monthly religious holidays to receive, consult on and mediate in order to solve the cases they are presented. The three elders of a *kushet* deal with cases in the *kushet*. But for *kebele* level cases they deal with these together. The committee works with the land administration (justice?) and the social court, with cases passed to the court by the elders' committee and cases passed to them by the social court and the land administration (justice?).

He gave examples of success and failure to mediate, and of collaboration with other bodies to resolve cases, summarized in the box below.

Box 5. Examples of elders' mediation and collaboration

Recently, they successfully mediated between individuals who fought after one insulted the other, in Endagebreal *got*; and between two men, one of whom had beaten the other's sheep which had entered his grazing land.

Meanwhile, they were presented with a case of conflict regarding a land transaction that they could not resolve. This was between a man saying that a household had sold their plot of residential land to him and he built a house on it, and the household arguing that they had never sold that land and the man had never been allowed to build a house on it. They failed to mediate between the parties and passed the case onto the land administration (justice?).

The other committee elders for the *kushet* are also members of the *Meskel* association and *iddir* that he is leading. Four years ago, there was a very serious case of three members of the *iddir* who killed another to rob him after they had drinks together, because they knew he had his pay for five months with him. The *iddir* was very important in collaborating with the social court and get the criminals arrested and punished. He was involved in the process up to the *wereda* and even the zonal court in Adigrat.

The elders' committee is also involved in disputes between *kushet* or *got* about land or water; and beyond the *kebele*.

The member of the elders' committee said that the problem they face is lack of time for their individual work.

The elders' committee was known by several respondents as "*elders selected by the kebele (who) mediate conflicts between individuals, kushet and got, and also with neighbouring kebele and Afar, and (who) took training at the wereda and work with the social court*" (description by one woman). A group of knowledgeable male respondents said elders on the committee were "*respected and well accepted people in the kebele... they also hold positions as model farmers, religious leaders and intellectual persons.*" Three of the elders of the committee "*worked together with other elders to solve the problem of boundary disputes between Ruba Felege (a neighbouring kebele in the wereda) and Kunewa wereda in Afar.*"

One woman (middle-wealth farmer head of household) noted as a change the fact that elders are "*more involved in the government activities such as meetings and training*".

Religious organisations

The only religious organization in the *kebele* is the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. There are nine churches in Harresaw, including St Giorgis in Abidera which is being transferred to Dera municipality. In each church there is a priest leader, a number of other priests and deacons.

According to the 'church leader' interviewed by the ROs, church leaders have special responsibilities but no special reward. They get the same payment as others serving the same church, depending on the number of people in the congregation, their annual contribution and the number of priests and deacons. In his church (St Rufael, the largest in Harresaw), with 250 regular church attendees, a contribution of 48 *Birr*/year and 13 priests and deacons, they each get 925 *Birr* per year. He does face refusal by some priests and deacons to involve in the church activities as per their schedule, in particular during working days, because they want and they have to engage in their own farming and other activities. In his view, the church should have its own budget and pay a reasonable salary to priests and deacons so that this problem would not occur.

Many respondents noted that religious leaders were among the people involving in conflict mediation in the community. Several respondents indicated that the church did not have the capacity to support individuals; on the contrary, it needed support from the congregation, which is provided through the annual contributions and through gifts from the *mehabers*.

Almost all women talking about the role of the church also mentioned, as more of a change, that religious leaders these days also transmit government messages to believers in church. The box below summarises what was said about this role. As may be seen from the box, there appears to be an understanding is that the messaging is by the priests as individuals, not by the church as an institution.

Box 6. Church passing government messages

Most women who mentioned this change talked about health-related messages (HIV/AIDS, family planning); one of them added they are also "*convincing people to use fertiliser and improved seeds, collaborating with kebele officials*". Men noted that religious leaders pass messages about reducing unnecessary expenditure on weddings and other celebrations, without mentioning where these messages came from.

The two priests among the respondents recognized this link with government. The young priest leader of St Rufael said that the church passing messages was very helpful for the government because many old people who are not able to attend *kebele* meetings come to church.

However, both were keen to indicate that the church remains an independent institution. The older priest said, out of their sense of responsibility to their community, they educate youth against migration as they are asked, but the church as an institution does not formally condemn migrants. The younger priest explained that "*the kebele officials are not involved to preach in the church about their programmes because the church and the government are separated. They convey their messages to the priests and the priests convey the message to the community in the church.*" He noted one exception, that is, "*during the general election government officials came to the church and requested for permission and involved themselves in teaching the people about the signs of election nominees*". In the same vein, one young woman noted that priests were passing government messages as individuals, and not the church as an institution.

A number of respondents noted shifts in the behaviour of priests that left some of them uncomfortable. Priests were now also among the people migrating to Saudi, where they are exposed to Islam and must conform to norms applying to anyone living there and yet, they resume serving the church on return "*as if nothing had happened*". One priest is owning a house in the *kebele* centre, which he bought after returning from Saudi. The RO was struck by the fact that the priest interviewed as religious leader is young (in his late 30s) and a grade 8 completer who, to calculate the priests and deacons' annual salary, had the immediate reflex of taking his phone to use the calculator. He was also constantly using the Arabic expression '*la la*', to say no. He said he never migrated but was influenced by his many friends who had been to Saudi.

One respondent noted that one priest is well-known for getting drunk and for gambling, which was not happening in the past. The ROs confirmed.

Iddirs

The importance of *iddirs* in the social life of Harresaw is not clear from the data. As noted in 2012, *iddirs* were not present in earlier times in Harresaw. There was an attempt to introduce them alongside the sub-*kebele* structures, which at the time was not particularly successful (only one was said to be functional at the time of WIDE3 fieldwork). In 2018, reportedly, the ‘big *iddirs*’ have not survived because of disagreements between members. But several respondents indicated that smaller *iddirs* still exist and members support each other during emergencies and social ceremonies. A group of respondents said these are organized between relatives; however, two women talked about strong *got* or *kushet* level *iddirs*, one of which has 300 residents from Lima’t *kushet* as members. Meanwhile, several respondents also referred to an *iddir* they were member of but which is no longer functional; or noted that there is no *iddir* in their *got*.

The box below presents a strong *got*-based *iddir*, whose membership is the same as a *Meskel* association established two years before the *iddir* and which is the basis for it; they have a common structure and the same leadership.

Box 7. A strong *iddir* in Harresaw

Both structures (*iddir* and *Meskel* organization) have 70 members. To become member, one must be from this *got*, be 18 or more, and have a good conduct and good relations with the members of the *Meskel* association/*iddir*. As *iddir* members they meet once a month to pay their contribution, as well as in emergency meetings to organize the *iddir* participation in funerals and weddings. The *iddir* and *Meskel* association share the same equipment.

Contributions to the *iddir* are not permanent. For mourning in a member’s household, members contribute two *Birr* each, and they divide into groups of nine people and visit the household turn by turn for condolences, taking the money and food contributions (two tins of flour and a tin of *kollo*), every day for six days. Finally, all members of the *iddir* visit the household on the 7th day, taking food to be served there, if the household lost a close relative (parents, wife/ husband and siblings). For marriage, members contribute 10 Kg of barley and grain to prepare *tihlo* and *tella*.

Women are especially active in the *iddir*, preparing the food and serving people during weddings and mourning with the deceased person’s relatives. Youth are also involved in putting up tents. Members who are sick are exempted from the contribution, and they can get the food prepared at their house. There is a system of penalty so that someone who fails in one of his duty as a member, is penalized 20 *Birr* which is an income for the *iddir*. The *iddir* is also renting out the equipment of the *iddir* (and of the *Meskel* association).

The leader of the *iddir*, a 57-year old man selected by the members for his good performance as *Meskel* association leader, is mobilizing members to make their contributions and with the vice-chairperson, he decides what to do with the money and what needs to be discussed with members. Like other volunteers he has no salary or reward; his tasks are overlapping with his personal household and livelihood responsibilities and he tries to “*make it side by side as much as possible because he is responsible to the members who selected him for the position*”. In addition, he used to be development army group leader and leader of the farmers’ association, but he resigned this year (2010 EC) from these roles. He is also a member of the formal elders’ committee of the *kebele*.

Several respondents highlighted the role of mutual support of *iddirs*. A group of knowledgeable respondents gave the example of a man who lost his ox, one cow and six sheep due to thunder, and his *iddir* replaced all his livestock. A group of knowledgeable men said that some *iddirs* have started giving loans to their members, but this was not mentioned by anyone else. A male farmer, who thought that *iddirs* were gaining in importance, mentioned as an example that they have by-laws about how to counsel and advise ‘disturbing youth’. As seen in the case of murder mentioned by the *iddir* leader/elder, *iddirs* are also very important in enforcing social norms (see p.69 above).

Iddirs have their own by-laws, and the *kebele* administration and law bodies know about them. Several respondents also noted the role of *iddirs* in passing government messages to the members. As seen above, the *iddir* leader was at times using the meetings of the *iddir* (or of the *Meskel* group) to announce party-related things like party meetings (see p.55). *Wereda* officials talking about *iddirs* in general said that they do pass government and development messages through *iddirs* and similar local organisations. They added that in some *kebele*, the *iddirs* also support development activities in cash, for instance school construction, but in Harresaw “there is no such kind of developmental contribution other than the usual practice of helping each other for marriages and funerals”.

Meskel associations

Meskel associations seem to be more strongly rooted in the social life of Harresaw; *Meskel* association leaders are considered as community leaders and have often several community-related functions. One of them (interviewed below) explains that “it is a tradition in Harresaw that community members create a group depending on their *kushet* and got to celebrate *Meskel* holiday every year”. One woman indicated that *iddirs* and *equubs* tend to be organized based on *Meskel* associations, suggesting that the case described here is not unique.

The leader of the *Meskel* association (same man as leader of large *iddir*, member of elder committee and interviewed in all three functions) is organizing members to pay contributions; he decides on the equipment to be bought and manages any equipment rent; he organizes the work of preparation of the celebration. This is done alongside the work for the *iddir*; at monthly meetings, members talk about both the *Meskel* preparation and the *iddir* issues. The difference is that there is a peak in the work for the *Meskel* association: annually, the leader and vice-leader are very busy during the *Meskel* holiday week to purchase the food and goods to prepare the feast, organize and manage the feast itself, and collect the annual contributions and pledges. There is no reward and no salary.

His *Meskel* association was established fourteen years ago. He describes its functioning as follows in the box below.

Box 8. A strong *Meskel* association

The aim of the *Meskel* group is to organize community members and strengthen their relationship by preparing a feast for the *Meskel* holiday and eating and drinking together. The celebration is also to thank God for staying alive and healthy year on year.

The members of the *Meskel* group are women, men and youth but contributions are made only by people who are married and have set up an independent household. Under-18 dependent youth do not contribute but attend the feast. Women contribute money and prepare the feast but eating and drinking is reserved for male members. Members contribute 30 *Birr* annually (it was 5 *Birr* when the group was established) to buy a sheep or a small cow and other items to prepare the feast. Moreover, they also give pledges of what they will do the year after (like bringing something or some money or committing to prepare the feast next year). Then on the next holiday they bring or do what they promised as a way of thanking God for they stayed alive and healthy. The feast is celebrated in different households every year.

The *Meskel* group is very successful. It owns a lot of equipment (e.g. 5 big containers for preparing *tella*, 500 plastic glasses, 5 steel jars to pour *tella*, 3 big steel bowl to cook meat and stew, 8 tents and many tree logs contributed by members to make tents for the *Meskel* celebration as well as for the *Iddir* association. The equipment is also a source of income for the group through renting it (e.g. 30 *Birr* for the 500 plastic glass and 50 *Birr* for a cooking bowl for three days). They do not rent out other equipment because they are afraid of them getting spoiled if they are used by others.

Meskel association meetings are also used to pass messages.

The interviews suggest that together with *mehabers*, *Meskel* feasts are an important way for the younger and older generations to ‘get together’.

Equubs

Like the *iddirs*, the *equubs* were new to Harresaw in 2012. In early 2018, a number of respondents mentioned having been members of one but that it was no longer functional. However, a group of knowledgeable women said that whilst *equubs* are not common, small groups of neighbours or people having a *mehaber* may organize one. A few other respondents said that *equubs* are getting stronger and are being organized by the development teams, and that some businesspeople like the successful young man with the bakery etc. also have big *equubs* in Dera or Atsbi.

Among the respondents, the wife in the young couple running the second largest shop in the *kebele* centre said she is member of an *equub* of six members, including one member from Atsbi who is the treasurer; the weekly contribution is 200 *Birr*; when she gets the lot she purchases items for the shop. Another young woman, a small trader who is also part of a 12-member youth group aiming to engage in beekeeping, explained that the group decided to start an *equub* with the 500 *Birr* that they got as per diem from the NGO which trained them. A woman farmer head of household said she is member of an *equub* with relatives and neighbours and with the lot that she got recently, she bought among others a mobile phone. And the shoe shiner said that he is saving 200 *Birr* per week in a local *equub* to be able to have his own shop and engage in poultry and sheep fattening in future.

There is an example of *equub* associated with a development group among the interviews. In this case, the *equub* came last of three organisations with the same membership: a female development army group, a *mehaber*, and the *equub*. The *equub* was established about one year before the fieldwork, according to the development team leader who is also leader of the *equub* and of the *mehaber*. The payment for the *equub* used to be 10 *Birr* but it is now 20 *Birr* every two weeks. The fortnightly lot (600 *Birr*) is drawn every two weeks by lottery. However, if one woman needs the money she can ask to exchange her turn with the person who drew the lot that week and this is decided by the group.

The leader is a 21-year old young woman, grade 8 completer, who was selected because she can read and write and can manage the reporting and calculating the money of the *equub*. She is organizing payments, following up presence of members, deciding on penalties for late-comers (5 *Birr*) or absentees (10 *Birr*) for both the *equub* and the *mehaber*. Meetings also overlap; monthly for the *mehaber* and fortnightly for the *equub*. The cashier (the same woman for both) is handling and keeping the money of both; the leader follows her up. The leader has no salary and reward.

The group of knowledgeable women mentioned above commented on the usefulness of *equubs* as follows:

“Equub is very helpful to save money and use it during emergencies. However, there is no big equub with a bigger capital. Women in our area are unable to organize a big equub because we have different backgrounds; some of us are housewives with no income, some of us are involved in trading tella or beer... Thus, it is difficult to organize a big equub. Some women who have the same St. Mary Mehaber organized a small equub and save money in that way. But, that is not considerable in terms of support during emergencies.”

Like *iddirs*, *equubs* are reportedly used to pass government messages. Presumably this is more the case with *equubs* based on, and with the same membership as a development army group. The young woman leader above highlighted how useful the *equub* and *mehaber* were to pass messages such as on the CBHI, and more generally to carry out the tasks of the development team, as women who are members of the development team gather frequently for the *equub* and the *mehaber*.

Mehabers

Even more than *Meskel* associations, *mehabers* are ubiquitous in the interviews. They are described as associations aimed to provide support in-kind and cash to the church, “*strengthen relationships*

among people by eating and drinking together every month” and thank the Saint. They are also used as mutual support mechanism.

A group of knowledgeable women said that most women have a *mehaber*. This indeed seemed to be the case, even, for instance, for a very poor woman who is otherwise not member of an *iddir* or an *equub*. However, an 18-year old poor young woman explained that she was not involved because she did not have the money. The group explained that some men have religious *mehabers* too, separate from those of women in the same way as women and men are sitting separately in church.

Young people also seemed to be commonly involved and interested in *mehabers* (with the one exception mentioned above, due to poverty). *Mehabers* are mentioned in most young people’s interviews as a way for young people, especially young women, to socialize among themselves and with the adult generation. The fact that they socialized in the same *mehabers* was indeed often cited as an example of the ‘mostly good’ relationships between young and adult generations.

Respondents who thought that the young generation was less interested in religion noted that they were interested in *mehabers*.

The young woman leader of a development team, an *equub* and a *mehaber* all three with a common membership of thirty women explained as follows. The *mehaber* was established six years ago¹⁰. They meet for the *mehaber* every month in each other’s house successively and eat and drink together and also contribute 10 *Birr* each, every month. With this, she as the leader asks the church what support they need, such as carpets, plastic glasses, crosses and other equipment. The women of the *mehaber* also contribute flour for women who give birth, anyone who is sick, and for the woman who prepares the *mehaber* feast.

As explained earlier, besides their respective main roles, this young woman leader finds both the *mehaber* and *equub* very helpful to support the work of the development army group. More generally, several other respondents mentioned that as people gather for *mehabers*, these are an easy way to share information, including government information.

Historically influential/wealthy families

There were respondents who had no idea about historically influential/wealthy families; others said they exist but are few in the community. A woman farmer head of household linked them to being influential during the imperial regime and mentioned a family who claims a *Dejazmach* as ancestor. They are respected for this, and also because during the fight against the Derg they strongly contributed to the guerrilla. They are wealthy, as they got a lot of land in the 1983 EC land distribution; they have houses in Atsbi and Wukro. Even their house is different, bigger, higher, imposing. Other respondents talking about such families indicated that they were known to support poor people with food, cash and loans, and to prepare *Meskel* feasts at their house.

The Research Officers interviewed the head of a household belonging to such a historically influential family – presumably that referred to by the woman above. The profile of the household is summarized in the box below.

Box 9. Historically influential family

The influential person is called Abriha Berhe and he is 79 years old. His family’s influence comes historically from his mother’s blood relation. She was a daughter of *Barambaras* Hagos Berhe Nigus (*Barambaras* is one of the title given for people who were in the government leadership during the H/Selassie regime). His grand-father (mother’s father) was very influential during his time, due to

¹⁰ This suggests that the *mehaber* and development team were established more or less at the same time; she does not say which preceded which.

his title and position as well as wealth. He was leader of the Harresaw *kebele* as well as mediator for the *kebele*. He passed away during the Derg regime.

Another reason of his family's influence is their credentials in the fight against the Derg. Throughout that period, the family's home was a place for fighters to hide from the Derg and rest, feed and drink. Abay Weldu, the former Tigray Regional State's president lived in their house during that period as his group stayed in Harresaw.

Currently, his influence in the community comes from this historical background, but also his hard wealth which he partly inherited and partly owes to hard work, and his wisdom. He has eleven *timad* of land, invested in a 'horeye' (small hand-dug pond) and 'baska' (water roof catchment container), houses in towns which he inherited and passed to his children, beehives. His children are involved in business activities such as trading or grain mill, sheep fattening and sale. His children also contribute to his wealth.

He is helping many relatives and vulnerable and poor people and does not expect any return from them. About this, he says:

"Meskel, Christmas, and St Mary mehaber feasts are prepared at my home and community members eat and drink during these social events. I also provide support in the form of food to neighbours, they can always come and eat and drink what is available in the house, this is usual for me. I also provide loans for those who want, in cash or in-kind (e.g. in the form of animal labour). They refund me whenever they get money. I cancel their loan if they really do not get money. Some of my relatives borrowed money from me, I don't remember most of them because they borrowed small amounts. But one of them borrowed 5,000 Birr last year because he needed the money to buy food for his household. He did not refund me so far and I do not care if he does not repay me."

He lives in a big old house, almost like a fortress, built on very steep slopes and overseeing the flat part of the *kebele* going toward Dera.

Whilst no one mentioned a link between these families and the EPRDF government, the man added that he was development army group leader until three years ago; he resigned because of a health problem. He was also the *kebele* representative for appeals about land issues, going up to the *wereda* and zone for appeal whenever there was a land conflict between *kebeles*. So, he was an appeal representative when some parts of the *kebele* were taken by neighbouring *kebeles*, and a mediator when there was dispute with Afar.

NGOs

In the case of Harresaw, NGOs cannot be considered as community management structures. They are associated with, and support government activities. Their activities are described elsewhere.

Wereda-kebele-community interactions

Government planning and consultation

We start by a description of *wereda* and *kebele* planning process and principles as described by officials at these levels, followed by the community' views and perceptions.

Wereda and kebele planning process

Wereda officials explained that there is a similar integrated planning system at *wereda* and *kebele* levels. Their description suggests a mix of bottom-up and top-down processes, with the top-down element overbearing for 'key activities' (e.g. irrigation expansion and fertilizer uptake in the latest process). This is summarized in [Box 10](#) below.

Box 10. Wereda and kebele planning process – Bottom-up and top-down

Wereda officials explained that at *wereda* level, sector offices prepare their plans and send them to *wereda* plan and finance office which integrates them; sector offices work together to implement.

“For example, the offices of education, agriculture, water resource, health, women and youth prepare a joint plan for adult education and work together accordingly.”

Kebele prepare their own plans based on an initial ‘model plan’ sent by the wereda; kebeles can add and remove content according to their needs. However, “the wereda gives some restricted and specified activities that should be incorporated in the kebele plans and forces them to work accordingly. For example, the wereda gives yearly plans to kebeles with regard to how much land should they develop by irrigation and how much fertilizer they should distribute to farmers and other similar issues.”

Kebele plans are prepared by all kebele sector offices, organized by the kebele manager, and approved by kebele council. The wereda do not directly intervene when the kebeles prepare their plans. However, besides the wereda model plan, all kebele experts are oriented by the wereda sector offices and the kebele manager is oriented by the wereda Civil service office about the plan.

In the integrated planning system, plans should in principle be regularly reviewed and revised according to progress so far and lessons learned.

In *wereda* officials’ opinion, the strong side of the system is that it is participatory, includes all activities, and is based on budget and other resources. The challenges are that *kebeles* and sector offices face difficulties in distinguishing their focus areas, overestimate what can be achieved considering their execution capacity and the context, and the review and revision system is little used. *Kebele* officials are also generally not good at “*publicizing their plans to the wider community*”.

Separately, *wereda* officials also talked (rather vaguely) about community consultation and information. At *wereda* level this appeared to be limited to *wereda* council discussion and approval, then the plan is announced to the general public “*through different medias*”. In *kebeles*, they said, the *wereda* policy is that the community “*should be participated for all kebele activities*”. Specifically talking about choice of work for the cash/food for work programme like PSNP and the community voluntary work, they said it is down to local councils. However, “*works like irrigation and natural resources conservation are always included in the plans*”. In their views, there was resistance initially but now communities are convinced after seeing the changes in water sources and tree coverage brought about by these activities, and also because of a more flexible scheduling of the work (nowadays an individual can do her/his part any time of the day at her/his convenience).

Planning in Harresaw

Wereda officials explained that Harresaw *kebele* prepared its last integrated plan in July 2009 EC. This *kebele* is found in Dera barley and apple cluster. So, the priority is given to agricultural activities. “*This means they should work on water structures (canals, water reservoirs, etc.) to strengthen irrigation development activities and it includes environmental protection*”. The second priority is given to drinking water and health activities. In Harresaw, the *kebele* manager confirmed that the *kebele* has an integrated plan, “*based on the recognition and valuation of the different resources of the kebele*”, last prepared in July 2009 EC, with agriculture, health, and good governance as priority sectors. (As described by *wereda* officials), the plan was prepared by all sector offices, organized by the *kebele* manager, and approved by the *kebele* council, he said.

Most community respondents did not talk about planning ‘in general’, possibly because they are not much involved. Those who did (mostly women) highlighted the top down nature of planning and implementation of government programmes and the lack of consultation by the *kebele* administration; and that the community was just told what to do. A woman farmer head of office noted that in previous years the *kebele* held general meetings to consult community members about what to do in the *kebele* and about government activities, but currently she and others did not hear about that. Another woman (development army group leader living in the *kebele* centre) commented that the conflict about the sketch plan town would have been avoided if *kebele* leaders had consulted the community.

Specific examples were given, illustrating that the ‘top-down’ element dominates in both the *wereda-kebele* and the *kebele-community* interaction about planning and implementation. *Kebele* officials and experts had even a new expression to capture this, noting that priorities are “*stepped down*” onto them by the *wereda* without consultation. This was the case for instance for the CBHI: as the HEW explained, the *wereda* informed the *kebele* administration about the programme and that it had to be implemented in the *kebele*.

More generally, as even the *kebele* manager recognized, it is no surprise that community members are often unclear about the details of an intervention; *kebele* officials and experts often are unclear too. “*We are told to implement, and report. And as we are not clear, but we are accountable for results, this leads to false reporting*”. At the level of *kebele-community* interactions, an example was the way “*DAs only work to implement programmes stepped down by the wereda without considering the community’s ideas, needs and benefits*” (woman 1-5 network leader).

On the specific issue of priorities for the PSNP PWs and the community voluntary work, again most respondents described a mostly top-down process. Some of the PSNP beneficiaries knew little about how prioritization was made; those who knew said it was done by *kebele* and *kushet* leaders, approved by the council then announced to the community. Again, *kebele* officials highlighted the absence of consultation and more basically lack of prior/timely information by the *wereda* to the *kebele* administration and experts. For instance, a few days after the start of the PSNP PWs they still had no word from the *wereda* about the plan for 2018. There was also no prior information on the change in the PSNP transfer value; they were told to implement it when it emerged. Similarly, they were not told in advance when the EFA stopped after the worst of the 2015/16 drought, and this year, they do not know whether EFA will be available or not in spite of severe drought as well.

Wereda – kebele relationships

Wereda view of the kebele

Wereda respondents had a rather negative view of Harresaw, although they suggested this was mostly a leadership issue. They talked about lack of good governance, carelessness of the administration, inactivity and lack of effectiveness. They highlighted resulting weaknesses in implementing health, road construction and youth livelihood development interventions. For instance, the organization of and support to youth groups are lagging behind other *kebeles* so that “*young people (in Harresaw) have given up/do not believe the interventions can be effective..., they complain that they are exposed to expenses only without any benefits because of delay in accessing credit due to the disorganized work of kebele officials.*”

They raised the ‘sketch plan town’ issue (see [Box 1](#) above) as both a cause for, and a good illustration of the issues in Harresaw. As summed up by one of the *wereda* respondents, there is a problem with the *kebele* administration; “*the problem is severe and that is a difference with other kebeles. Harresaw has a bad relationship with the wereda. But the most severe problem is found among themselves. There is a worst relationship between the community and the administration. They have a gap working together.*”

Wereda supervision of kebele

According to *wereda* officials, the *wereda* supervises *kebeles* using various ways. *Wereda* officials meet *kebele* officials at the *kebele* to monitor political activities and to provide support. Regarding governmental activities, the *wereda* sector offices supervise experts at *kebele* level. This is done through daily phone calls and monthly reports from *kebele* to *wereda*. The system of *wereda* cabinet members assigned to closely follow up a specific *kebele* has been stopped since this year (2010 EC), because it was found to undermine *kebele* structures, and it led to false reporting by the *wereda* cabinet members. A new system, removing the *wereda* direct support and aimed to strengthen the *kebele* capacity, was pilot-tested in Raya Azebo *wereda* and is now scaled up. In this

system, the *kebele* calls on the *wereda* when they face difficulties in execution. The *wereda* supports on some limited issues and special problems.

In Harresaw, *kebele* officials confirmed that the system of daily calls and monthly reports was operational. However, they talked about the supervision by the *wereda* cabinet member as if this was still in operation too. At the time of the fieldwork, in their understanding the *wereda* official assigned to supervise Harresaw was the teacher Kiros G/Yohanes. *“He comes to the kebele mostly at the time of fertilizer distribution”*. He also supervises the *kebele* via telephone and monthly reports. In the last three months before the fieldwork he was involved in the discussions about the sketch plan town with *kebele* officials. He also passed the *wereda* directives about irrigation development activities but *kebele* officials said that *“it is not proper the woreda to order them to develop irrigation as it is known there is no water for irrigation purposes”*.

In practice, *kebele* to *wereda* reporting processes seemed to vary across sectors, from the very intensive reporting due by the HEW (see p.52), to a much more relaxed quarterly reporting about the CCC contributions and the support provided, according to the *kebele* social work leader.

Kebele and community view of the wereda

Kebele officials and experts generally said the *kebele* had a ‘good relationship’ with the *wereda*. The main issue is the workload *“arising from the wereda ordering the kebele”* (*kebele* leader) and that at times, the *wereda* is slow in responding to questions and in fulfilling their responsibilities, for instance sending the new CBHI cards once stamped (*kebele* manager). However, as seen above there is also a quite strong sense that programmes are just ‘stepped down’ on them and *“the wereda has a problem of ordering the kebele, sitting on their chair without going down and experiencing the situation here”* (WA leader).

Relatively few community respondents talked about the *wereda* as such. Those who did were often people with justice cases or appeals and as described below, their experience was generally not good (see Appeals, petitions and complaints below). In relation to ‘big issues’ (e.g. the dam/lack of water, the inadequacy of the existing youth support interventions in the face of the deadly migration flow, and what several respondents described as lack of the change in the area), a number of respondents held the *wereda* officials responsible for not communicating these issues to higher government levels, for fear that this would reflect badly on them. Talking for instance about young people’s migration, the most often mentioned ‘key problem’ of the community, and what the government does and should do, the *kebele* youth affairs leader had this to say:

“The main thing is that kebele and wereda level interventions are not going to be enough. The Federal and Regional governments have to provide jobs for the youth. It’s in the interest of everyone because if there are no jobs there’s going to be a lot of delinquency, conflict etc. All levels should think clearly about this before it’s too late. Wereda and kebele alone cannot bring a solution. But relations between Federal/Regional and wereda and kebele levels are lose when it comes to youth issues... We talk openly to wereda officials; we publicly tell the wereda administrator in his face. They say they will talk to the Region. Sometimes they might do it but most often they don’t, because if they are too vocal about local issues it reflects badly on them. Regional officials will tell them “what are you doing if you can’t address these issues whilst you are in leadership position, this clearly shows that you are inefficient”.”

Messaging and mobilising the community

Wereda perspective

Wereda officials explained the different means used to pass messages and mobilise the community as follows. To pass information on a new programme, firstly, meetings are held at *wereda* level with civil servants from different sectors and *“sample community representatives”*. At *kebele* level, information is transmitted through general *kebele* meetings as well as WA, YA and other

associations, as well as DTs and 1-5 networks to reach “*the lower level of the community*”. *Wereda* civil servants may communicate in writing with the *kebele* experts and officials to explain a message. Sometimes, *wereda* leaders visit communities in *kebeles*, on a sectoral basis – e.g. the *wereda* agriculture office visit *kebeles* to deliver messages about farming. Some messages are also transmitted by radio and newspapers. However, one official said, in all *kebeles* in the past three years participation to meetings has declined; communities want practical demonstrations and consultations, “*they need to see practical changes rather than meetings and public gatherings.*”

Kebele perspective

In Harresaw, one of the *kebele* sector experts outlined the following system, also commenting on its lesser operationalization and effectiveness than in the past.

Development and political messages are conveyed through 1-5 networks, general meetings and *kushet* meetings. 1-5 networks are used to convey urgent messages. Thus, the main information ‘route’ is as follows:

Kebele administration → *kebele* leaders¹¹ → *Kushet* leaders → development army group leaders (male & female) → 1-5 network leaders → community members

In principle a **general *kebele* level meeting** is held every month, and once a week at ***kushet* level**. The attendance level depends on the season and the meeting day. Attendance is low in working days and ‘high seasons’ for social events (especially marriages) as well as during the rainy season; it is better on holidays. However, these days attendance is generally lower than in the past; it is frequent that half of the community is absent. Each *kushet* has its own principles regarding penalty for late or non-attendance, with fines ranging from 1 up to 5 *Birr*. Nowadays, many people prefer to pay five *Birr* and continue their own business.

The **development teams and 1-5s** are very effective at delivering messages because they are able to deliver messages rapidly due to their proximity and easy contact with people. Political cells are as effective as 1-5 networks, they focus on political and party messages to **party** members. In principle, DTs gather every week and discuss on issues in the party newspaper. However, often people get bored and do not attend because the newspaper is repeating what they already know.

There are fewer **training** activities than in the past. Previously, selected people from the *kebele* were trained every year about infrastructure; people responsible to promote something were selected for training related to it (e.g. irrigation, vegetable gardening); many training were given on agriculture: about farming techniques, fertilizer uptake, improved seeds and farming calendar. Some 300 farmers could take part. But like for infrastructure, it was no longer done recently. The only recent large-scale training activity was done by the Green Diversity NGO.

Quite a few community members listen to the Voice of *Weyane* **radio** station and follow interviews and programmes concerning rural development and interventions. So, when officials try to inform them about specific programmes, people tell them that they already know about it. Other means of dissemination of government messages are church gatherings.

As seen earlier, even the *kebele* leader recognized the community ‘fatigue’ with meetings, putting this down to failure by *kebele* officials to implement their plan effectively.

¹¹ These are the *kebele* cabinet members in charge of a specific *kushet*, and generally all *kebele* cabinet members.

The perspective of the community

This sense of lesser effectiveness of the (generic) government 'messaging system' was reflected in what community respondents who commented on this had to say.

All respondents highlighted that **attendance to general meetings** (*kebele* and to an extent, *kushet*) has declined. Several linked this to the fact that the *kebele* administration is less strict about it. Other reasons were that people are busy, focusing on making a living, and bored because they are familiar with the issues that are being discussed or that "*these days, everyone hates long and frequent meetings*". Men were more vocal about this than women. Several women recognized the lower participation, including personally, but that these meetings were useful to "*know what's going on in the kebele*", "*hear about what will be implemented next*", "*get first-hand information rather than through others*". As a result, respondents indicated they attend when indispensable. For instance, those who are *kebele* council members attend the 'mandatory' *kebele* council and party meetings at a minimum. A rich woman farmer head of household explained she attends when it is "*compulsory or very necessary*", for instance when the meeting is about farming or food aid.

The women DT leader and 1-5 leader talked about **training** related to their function, and in the case of the 1-5 leader who is also water user committee leader about training related to this too, but she said none has occurred recently. The WA leader said she is getting training three times a year on "*awareness creation for women to be free of backward thinking*", but she did not say when it was done for the last time, and according to the ROs she tended to be imprecise in her responses. A woman farmer, head of household and ex-model farmer, talked about 'many' training in the past, but recently, none of the respondents had been or heard of any training other than the Green Diversity NGO training for which participants received 500 *Birr* per diem (see [p.121](#)).

The woman DT leader went recently on an **experience-sharing** visit to Ruba Feleg *kebele* where she met other DT leaders to discuss about false reporting. She knew that people from Harresaw growing apples went recently on an experience-sharing visit elsewhere. A veteran middle-wealth farmer was also involved in a recent experience-sharing visit through the veterans' association. He and several others insisted that this is much more effective than meetings

These days, the community is not willing to accept development messages only through meetings and other speeches, rather, they are ready to believe through demonstrations that show changes practically. As transmitting messages through real actions and practical implementations have better acceptance by the community, the government bodies should focus on them to mobilize the community.

As seen earlier, **development teams and 1-5s** were said to be more useful than general meetings but less effective than in the past in disseminating messages, especially development teams (see [p.43](#)). The health development army is the same thing as the women's development army groups, which focus in particular on health messages and issues. The (male and female) respondents who mentioned the **women, youth and farmers' association** as messaging and mobilizing means did not say anything specific, and as seen earlier, there is a strong sense that the WA and YA are no longer very effective (see [p.48](#)). The same comment was made with regard to the **party** mechanisms. Those who are members attend party meetings as these are compulsory (see [p.55](#)) but the wife of a poor farmer mentioned that for instance, she is no longer called for meetings of the women's league. None of the community respondents mentioned the party newsletter.

From the interviews, the messaging through the different '**community organisations**' (church/religious leaders, *elders*, *iddirs*, *equubs*, *Meskel* associations and *mehabers*) appears to be relatively operational. Most respondents mentioned one or another of these channels, and some of them commented that these are quite effective as people gather for the purpose of the specific social organization anyway. See further details in the relevant sections above.

Several women respondents noted the role of ‘influential women’ in passing messages and that they were ‘heard’ by community members.

Messaging about CBHI

The Community-Based Health Initiative (CBHI), as a recently introduced high priority government intervention, illustrates that the government messaging system described above still retains a degree of operationality. The HEW, talking about the initial rollout and annual campaign (to enrol new members and get existing members to renew their membership and pay the annual insurance premium) explained that

After an initial meeting at which the *kebele* administration gave orientation to all *kebele* officials and experts, widespread awareness creation was carried out through general *kebele*, *kushet*, DT and 1-5 network meetings, home to home visits as well as at every gathering such as for the free public work and PSNP PWs about the benefit of the CBHI and how it works. *Kebele* officials and employees and DT leaders played a major role in this. There is a CBHI management committee comprising the *kebele* manager, the HEW and the three *kebele* leaders in charge of the three *kushet*. But all other officials are involved too. *Wereda* officials told the *kebele* to inform them whenever there are public meetings and gathering so they could support the *kebele* in providing awareness and answering questions from the community. They participated in many awareness creation activities to provide clarifications to the community.

This is reflected in the interviews of community respondents who mentioned a range of channels through which they were informed about the CBHI, and how various people tried to convince them. Besides the *kebele* manager, HEW and *kebele* leader identified as the key actors in this, there were mentions of meetings at different levels; home visits by the HEW; officials talking about CBHI whenever they met for other issues; people like the PSNP coordinator and DAs giving information during meetings, gathering and through personal contacts; the HEW informing women visiting the health post for the ANC or another service; messages passed at *equub* and *mehaber* meetings as well as at church. Even the ambulance driver reportedly tried to convince a woman. Health officials also came from Dera and Atsbi, most recently in November 2017 to talk about enrolling and renewing membership. One woman said that the *kebele* leader told her to register even if it meant borrowing money, considering the benefits for her and her household. (When she was interviewed she still had not enrolled because she considered that the premium is too high).

However, after three years of what appears to have been a ‘high priority campaign’, besides binding financial constraints for some community members there remained visible limitations in people’s understanding. There was even a perception by some community members that the government is ‘gambling’ with people – making them pay for a service they might not use if they are not sick (see the section CBHI elsewhere in this chapter for details). This is unsurprising considering the complexity of the concept and that the CBHI, first introduced in 2008 EC, is therefore only in its third year of implementation, but nonetheless noteworthy.

Models

The role of **models** in messaging the community appeared to have changed a lot too, compared to 2012. Not even talking about effectiveness, by early 2018 it seemed that the practice of identifying and awarding model farmers either had fallen into desuetude or was suspended, possibly temporarily as agricultural production was affected so much by the recurrent drought. Instead, a number of ‘model non-farmers’, generally young, had emerged.

Model farmers are still mentioned as early adopters, for instance, of improved seeds, hybrid breed etc., together with *kebele* leaders and ex-fighters. The WA leader also referred to model farmers, explaining that the government train them then let them “*teach the community through being a role model for other farmers*”. The lead DA briefly mentioned them but his explanation suggests that the

system might be shifting; the 'systematised knowledge management system' that he described suggests a potentially less rigid way of promoting cross-learning. Four male farmers talked about model farmers in the community (giving figures ranging from 170 to 600). But two of the four mentioned that as model farmers, they were also expected to engage in additional income-generating activities to continue to strengthen their livelihood.

The interviews of a number of other respondents, including a woman (ex-)model farmer herself, suggest that by early 2018 the system of model farmers was no longer in use (see p.120 in the *Farming* chapter), although nothing had been officially said about it. Meanwhile, a number of 'model traders' and 'model business people' were 'recognised'; this was still informal in the sense that they were not formally awarded etc. (unlike in Dera municipality, according to the only investor in Harresaw who is from the *kebele* but resident in Dera) but even among *kebele* officials explicitly referred to them as 'role models' in public meetings (see p.123 in *Non-farming* chapter). Several respondents identified specific individuals, and a poor man, earning a living from farming and construction daily labour locally and in Afar, said they were around fifteen in the community. They are mostly young, which is also quite a significant shift.

There was not a single mention of models in the *wereda* interviews. In the same vein, there was not a single mention of 'health model households' in the way the CBHI is being rolled out.

Other means of convincing

As many community respondents suggested, the uptake of fertilizer seems to be the one government intervention for which a range of more coercive means of convincing people remained in use after 2012 (WIDE3 fieldwork). However, it is not entirely clear from the data whether this was still current in 2010 EC or if respondents referred to a few years back. As seen above, it still attracts special attention from the *wereda*: specific targets for fertilizer uptake are given by the *wereda* to *kebeles* (see *Box 10*), and the *wereda* cabinet member responsible for Harresaw comes to the *kebele* especially at the time of the fertilizer distribution (see p.78).

On the community side, a man (middle wealth farmer, veteran) who received emergency food aid in 2007 and 2008 EC indicated that the aid was delayed because the *kebele* administration used this as a leverage to make the community to buy fertilizer. He explained that

The time when to receive the food assistance was announced by development teams' leaders and in public meetings. The food assistance was delivered from the wereda on time. But it was delayed in the kebele, because the community was refusing to buy fertilizer. As a result of the delay, some migrated to other places, borrowed money and others were forced to work as daily labourer to feed their families. We were forced by the kebele leaders to save 50 Birr per head from each food aid beneficiary, to buy fertiliser. None received the food aid if they did not pay the money.

As seen elsewhere (see p.116), the irrigation association leader reportedly was instructed by *kebele* officials to not let farmers who refused to buy fertilizer get their water turn. Other respondents were less specific in mentioning how farmers were forced to take fertilizer. A very poor woman whose household is not included in the PSNP suspected this was because she stopped buying fertilizer two years ago (see p.88). But a group of knowledgeable men explained that not only it is compulsory but there are rules, so that for instance "those who have one ha of land must buy one quintal". "If they are unwilling, they face challenges from the kebele officials", they added, giving the example of a man who used to work as FTC guard and who was fired because he was unwilling to buy fertilizer .

The WA leader explains, however, that "such kind of things is not found, mostly since 2008 EC". The case of the EFA beneficiary refers to the provision of food aid for the 2007 EC drought, three years ago. In the case of water for irrigation this might have continued until 2009 EC, the last year during which a few households were still able to use water from the dam; this year (2010 EC) this means of pressure has disappeared. The case of the FTC guard is relatively recent: his replacement was only

hired in 2009 EC. The woman excluded from the PSNP had no evidence and although she did not make the link, one explanation could also have been her migrant daughter, even though she is still only repaying her loan when the woman was interviewed.

As for the CBHI, even though it is a high priority no one mentioned coercion in trying to get people to enrol or renew membership.

Effectiveness of government messaging – the short and the long term

The short-term perspective outlined in the previous sub-section gives a sense of declining effectiveness of the government messaging system. More coercive means of making people do something appeared to have declined too, with the possible exception, at least until recently, of fertilizer uptake. For high priority interventions like the CBHI rollout, the system appears to be intensively mobilized and although after three years of campaign there are limitations in people's information and 'buy in', no one had not heard at all about the CBHI. In contrast, for an issue possibly less high on higher government levels' agenda as might be the case for instance for the Community Care Coalition (CCC), the system may be less intensively mobilized, and the data suggest a low level of information on the 'intervention' as a result (see the *Social protection* chapter).

The experience of the former Traditional Birth Attendant (summarized in the box below) illustrates that the effectiveness of the government messaging system also should be looked at over the long term. Even if, as a *kebele* official (she is today the *kebele* finance leader), she might have been over-enthusiastic, the change she outlines is undeniable, as well as the role of this system in it.

Box 11. Government messaging over the long term – Birth delivery

Her first years of work as TBA were a very bad time for women. Women did not know a lot, they did not get any education, they were delivering at home, with poor sanitation. Women did not get their clothes washed and there was a custom to inhale genitalia by putting eucalyptus leaves in boiling water. There was no health centre, and if part of the placenta remained inside, it was brought out using non-disinfected sharp materials.

After several government health education projects, there was more awareness about washing after delivery. Women were also taught to remove dust from their clothes, and better food started to be given to pregnant and lactating women. In the past women used to wear very tight clothes during the pregnancy; this has now changed, they lose pyjamas which is better.

Twenty years ago, delivering at the health centre was strongly rejected by old people and husbands. There were different customs; for example, when delivery was delayed people killed a sheep. They were saying there is no need to go to the health post or health centre. Later, shortly after Meles died (2012), there was a slogan "no woman can die because of delivery". There were supposed to be punishments by the government: when a woman delivered at home, *kebele* officials went to their home to give her awareness and give a fine of 250-300 *Birr*, although in the end nobody punished those who delivered at home. Men used to refuse to carry women to the health centre. Husbands did not care a lot about deliveries, "because they have a number of wives – so if a wife dies, they can have another – sometimes a man had 3 wives even if this is not legal".

Now, this attitude has completely changed. "Out of 400 women who recently delivered, maybe you will find one woman who delivered at home." It is thanks to the government relentless message that "men gained knowledge and experience" that delivery at the health centre is better.

Targets and accountability

Quality of data

As a 'health warning', any quantitative data mentioned by either *wereda* or *kebele* officials should be considered with utmost caution. This was already the case in 2012 and has not improved since then. A number of factors contribute to this state-of-affairs, including inadequate information flows (both up, and down, see the *Government planning and consultation* and *Wereda – kebele relationships*

sections above); infrequent update of records and the apparent absence of a system to reconcile records when data is held in several places (see for instance, the three different figures given for the number of militia in Harresaw, p.44); in some cases, the absence of an even basic record system (see e.g. 'formal' land transactions, p.228). Other factors are the high turnover of civil servants at *kebele* and *wereda* level, and the 'false reporting' issue, identified as a major problem. These last two points are illustrated by the case of the data on the CBHI rollout in Harresaw.

According to the HEW, there were 1,340 households registered for the first time for the CBHI. This was before she came to the *kebele* and as she mentioned a total of 1,339 households for the whole *kebele* (see about community unwillingness to pay for ambulance service, p.60), it seems implausible if her data is correct. Even if a large number of households registered that year, there was a range of implementation issues: among others, many households paid but never got their card, due to inaction of the *kebele* administration and households not asking for it. So, the second year most households did not renew their membership. This year (2010 EC) there is a target of recruiting 558 newcomers and getting 340 households to renew – although it is difficult to know how many are actually 'newcomers', and how many did register in 2008 EC and did not renew in 2009 EC.

At the same time, she indicated a serious false reporting issue. In 2009 EC Harresaw was ranked least performer among all *kebeles* in the *wereda* with regard to the number of CBHI member households. However, this was because several other *kebeles* had inflated their figures, in some instances by as many as 100 households. This emerged when the number of supposedly enrolled households was compared with the total paid as premium. However, in the meantime, because of this apparent poor performance the HEW had missed the chance of going for advanced education.

Targets and quotas

This section must be read bearing in mind the sections on *Government planning and consultation*, *Wereda – kebele relationships*, and *Messaging and mobilising the community* above.

Both targets and quotas were a recurrent aspect of the *wereda-kebele-community* relationship in 2012 (WIDE3 fieldwork). In early 2018, alongside the overall dilution of effectiveness of the *wereda* and *kebele* structures documented in this chapter, the use of quantitative targets seemed to be less widespread; whilst the CBHI added one more quota (for a maximum number of households who do not pay the premium and get access to the same services as paying households).

Targets were explicitly mentioned in relation to **irrigation development**, and the **CBHI**. In relation to irrigation, reportedly *kebele* officials objected to any target to be set considering the situation on the ground in Harresaw. In relation to the CBHI, the HEW was concerned about under-performance (see in *Social protection* chapter) at the same time as upset by the false reporting issue she explained. She said she suggested means of making the CBHI rollout more effective but was not listened to. She also mentioned a target for the number of households planned to contribute to the **Community Care Coalition (CCC)** (1,235 for all three *kushet*), and underperformance in relation to both, the target and last year's performance (only 551 households had contributed since the start of 2010 EC, down from 893 households in 2009 EC). As no *wereda* officials mentioned the CCC it is not clear if this is a *wereda* target, or a target that the *kebele* fixed itself in its integrated plan.

Meanwhile, whereas no one at *kebele* level (officials or experts) explicitly mentioned a target for **fertilizer** uptake, as seen above (*Other means of convincing*) this is the apparently only government intervention for which at least until recently, coercion was used.

In early 2018, 'false reporting' had emerged as a new dimension in the *wereda-kebele-community* relationship with regard to targets and accountability. In addition to the false reporting on CBHI mentioned above, the HEW said there is false reporting about the number of students in 0-classes and about adult education in the *kebele*. Meanwhile, it was also a 'hot issue' more generally: many

respondents mentioned it informally or whilst talking about other topics, giving examples of how this practice is infiltrating all government levels and results in a false picture of what is really happening (and not) on the ground. For instance

- The respondent who thought the issue with the dam/lack of water was not reported anywhere, linked this to the chain of false reporting which led a high level regional official to ‘report’ an irrigation coverage seven times what was later revealed to be the case.
- A group of men talking about migration had this to say: *“There is a lot of propaganda in the media about how government is working tirelessly, around the clock, to control the brokers etc. But this is not true, it’s a cover-up and instead of covering up they should deal with the real causes of migration.”*
- And a young woman talking about migration, government support and the (much) delayed PSNP payment: *“... the media is full of false reports, that people are happy and changing their life (with PSNP support) but this is completely false, and with things like this non-payment we suffer even more.”*

Together with false reporting in the form of inflating positive achievements, community respondents in Harresaw also blamed the government officials for under-reporting challenges and not relaying the issues raised by the community higher up, out of fear that this would be considered as poor performance on their side. This perception of the community is illustrated above in the case of *wereda* officials not talking to the regional government about the challenges faced in relation to migration and youth unemployment (see p.78); but it extended to the way *kebele* officials ‘covered up’ issues in their contacts with the *wereda*.

The management of **quotas** involve all *kebele* and sub-*kebele* structures. *Kebele* officials/experts disaggregate the quotas given by the *wereda* for the *kebele* into smaller quotas, down to the level of sub-*kebele* structures at which the selection is made – that is, these days, the development army groups (p.44). For instance, the HEW explained in the case of the CBHI that *“if one development group is thought to be better-off economically, its quota is given to other development groups which are thought to have more poor households.”*

As was already found in 2012, the quotas for **PSNP** (Public Works and Direct Support) continued to be an issue, complicated by the fact that emergency food aid was also provided on a large scale in 2007 EC and 2008 EC then drastically reduced. Like in 2012, to select people for food aid support *kebele* officials tended to ‘pool’ the PSNP and EFA quotas, possibly distinguishing between less and more vulnerable households and getting the former ‘under’ EFA and the latter under the PSNP; the nature of EFA as an unpredictable resource makes the whole selection exercise trickier.

The new thing was the quota for non-paying membership of the **CBHI**, which was also thought to be too small by the HEW. The *kebele* manager indicated that the quota was reduced a bit from 144 to 138 households, of which 81 were male-headed households. The HEW explained that this was not enough to cover all people who would need support to get access to health care; and for instance, certainly not all PSNP but even not all PSNP Direct Support beneficiaries are included.

Like in 2012 and with one more to manage (CBHI), the management of quotas generated multiple ‘frictions’ between the *kebele* administration and the community: the outcomes of the selection processes associated with the quotas were a major source of appeals and complaints in the *kebele* (see *Appeals, petitions and complaints* below), and the source of several allegations of nepotism/partiality as well (see *Perspectives on justice, nepotism and corruption* below).

Accountability activities

Wereda officials highlighted the importance of *gemgema*, which *“never has mercy for those who have accountability problems”*. With regard to accountability for services, there is no system of Citizens’ Report Card or anything similar in the *wereda*. There are suggestion boxes but they are

most often used by civil servants and rarely used by community members. There are accountability committees at *wereda* and *kebele* level. Officials had different views on the strength of the *wereda* accountability committee; at *kebele* level, it is reportedly weak, with members who do not even know about their membership. At times the *wereda* organizes a survey of farmers, who are interviewed about their grievances and complaints, and the results are submitted to the *wereda* and party leaders. (This was not mentioned by anyone at *kebele* level). The *wereda* budget is posted at the *wereda* administration office and at each sector office, which was observed by the ROs to be the case. One of the *wereda* officials highlighted the role of media and that people can easily access them to complain about anything. Meanwhile, they said, *wereda* councillors have been weak in representing their constituency and raising issues on their behalf.

In Harresaw, as noted elsewhere, with the exception of the male *kebele* council members among the respondents, others are unsure about the *kebele* (let alone *wereda*) council's role or activities (see p.42); planning is not participatory (see p.76); there is no mechanism whereby community members can express or record their opinion on services except in general meetings, when these are held (see below); committees like the school-based Parents-Teacher Associations and water users' committees are implementing bodies more than accountability bodies, especially so for the water users' committees; and the extent of financial transparency on the *kebele* budget is unclear (see p.63). Appeals, petitions and complaints are discussed in the next section.

The most important accountability mechanism appears to be the *gemgema* meetings. It is not entirely clear whether these are exclusively reserved for party members, or if they are 'public'. Those respondents who are party members tended to highlight their membership as a reason why they attend meetings during which some *kebele* officials are removed (it is compulsory for them to attend party and other meetings such as council but also DT and 1-5 network meetings, see p.55). But they also talked about 'public assessment', and some respondents highlighted the role of general meetings in this respect. Several respondents noted that general meetings had not been held for two years/since the current *kebele* leader (removed at the end of the fieldwork) was in the position. Others among the party and *kebele* council members indicated that they participated in "accountability and evaluation meetings" in the past one year, during which some land justice committee members were removed and replaced (the current leader of the land justice committee indeed said he was appointed in August 2017, less than a year before the fieldwork).

Notwithstanding, the big thing during the second fieldwork was the ongoing *gemgema* process, much awaited as there was reportedly none for two years, and much appreciated ("it's like washing one's body with soap for all the dust to go away", former *kebele* leader now social court leader). Different community members participating to this meeting explained the process as follows.

The *gemgema* starts at the *wereda* level¹² then comes to the *kebele* and goes down to development army groups. The *kebele* and sub-*kebele* *gemgema* meetings cannot undo decisions taken at the *wereda* *gemgema* – such as, this year, the decision of removing the *kebele* leader, first taken at *wereda* level then "approved by the *gemgema* of *kebele* party members". But they can add elements to cases and add cases. So, for instance, some respondents said there was going to be reshuffling in the land administration sector as well.

The ROs observed that in the course of the process, the development army groups address the points coming from the *wereda* *gemgema* in meetings. This year, prominent issues were corruption/nepotism, and false reporting. For instance, the HEW had a *gemgema* session with the women 1-5

¹² The *wereda* level *gemgema* for civil servants lasted one week, during which all *kebele* civil servants and officials were at the *wereda*. The *kebele* manager had a long queue of people waiting for him on his return, which he was trying to help as rapidly as possible, spending his Sunday in office.

network leaders during which they did not discuss health issues, but “issues such as favouritism/ nepotism and loyalty to the party”.

Appeals, petitions and complaints

A *wereda* official explained that “people in the *wereda* have the culture of confronting leaders frankly and openly; and as they have more exposure to medias they appeal against *woreda* decisions in many ways, to the zone and Region appeal committees”. The *wereda* level interviews suggest that an elaborate system exists to handle appeals at and across government levels.

There are vertical and horizontal structures of appeal. Vertically, appeals can be passed from *kebele* to *wereda* to higher up. Horizontally, at *wereda* level each sector has its appeal structure but there is also a cross-sectoral structure chaired by the *wereda* administrator, called the ‘command post’, that examines issues if they are cross-sectoral or from several *kebeles*. Any complaint must first be seen at *kebele* level, by the relevant *kebele* sector office then by the *kebele* manager and chairman. If the plaintiff is not satisfied, he presents his complaint to the *wereda* level. This cannot be done directly, all issues must first be seen at *kebele* level. Any issue presented to the *wereda* level is first seen by the relevant sector office and the *wereda* complaint committee (?). If not resolved at these two levels, it is presented to the complaint ‘command post’ chaired by the *wereda* administrator.

Another *wereda* official talked about an ‘accountability committee’ (see above). Also, sometimes when there is a complaint the *wereda* collect suggestions from a group of representatives from the *kebele* through interviews; and action may be taken on this basis.

In relation to Harresaw, *wereda* officials reported that there were a number of individuals and groups from Harresaw who petitioned the *wereda*. This included a youth group which submitted an appeal for a land issue (possibly the group which was refused land for shoat fattening, see p.222), and an individual who needs land to establish a grain mill house and complained about injustice arising from the practices of specific individuals and group (most likely the case described p.132). In addition, there were complaints about drinking water, road, and food assistance, most of the times presented in public meetings and conferences and in written form. They commented that the *wereda* councillors from the *kebele* have been ineffective in this respect.

In Harresaw, all respondents knew about the *kebele* manager’s role to receive appeals. Generally, even appeals for which there is supposed to be a specific appeal committee (such as for PSNP) are reportedly presented to the *kebele* leader, the *kebele* manager and for appeals related to the CBHI non-paying membership, also to the HEW.

Appeals to the *kebele* level were mentioned in relation to the CBHI, to the PSNP and food aid, and to land issues (for PSNP there were appeals in relation to exclusion, status as PWs beneficiary instead of DS, and number of household members included in the support). According to a rich woman farmer head of household, the community also appealed to *kebele* officials to get the silt at the bottom of the dam dug out with machinery. There were also mentions of appeals to the *wereda* level. For instance, a 60-year old very poor divorcee excluded from PSNP and food aid appealed to the *wereda* after being told by the *kebele* officials that her exclusion was due to the quotas; one respondent was member of a group of youth who was told by the DAs and *kebele* officials that the land they requested is not suitable for shoat fattening (see p.222) and who appealed to the *wereda* – likely to be the group mentioned by the *wereda* officials as just said.

Both *kebele* civil servants and community respondents noted that when an appeal is about exclusion from a programme, the only thing the *kebele* administration can do is to refer to the quota, and tell the household that their case will be reviewed and if justified, they will be considered in the next year’s selection (the *wereda* might increase the quota and they replace people passed away by other people). The HEW suggested that people are ‘convinced’. However, on the side of the community respondents, overwhelmingly people felt that no solution is ever given to any appeal. Some

respondents noted the effects of the quotas in relation to PSNP and CBHI. Yet others pointed to lack of attention or worse, lack of fairness (see more on this in *Lack of justice, partiality, bias* below):

“No one listens and solves appeals in the kebele” (a migrant returnee member of a youth group waiting for their loan for their beekeeping activity).

“The kebele administration is not fair for all community members. Rather, leaders work in favour of their relatives. Most of the time they do not give attention especially for women and poor people and they are not willing to listen to the appeals of these people” (a poor widow who had to rent-out her land to repay a government loan she took in 2008 EC for chicken who all died of a local disease).

One respondent, a woman with a complicated land inheritance case, said she was rudely treated by the *kebele* leader and the policeman when she tried to appeal to the *kebele* administration (see p.238). This may have been an isolated case; although not involving the same characters, as said earlier many respondents noted the respectfulness of the *kebele* manager.

Those who appealed at *wereda* level said it made no difference: for instance, neither the youth group waiting for their loan to start beekeeping nor the youth group that was refused land for shoa fattening had received feedback from the *wereda*, according to their members.

This lack of response from either the *kebele* or the *wereda* level prompts in some instances feelings of anger or powerlessness as illustrated below:

A woman who claims she is wrongly excluded from the PSNP and who first appealed at *kebele* level: *“I was told by kebele officials that I was excluded because of the quota... But, I stopped asking fertilizer and improved seeds two years ago because of lack of money and I think this is the reason. I appealed up to the wereda but no solution was given. In fact, no solution will be coming from the government... It is better to pray to God than asking the kebele administration and appeal on something. I contacted the kebele officials for different issues in the past few years; they never give a decision or a solution for the community members, rather they are good at letting people cry. I prefer to die staying at her home rather than appealing to the kebele officials.”*

Another poor woman, destitute, living from charity and petty trade and in her view, wrongly excluded from the CBHI non-paying membership (she knows households less poor than her who are included) did not know if there is an appeal committee: *“I did not appeal to anyone in the kebele. I don't plan to appeal because I think it will bring no change.”*

As noted earlier (see p.78), for community-wide issues the same sense of powerlessness is prevailing. In our interviews, *kebele* officials indicated that there was no petition by individuals/groups from the *kebele* to the *wereda*. This contradicts the accounts of both the *wereda*, and community respondents, and yet it seems unlikely that *kebele* officials would be unaware of the complaints that were presented – in turn suggesting that at their level too there is a sense that recognizing these would reflect badly on them.

Resistance and conflict

Wereda officials noted that the initial lack of enthusiasm of the communities for soil and conservation activities had disappeared as people could directly observe the results (springs, tree coverage etc.). In Harresaw, as seen earlier soil and water conservation activities are a compulsory part of the *kebele* plan and always part of the priorities for PSNP PWs and the voluntary community work. However, not everything was smooth according to *kebele* officials and experts. The *kebele* leader explained that people are content when the work is done on a *kushet* basis (i.e. people from one *kushet* working on land in their own *kushet*) or on individual land, but complain when they are sent to work on land elsewhere in the *kebele* and mountainous areas. The DA blamed people for preferring temporary benefits over longer-lasting ones and for prioritizing individual over communal

benefits – presumably referring to this alleged preference of community members for work on individual land; and for not complying with rules and regulations that they had agreed upon – possibly referring to the difficulties in managing access to water in watershed as mentioned by a group of respondents about water in the Zeroreha watershed (see [p.12](#)).

The DA and the HEW also referred to some outstanding ‘resistance to change/new development ideas’. The HEW commented that women in general have better awareness than in the past in relation to health but some women are obstacles to change; she pointed to family planning, with women complaining of side effects, and difficulties with the idea of a balanced diet for pregnant and lactating mothers as “*women do not want to take special food without their household members*”. As seen earlier, there was some passive resistance to the idea of paying for extra ambulance services (bringing mothers back home after delivery), with only a few households paying (see [p.60](#)). The DA raised the “*loss of interest of farmers in taking and using agricultural inputs, especially fertilizer*” as an issue of concern, but he also noted that farmers are generally positive about agricultural programmes and one reason for ‘implementation problems’ may be lack of financial capacity. The *kebele* leader said that “*people’s traditional attitude*” is one of the main problems for him but did not give any specific example.

On the community side, a few people expressed unhappiness about the increase in membership fees for the party and for the farmers’ association, and there is a widespread perception that the various formal structures, including the party, are not really effective. But there was no reported instance of resistance to paying membership fees, said to be a pre-requisite for some processes such as getting an ID card; or in relation to paying taxes (see below the section on [Rights and duties of community members](#) on both these issues – ID card as a right and paying tax as a duty).

As described in the [Perspectives on justice, nepotism and corruption](#) section in this chapter, there was an apparently widespread sense of ‘lack of good governance’ under the (then) current *kebele* leadership (the *kebele* leader was removed by the end of the fieldwork). There were a few cases in which reportedly, some community members tried to resist or expressed their discontent more violently. These include:

- Reacting to the (then) *kebele* leader’s deeply controversial ‘decision’ about the location of the sketch plan town, a group of young men threw stones on the door and disturbed a *kebele* council meeting. More broadly, as illustrated by the many references to that issue in the interviews and in this report, by the time of the fieldwork and in a few months, the issue had grown as a thorn in the flesh of the community.
- Resistance to the coercion exerted (at least until a couple of years before the fieldwork) on farmers to take fertiliser. At least one of those who resisted was sacked from a paid position because of this (he worked as guard for the *kebele*); some young men openly challenged the *kebele* leadership, saying there is no law or anything saying that farmers must take fertilizer.
- A young man and a young woman who thought they were wrongly excluded from the PSNP resisted when the *kebele* told them to participate to the voluntary community labour; reportedly, they were arrested and sent to prison in Wukro because of this.

Rights and duties of community members

There was no specific discussion on the rights and duties of community members in the research protocols.

With regard to **rights**, the interviews suggest that at least implicitly, people think they have a right to hold their local leaders to account: this is illustrated by the several respondents who lamented that general meetings at which community issues were discussed were no longer held, and the widespread satisfaction at the time of the gemgema during the fieldwork, the first since a while. The

need for it was probably felt all the more strongly considering the apparently widespread (at least in our interviews) sense of lack of good governance under the current *kebele* administration.

Another right is that of getting an ID card (it is a right for any *kebele* resident above 18), which also is indispensable for a series of things. First, keeping a rural *kebele* ID and one's farmland is important for those rich farmers with properties in town – for this, land tax payment does not suffice; one also has to participate to the community voluntary labour. Having an ID is also indispensable to get banking and MFI services and access to credit, and to move anywhere outside of the community 'safely'. One also cannot marry officially without an ID.

There were a number of issues and complaints about the *kebele* administration in this respect. The process was said to be lengthy, with on one hand the *kebele* manager saying they often lack cards and that people cheat on their age to get one before being 18, and on the other hand, people thinking the lack of cards is an excuse and that the *kebele* administration is unwilling to give ID cards especially to young people. Young women, in particular, complained that the *kebele* manager "*is all smiles and gives it easily to married young women (but) he is always suspicious of our age for the unmarried young women*".

A number of respondents said that getting an ID card (or not) was a real issue for young people wanting to move for instance to towns to seek a job. Yet to get one ID card, beyond the age and residency status it was said to be a pre-requisite to pay membership fees of at least the WA or the YA – and some respondents said that one reason why many young people, including those who migrated, were members of the YA or WA, was to get an ID card before moving; others said all regular contributions and/or that being party member made it easier to get an ID card (see p.60).

With regard to **duties**, paying one's tax is considered as one. The comments from community members mainly revolved around the issue of fairness in taxation practices. Moreover, whilst there was no overt resistance in paying tax, for some people engaged in non-farm activities the fear that they might have to pay too much tax acted as a block to ideas of possible expansion of their business (see p.58 and p.143).

In addition to one's duty as a taxpayer, there were a number of other things one had to do to 'keep on the right side of the administration'. These include the 'grey zone' related to paying membership fees for the WA, YA and Farmers' Association, and participation to the voluntary community labour. Party membership was said to make a number of things easier including getting an ID card as said above, but no more. Participation to *kebele*, *kushet*, DT and 1-5 meetings was reportedly less 'compulsory' than a few years ago, except for party members for whom attending party meetings and at least some of the government meetings was still said to be compulsory (see p.80 and p.55).

Perspectives on community's key problems

Wereda officials identified the main problems of the *kebele* as the lack of water, especially drinking water; lack of quality roads within the *kebele* making it difficult to reach women about to deliver; and the recurrent drought, a "*basic problem affecting the community in many ways*". They also noted that the *wereda* does not have the capacity to solve these problems on its own and it must work with others. One official mentioned the big borehole dug in Harresaw in 2009 EC with the collaboration of UNICEF and the Regional Water Resource Bureau as an example of the type of collaboration required, adding that now, "*various water options should be expanded in order to create a sustainable drought-defensive economy*".

In Harresaw, in the course of the first fieldwork in January 2018, a range of respondents with different profiles were asked to specifically identify the three key problems of the community. These included men, women, rich, poor, farmers, traders; young men and women more and less successful in their life, and included in government interventions and not; very poor men and women, included in a government intervention and not included in any, male and female investors present in the

community; and a few key *kebele* officials and civil servants. In total they were forty, with only four of them in official/civil servant positions. In summary:

- Absolutely all of them mentioned the recurrent **drought** and/or lack of **water** as one of the three key issues.
- International **migration to Saudi** was mentioned by all but two women, illustrating the point made in the *Migration* chapter about the change in perception compared to 2012 – arising from the change in the balance of risks vs potential benefits even if people continue to go.
- Three out of four people (30 out of 40) mentioned one way or another the current context of **poor 'governance' in the kebele**.

Fourth on people's mind, and very closely linked with migration, was the issue of the **future of the youth**. A large majority of respondents (25 out of 40) referred to it as an issue or as the focus of their topmost recommendation to address the biggest problems of the community. They raised youth-related issues ranging from lack of jobs and landlessness (for most) to problems of youth behaviour (unwillingness to get organized, getting drunken, violence, with one of the respondents calling them "lazy youth"); one young man pointed to the "lack of empowering the youth. Government does not even gather them to ask what their issues are, let alone about resolving them". Creating jobs for young people was the single most often mentioned recommendation, and of those who made it, six specifically referred to opening factories nearby; another six respondents interviewed on different topics made the same reference to factories.

The other key problems mentioned were poverty, inflation, lack of infrastructure and individualism, each of these by maximum two of the forty respondent.

The four 'biggest' of the key problems raised by community respondents are all discussed in other parts of this report.

Perspectives on justice, nepotism and corruption

'Unfair administration' of the kebele

A 30-year old woman, small trader, quasi-landless (1/5 *timad* that she owns with five siblings), with a husband daily labourer and who identified drought, youth joblessness and landlessness, and migration to Saudi as the three main problems in Harresaw, added that "all these community problems result from the unfair administration of the kebele." Among the thirty respondents who highlighted 'poor governance' in the *kebele* as one of the three key problems, the specific points they made ranged from mere **weaknesses in service provision** and that the *kebele* administration "never replies timely to community demands", to accusations of **lack of justice; nepotism, partiality** (to relatives, well-connected or economically strong people), bias and parochialism (towards one's *kushet* or *got*); and **corruption**. A few respondents added that this led the community to lose hope and interest, "people are fed up"; for one woman it was "better to pray God" rather than expecting anything from the government.

Other sections and chapters of this report provide a number of examples of situations in which many other respondents¹³ developed similar perceptions arising from their dealings with people in official positions: in particular, the *kebele* administration (cabinet and leader), the land administration (*kebele* and *kushet* LACs), land judges (the land justice committee) and the social

¹³ In the course of the second fieldwork (February-March 2018), across several research modules a range of men and women with different wealth statuses and different occupations (farmers, traders, businesspeople) and residence places ('urban residents' in the *kebele* centre or with a house in Dera, and living in the 'rural parts' of Harresaw including the remoter *kushet*) were interviewed, as well as young men and women of different age groups and wealth statuses, and community respondents talking about their experiences with PSNP, CBHI and CCC as well as involved in land processes.

court. See the following sections to get a sense of the functioning and people's perceptions of these structures: *Kebele Cabinet*; *Kebele leader/chairperson*; *Social court*; *Dedicated land-related structures*; *Land administration and justice processes*; *Women's rights to land* and; *Land disputes*.

The sense of **weakness and ineffectiveness** of the current *kebele* administration is outlined above as a significant change compared to 2012 (see [p.38](#)).

Lack of justice, partiality, bias

The sense of **lack of justice and of fairness**, closely related to **partiality**, was most often expressed – across a wide range of profiles among the respondents.

In the interviews there were a few instances of people highlighting specific positive aspects in relation to justice. For instance, the WA leader and several young women pointed at the role of the courts in sentencing men for rape and abduction whereas in the past *“women remained without getting justice”*. The WA leader also noted equal participation of women in the justice positions at the court, *“unlike in the past where these were 100% men”*. But these were isolated cases; in contrast stand the many references to lack of justice/fairness more broadly conceived, which people linked to partiality, nepotism, and bias, in turn linked to parochialism or proneness to corruption.

Hence, one young man stated, *“there is no justice in the kebele except on paper”*. Two women said that *“justice is the worst service at both kebele and wereda level”*, one of them adding a comment on the corruption and partiality of the *wereda* court judges. (One is a still young poor divorcee, landless, living in a rented room in the *kebele* centre and the only woman militia, who lost her share of a house she and her migrant husband built when he came back and divorced her; the other is a comparatively better-off older woman farmer head of household, with farmland which used to be irrigable when the dam was fuller, and an ongoing case to ensure her son's inheritance of land from her mother). And one man added *“the problem is not only limited to the kebele, it is even worse at the wereda level. For instance, the wereda prosecutors always delay cases that need to be taken to court immediately.”*

Elders mediating conflicts seemed to be generally positively perceived; whereas the members of the land distribution committee in 1983 EC were accused of similar partiality and proneness to bribing than the land judge committee, including by the LAC (see [p.234](#)).

Some of these perceptions/accusations arose from community-wide issues such as the location of the sketch plan town, issues around use/misuse of water infrastructure, and the sense that too many ('all') people in *kebele* leadership position were from one *kushet* (Lima't). There were also many instances of individuals holding the view that partiality was widespread, in relation to access (or lack thereof) to land (in inheritance processes as well as access to hillside land for youth groups, reallocated farmland, and residential land) (see [p.235](#)), access to credit (for which a *kebele* letter of support is indispensable) and to youth livelihood support opportunities, and selection of beneficiaries for food aid/ PSNP support, with a few references to partiality in selection for CBHI non-paying membership and support by the CCC.

This example given in the case of a household excluded from the PSNP illustrates more generally how quotas fuel this trend to partiality/nepotism:

“When the quota is limited, the leaders select their relatives and are not fair. There is a complaint committee. Any appeal is presented to this committee or to general meetings of the community. But as those who have many relatives and friends among kebele officials get many hands, it's less unlikely that these processes will lead to a change in decision” ('getting many hands' means, here, getting a lot of support in a vote by those attending the community meeting).

Partiality was said to be in favour of relatives, well-connected individuals, economically strong/rich people, and people able to bribe; and therefore, women were seen to be at a disadvantage (see e.g.

p.238 in relation to women's land rights). Partiality was said to be at the disadvantage of the poor, those without connection or a relative in the 'administration' "*who can stand for them*", and women. There was only one reference to the party being a reason for partiality, by young men who indicated that the *kebele* favour young men with connections to them or who are "*politically involved in the party*" when it comes to access to youth support initiatives.

These accusations of partiality/unfairness/nepotism extended to some of the development teams, which have become the main mechanism to select people for everything, from food aid to CCC to CBHI non-paying membership to opportunities of training (see p.44). The Research Officers observed a meeting chaired by the HEW, at which the WA leader was asked to solve a case in which the members of a development team wanted to remove the leaders from their position because, they said, they do not "*share the benefits coming for the development army group between the members and instead, use them for themselves only*". Development team leaders are also in charge of passing the information when subsidized commodities are available at the cooperative shop; one woman complained that even for this, leaders are not fair and "*take all the benefits for themselves*" (presumably purchasing as much as they can from the stock before alerting others).

Corruption

The issue of corruption at *kebele* level was raised by *wereda* officials. They and the policeman gave as an example of the efforts made to address it, the stopping of the practice of deducting grain in-kind from food aid for the *kebele* budget. However, as seen in *Box 4* and in the *Kebele budget* section, how the *kebele* raises and spends resources remains rather opaque for the average community respondents.

More generally, among community respondents there was a strong sense that the problem of corruption is not addressed. In the view of an elderly but 'modern' lady (she lived in Asmara for years in the past), "*everywhere there is corruption and cheaters are rewarded.*" This strong view was echoed by others, including for instance an elderly poor farmer militia member who, walking back from the dam and showing the place of a serious battle between the TPLF and the Derg, said that although these days one can move freely, "*we are becoming our own enemies with this corruption everywhere*". The specific case that he was talking about was the poor quality job done by the contractor for the water scheme that should have brought water from the borehole down to Ekunta and Harresaw *kushet*, which worked a few days then failed. Several respondents indicated they suspected foul play (see p.21). One of the women who did not want to explicitly comment on the *kebele* administration just raised that one issue (60 million *Birr* spent and still no water) to illustrate her sense of how things are going in the community.

Others who expressed suspicions of corruption were for instance

- A young Saudi returnee in relation to the support that people repatriated in 2013 were supposed to receive on return. Supposedly they would get a loan of 30,000 *Birr*. Then when they arrived they were told this was for groups of minimum three. When he and two friends submitted a proposal to the *kebele*, they were told that the money available was exhausted. They do not believe this and think that at least some of the funds were diverted.
- A group of respondents showing the recently built bigger check dam on the Zerehoha stream regenerated over years of soil and conservation work. Like in the case of the pipe system for the borehole the works were not up to standards and in this case too they suspected collusion (see p.12).

Moreover, as seen in the *Land use and urbanisation* chapter allegations of bribes abounded when people narrated land cases, theirs' or those of others (see among others p.235).

As noted earlier (see p.77), *wereda* officials recognized that there are serious governance problems in Harresaw, however highlighting that this is an exceptional situation not reflected in the other

kebeles. This research did not have a chance to check this, but ROs were informally told of cases showing that the *wereda* itself was not immune to governance issues. Some of the cases mentioned above illustrate that indeed, perceptions of corruption held by Harresaw respondents extended to the *wereda* level and possibly higher up. For instance, in the case of the two water infrastructure development projects mentioned above (borehole and check dam), people suspected collusion between the contractor and those at *wereda* level in charge of supervising the works.

Another case was even clearer and was mentioned by several respondents in Harresaw as one of the causes of the delays in the PSNP transfer payment that the community was experiencing especially in the last two years¹⁴. They explained that:

A few years ago a *wereda* finance leader stole 2.5 million *Birr* from the PSNP and fled the country. The man was known to have a G+3 house in Wukro but when the *wereda* went there to possibly seize the house, they were told that he had divorced his wife and the ownership of the house had been transferred to her, so they could not do anything. The man is also a shareholder in the most successful restaurant of Atsbi, but the other shareholder told the *wereda* officials that she didn't know anything about his whereabouts. Therefore, there was termination of provision of the PSNP support for four months in the *wereda* as a whole, because as it took a long while for the *wereda* to get the case explained etc.

One notable woman respondent linked the increasing weakness and corruption of 'leaders' and what she described as the loss of social cohesion in the community ("*people ignore each other*"), explaining that it is a result of leaders having achieved success politically hence "*forgetting everything and behaving selfishly*", and "*dividing people into different groups who watch each other... which destroyed the trust of people with one another*". "*People get afraid that they may be discriminated against during supply of food, or farming inputs or anything else. Thus, in order to survive, everybody pretends to accept any rule provided by officials.*"

Farming

Farming, and especially crop growing, has been severely affected by the recurrent drought of the past five years and the quasi-complete disappearance of irrigation as the little water still held by the main dam does no longer reach the water distribution system. Yet, most people still consider it as the main livelihood option in the area. This stems from both, the limited range and number of realistic alternative options, and the hope that arises again as soon as there is some rain. As one of the respondents explained:

The 'on and off' of rainfall in the area is causing unnecessary hope in the community. When there is good rainfall one year, the hope rises again to get better production also the next year so that we invest more in our farming activities such as using fertilizer and improved seeds and sowing in lines. However, then there will be no rainfall so that we lost our money for no production. The situation in our area regarding farming activities needs not only the attention of the kebele, woreda, or regional government but also the federal government's attention."

This respondent and some others were calling on the government for solutions such as maintaining the dam, constructing other bigger dams and extracting underground water – i.e. addressing the issue of access to water indispensable for any farming. Or, the government should shift its focus and create non-farming opportunities and "*solving unemployment in the area in other ways*".

¹⁴ This was not the only reason for delay: food aid more generally was also, at least until recently, used as a means to make farmers buy fertilizer, as seen [p.67](#) (in that instance it was emergency food aid).

For most respondents at community levels and among *kebele* and *wereda* officials, fattening, beekeeping/honey production, dairy, and poultry for egg or meat production are considered as non-farm activities – presumably because they do not rely on having crop land. They are however, described in this section of the community report. Changes are somewhat more positive with regard to some of these activities, although the recurrent drought and limited access to groundwater also strongly affect access to water and fodder for the livestock.

There is no cooperative farming, and almost no investment farming in the *kebele*.

Smallholder farming

Smallholder farming is the only form of farming in Harresaw with regard to crop growing. There is an irrigation water users' association but its role does not extend to cooperative production or marketing. There are a number of youth groups involved in activities such as eucalyptus growing, beekeeping and others (considered as non-farming activities as said above); these are described in the *Young people's economic and other experiences* chapter of this report. But apart from these, all livestock production activities are also individual.

Land for smallholder crops and grazing

Having user rights on farmland ('owning' farmland as people say) is still considered as an important asset, in spite of the difficulties faced by farmers in the area. For many, one key characteristic of rich people is that they have access to more and more fertile land. And as noted earlier, rich farmers with houses in town and who may live away part or even most of the time, are careful to do what is required to maintain user rights on their farmland in the *kebele*.

It was notable, and a change compared to 2012, that people no longer drew the same kind of distinction between irrigable and non-irrigable land, as no land can be irrigated any longer.

Access to land is an important issue among the young generation, in different ways. On one hand, the fact that very few young people have their own land is widely seen as a push factor prompting migration (reportedly, fewer than 20% of the youth in their 20s have their own land; some say fewer than 10%); and the younger youth appear to have given up on farming and have other aspirations. On the other hand, there are young people who state that they would want to live in the community if they had or could get land; and young women are said to prefer to marry either a businessman or successful returnee but there are not many of these in the community, or a young man with his own land as "*at least it is a guaranty when a man has farm land.*"

Apart from inheritance, young people can access land through lottery allocation of land of deceased people without known heirs, or of people who lost their user rights. The latter is very uncommon in the community; and the amount of such farmland available is far from matching the number of landless young people. There are young men who are landless but still buy their own oxen to involve in farming, through renting-in or sharecropping, among others from women whose husbands are away on migration (and other female-headed households), but these are few. Having her own land is also an asset for a young woman to marry.

Sharecropping land seems to have become less common than renting-in/out land. And with regard to the latter, most of the transactions are informal i.e. take place with elders on both sides as witnesses. A large number of these land transactions are in one way or another linked to migration – be it women whose husbands are away and who rent-out, or, as seemed to be very common, households renting out their land to get loans from the person renting-in, often to finance migration. See more on this in the *Land use and urbanisation* chapter of this report.

See the *Grazing land* section above and *Land use and urbanisation* chapter below for information about grazing land. The main point about grazing land is its growing importance, as the crop-livestock mix in smallholder farming in Harresaw is gradually tilting more towards livestock, whereas

at the same time other pressure on it are also growing, such as the increasing number of landless people and the difficulty of finding land to allocate them.

Wives' farming activities

The recurrent drought has affected the participation of women in farming. Vegetable growing and selling, which could be done in one's backyard/garden and was picking up as a source of income for women in 2012, appears to have almost disappeared. Only one of the respondents mentioned she was doing a bit of that to cover minor household expenses such as coffee and salt. However, a growing number of women are involved in poultry (see below).

People noted that migration does not change much in the gender division of labour with regard to farming. When a man with land is away generally he either rents-out or hires labour for ploughing if this cannot be done by anyone from the household, or he gets support from relatives. However, if the land is the wife's land, she may have more decision-making power. In some cases, she gets help for everything, like a young woman helped by her father; or at least for ploughing. In other cases, she is the one who hires labour with the remittances, who decides on what to sow and on the use of fertiliser etc. Whereas if the land is the husband's land, if it is not rented-out the responsibility is more likely to be with the husband's family.

Women's involvement in daily labour was, compared to 2012, affected by the general decrease in local demand for daily labour due to the drought. For instance, one young woman, married and whose husband is landless like herself, noted that during the last agricultural season she was doing farming daily labour for 60-70 *Birr*/day, but was working only twice a week or so, because there were many people wanting to do this work and only a few richer farmers who wanted to employ labourers. Her husband is also living from daily labour, and migrates repeatedly to Kunewa in Afar and to Saudi, so far unsuccessfully.

Farm labour

Farm labour is not mechanised at all. There was an attempt at introducing mechanised ploughing, reportedly three years before the fieldwork (possibly linked to the concept of crop farming clusters that the *wereda* is trying to implement, see below). The tractor came from the *wereda* town. Around twenty farmers used it, paying 400 to 500 *Birr* per day. However, it was soon terminated because it was found to be unaffordable and not suitable in the local context. Farmers complained that the price was based only on the size of the land to plough and did not factor in differences in terms of time taken due to the nature of the soil. They also noted that ploughing with a tractor reduces the yield in the first production year and it is only after a few years that it can lead to a higher production. This is not an adequate strategy in Harresaw considering the weather vagaries and the poor rainfall pattern of the past few years. The use of tractor ploughing has now totally stopped in the *kebele*.

Family labour, exchange and support

Access to farm labour in the form of manpower and oxen to plough is a key issue. A number of respondents highlighted that one difference between richer and poorer farmers, besides the fact that richer ones can afford to buy fertiliser and improved seeds, is that they have (or can access) "*enough manpower and oxen to till their land repeatedly and on time*" (destitute woman).

Children are still expected to help, including girls in herding and feeding cattle, though most parents mention that they do so 'in their free time' or when school is closed in the summer. Among unmarried young men, including those educated to Grade 10 and above and who cannot find jobs, some do spend time helping their parents in farming and other activities. But not all do so, and according to some respondents, most migrate and when they are back, spend their time drinking and gambling in the *kebele* centre. A number of young men alternate working for their parents'

households and migrating to Afar to work as farm or construction daily labourer and get an income (e.g. 20-25 year-old poor young man).

In most cases, household members (the wife and children living at home) are also those providing the labour needed to rear livestock, such as cutting and carrying fodder for cattle and sheep, milking the cows; for those having hybrid cattle ensuring the animals are regularly washed and their place kept clean; for chicken, similarly providing them with food and water and regularly cleaning their hut as well as letting them out and back in again timely etc.

Work exchanges

Reportedly, customary practices of large work parties or smaller work exchange between farmers have practically disappeared. In the past, it used to be common for a farmer with a married daughter, but young so that the two spouses were still living each with their parents, to request his son-in-law to send him a certain number of people from his family and relatives for a specified volume of labour that needed to be done, to support him in farming. In exchange the daughter's father used to prepare food and drinks for the workers. This too does no longer exist.

However, there were mentions of a wide range of support and exchange arrangements with regard to farm labour, many being directly or indirectly related to migration. As noted above, relatives on the wife's or husband's side may help households in which the husband is away. Among relatives this usually is for free, but it can be problematic as it is considered as a second-order priority by the one who is providing the labour. For instance, a young woman noted that her land is ploughed by one of her brothers, but he will only plough it once whereas the land would need two or three ploughing to be more fertile.

There were many mentions of farmers with oxen providing 'oxen support' to relatives or neighbours or vulnerable households (this could be either only the oxen, or the oxen and manpower), usually against either farm labour during harvesting or threshing, or the straw as fodder, or a combination of both. Labour work against oxen labour was already practised in 1995 (GC) but by then there was no mention of the oxen labour against straw arrangements.

Examples include the case of one relatively better-off widow (earning some income from selling *tella* and with children who are government employees), whose land is ploughed by her brothers and they also harvest for her; in return, she is giving them the straw for their oxen, and also in-kind support such as buying shoes and clothes for their children for the holidays. Another woman, divorced, explained that her ex-husband was supporting her by ploughing her land with his oxen; she and her children could do the rest, and she was giving him the straw as she has no cattle. A young man who *got* half a *timad* of land from his in-laws helps them with labour on their farmland.

When they involve a return, these informal oxen-related transactions bear two kinds of opportunity costs: first, one will get access to someone else's oxen after that person has ploughed his or her own land, and this delay may be critical depending on the rainfall; second the time or resource one has to spend to reciprocate is also a cost.

There was no mention of development teams or 1-5 networks in relation to farm labour.

Agricultural workers

There are only very few households now employing agricultural workers on a permanent basis, due to the drought and 'shortage of money'. There used to be people employing shepherds, but this has almost disappeared for this reason and also, people have fewer livestock as they sold some due to the drought too. There are still a very few households who employ young boys to help them with the livestock-related tasks mentioned above. The box below presents the case of Gashaw, a fourteen-year old boy employed by Hagos, the ex-shoe shiner turned businessman in the centre of the *kebele*.

Box 12. Gashew, farm employee of Hagos

He was born in Ekunta sub-*kebele*. He works for Hagos Tikue, the owner of the bakery, biggest shop and biggest café/snack bar in the *kebele*). He got his work as the employer asked his mother to let the boy work with him and continue his education. He started working one and a half year ago. His primary task is to take care and feed the two oxen, and work on farming activities such as harvesting and threshing. He also helps in preparing dough for the bakery house and works in the café. He goes to school for half a day and spends the rest of his time working.

He is paid 200 *Birr* per month. In addition, his employer covers his food, clothing, shelter, and educational material expenses. He was working on agricultural activities with his parents. But he has learned various skills in a better way since he started working on this job. He has a good relationship with his employer and they are also relatives. He supports his employer in the bakery and plans to work till he is 18 years old. He was dismissed from school as he was often absent due to his exhausting work. The problem is solved now as his mother talked with his teachers and the employer allowed him to focus on his education during school time.

Daily labour

Doing farming daily labour in one's own community used to be uncommon years ago, and it was also uncommon for women to be involved. By 2012 this had changed, with daily labour an increasingly common activity in the livelihood portfolios of many landless and poorer people, including women and young women. This has continued to evolve since 2012, in that the recurrent drought of the past five years meant that fewer daily labour opportunities were locally available at the same time as the labour on offer was at the very least not decreasing. As one young woman noted, there were not many opportunities and many people wanting to work. So, whilst many years back there even were in-migrant daily labourers this has now completely stopped. Instead, ever more people from the community move out to seek work elsewhere. This includes a good number of landless young people who live from daily labour locally when it is available, and also migrate regularly for a few months to Afar; and others who try to get daily labour in neighbouring *kebeles* less affected by the drought.

A few people noted that compared to the distant past, the opportunity of doing daily labour and earning an income from it (instead of "*working for richer people as a slave, for food*") helped poor people to get better-off (alongside government support). However, for most respondents this beneficial effect had vanished in recent years; on the contrary, poor people were becoming poorer because of the lack of daily labour opportunities.

Wage rates reached 100-120 *Birr/day* for men whereas it used to be 15-30 *Birr/day* ten years ago and more. But inflation means everything is more expensive. Also, in the past few years it is not clear that wage rates continued to increase because of the intense competition for the few available opportunities. Wage rates are higher for skilled labour such as cleaving stones or quarrying stones for housing (paid 120-150 *Birr/day*), and skilled construction labourers are paid 200 *Birr/day* (locally).

As was the case in 2012, wage rates are lower for women, reaching 50-60, maximum 80 *Birr/day*. One woman said a few women may get 100 *Birr/day* because they are very strong and "*work as much as men*". But she also noted that there are people who do not want to employ women with children in daily labour because they believe they cannot be effective because of their children.

Several respondents highlighted the precarious nature of a livelihood based on daily labour, as is the case for many especially in the younger generation. Besides the issue of wage rate, as said one man "*when I have no job for a while my household is going without food*". Even for those who alternate different kind of jobs and migrate a few weeks or months to complement the local opportunities this remains a hand-to-mouth way of making a living.

Crop-livestock & products mixes

Over the past five years, livestock production and livestock products have taken more importance in the community's farming economy in general. Crops were never grown exclusively for cash, whereas this shift toward the livestock sector seems to also prompt a shift towards a more market-oriented type of farming, albeit this is still on a small-scale.

Crop production and sale strategies

The main crops produced in the community are barley, wheat, beans, lentils, flaxseeds ('*telba*') and sorghum, in that order. However, all are vulnerable to drought and also frost, especially sorghum with regard to frost. Irrigation has gradually declined until the last season when it became completely impossible, hence only very little vegetables continue to be produced, mostly by women watering them manually in their backyard and for household consumption. At the same time, seeing the reduced production of crops and vegetables, a growing number of households pay attention to alternative crops such as eucalyptus trees, apple production and hops, produced both for own consumption and as a source of income.

Grain and pulse crop production and sale strategies

Several respondents mentioned that farmers alternate the crops they grow from one year to the next, mainly between the first three crops that is, barley, wheat and beans. There are improved seeds for barley and wheat (see below in the *Agricultural modernisation* section), but not for beans and peas (though *wereda* officials mentioned improved small beans seeds but it may be that these were not made available in Harresaw). Farmers gave different information with regard to the relative vulnerability of different crops to drought and frost. Most indicated that wheat and beans were more vulnerable than barley, but one strong woman farmer said that she shifted to wheat after the (2015/16) drought because barley and beans were more vulnerable to frost and drought. These differences may partly result from whether or not respondents used improved seeds, but information on the usefulness of improved barley and wheat seeds is also not consistent among our respondents (see below).

People do not grow grain crops for the market. But in good years, those with a surplus can sell it on the market. Selling small quantities of grain is also widespread, to get some small cash for other household expenses even if this means that the household will have to buy grain for food later in the year. The difference between the former and the latter is illustrated by these two cases:

"Last year the household produced wheat, barley, beans and peas. They yielded 2.5 quintal wheat and 2.5 quintal barley which was all consumed by the household. They also produced 2 quintals of bean and sold 1 quintal for 2,500 Birr; and one quintal of peas and sold 1/2 quintal for 1,050 Birr. They sold all the pulses to local traders at Dera market place." (Rich male farmer).

"Last year she produced 1 quintal barley, 1 quintal "demhay" (which is a kind of barley) as well as 1 quintal of wheat. She used almost all the production for her household's consumption; she only sold around 10 KG from each crop on the market and got around 300 Birr to cover other household expenditure such as coffee and salt."

People also grow pulses at least in part for household's consumption, but they are aware of their higher market value. So for instance, another rich farmer (who is also resident in Dera) explained that even though beans and peas were most affected by the drought, he did not stop growing these crops because of their good yield in good seasons, and good market value. However, one reason for some farmers to prefer growing grain crops in spite of their lower market value is that they produce more straw for their livestock, and straw has become a more precious resource in the community given the trends towards increasing livestock production. Getting at least some straw is also more likely even with poor rainfall.

Some respondents said that people in Harresaw were selling more grain than five years ago because they faced higher household expenditures; others were of the opposite view, noting that most people were selling less grain than earlier because of their much reduced production.

Irrigated crops

In the past, some of the grain and pulse crops as well as vegetables were grown through irrigation. What to grow was a big issue in 2012 (WIDE3 fieldwork), with among others the DAs trying to get farmers to grow beans as they had better market value than barley, and farmers (with access to irrigation) resisting because they said beans were more vulnerable to frost. There was economic inequality between people with access to irrigated farming and those without and as noted above (in the *Spatial patterns* section), access also strongly differed among *kushets*. Some respondents mentioned that a youth association had been established to produce and sell potatoes, with trucks coming to take their production and sell it in towns, but this had stopped. The FTC was also producing vegetables on the demonstration land, which were sold, thus providing both a source of revenue for the FTC and of vegetables for residents of Harresaw, but this had stopped as well. As the picture below shows, pumps that belonged or were rented by some farmers are stored idle in the one of the *kebele* compound rooms.



Pumps used for irrigation, now stored in kebele room

The irrigation capacity of the dam appears to have gradually decreased over the years since 2012. In the *wereda's* record, the capacity of the dam is recorded as capable of irrigating 224 ha of land in the *kebele*. The big decrease occurred in the 2015/16 drought. Farmers mentioned that in 2016/17 only approximately one hectare, or 10% of the land planted with barley and wheat, was irrigated, and also around one hectare of chick peas. Then in the last production season this completely stopped, no irrigation was possible from the dam. Vegetables such as onion, garlic, green pepper, cabbage, carrot, potatoes and tomatoes have also stopped being grown, except on a very small scale through manual watering.

This man, who used to irrigate his farmland, gave an example of the chain effect of drought on livelihoods:

“Until two years ago I was producing by irrigation using a rented water pump. I had to stop due to water shortage. I was also forced to sell one ox because of lack of fodder. This year, if some rain does not come soon I may have to sell my sheep to feed my cattle. In selling my livestock I also lose the manure I used to get and spread on my farmland.”

A middle-wealth farmer with one *timad* of irrigated land which he used to grow peas, lentils, wheat and vegetables, saw his production cut to one third as he had no longer access to water. Another farmer said he used to produce twice a year and get some income in this way, but this was now completely stopped. Whereas for one of the women farmers, she used to produce enough food for her household throughout the year when irrigation was possible, but now she has to buy food.

Wereda officials noted that due to drought and shortage of water, no land is irrigated any longer in the *kebele*. However, in another interview focusing on the clustering system (see below), they highlighted that as Harresaw is included in the Dera barley cluster, priority should be given to working on water structures such as canals, water reservoirs etc. No one mentioned what to do with regard to the dam. On their side, some of the community members believe (or wanted us to believe) that most likely the issue was not reported anywhere. One of them explained:

“The wereda head of agriculture never came to see the dam. Even the DAs do not come, they sit in the kebele offices and write reports. They are like pregnant women who don’t move away from their home. There is no commitment in the administration.”

Eucalyptus production and sale

Eucalyptus commands high demand in and outside of the community. Branches and small logs are used as fuel whereas trunks are used for construction. Over the past five and especially three years an increasing number of people have engaged in producing eucalyptus. Most people with land try to plant some trees, even on a small plot in their homestead or on the side of their farm land.

Production inputs and risks - Wereda and *kebele* agriculture officials encourage the community to involve in eucalyptus production by providing advice, and seeds that the DAs collect in the same way as community members, from the grown-up trees. Some people do plant eucalyptus seedlings in line. There are also farmers who instead of seedlings, are using the ‘stem cutting’ technique i.e. they cut a stem from a tree and plant it in the hole in the same way as they would for a seedling. Most farmers use compost to grow the trees, but reportedly, some people are using dap and urea.

Eucalyptus production is also encouraged as one of the options for youth groups to engage in, although the first challenge is that they need to get land, and this may be an even less popular decision now that the community at large is more aware of the potential of hillside land with regard to this source of cash. Five hectares of hillside land were allocated to two youth groups for eucalyptus production and this indeed, initially prompted a conflict with the farmer who had been using the land thus far.

The challenges include the fact that eucalyptus production is time-consuming and laborious. Collecting enough seeds to produce seedlings takes time. Deep holes must be dug to plant the seedlings. Young seedlings also need regular watering and protection from sheep and goats. In the past some people used irrigation to water the trees but this now no longer possible. Frost and climate change is also a challenge; we saw a number of big trees almost entirely burned by the severe frost that had occurred earlier in the year. In addition, our knowledgeable respondents were aware that eucalyptus trees quickly absorb water and minerals in the land around them, thus depleting the soil and reducing the productivity of this land for other crops.

Market and sale strategies - However, they said, people see the benefits of getting a good income from this activity and they too are of the opinion that the advantages exceed the disadvantages. They and the ROs considered that eucalyptus had become the main cash crop in Harresaw. In the community, a small tree which used to be sold 15 *Birr* three or five years ago is now sold 50 *Birr* and a big tree can fetch 150 *Birr*. Its value as fuel is continuously rising, and this is directly linked to the *wereda* (and regional?) policy of stricter enforcement of the forest protection regulations. As explained by two of the women interviewed by the ROs:

“Previously, there were firewood traders who came and were cutting logs from the forest in Harresaw and carrying it on donkeys. I used to buy from them. But, currently it is difficult for the traders to cut trees from the forest because it is protected. They are penalized and their wood is taken if they are caught. That is why I am using eucalyptus branches for baking injera. I cut them from my own eucalyptus trees and I sell the trees and logs every year for people who want to construct houses and use it for fire wood.”

„... the price of firewood increased because of forest conservation so that farmers have to steal wood during night times. So, the price of eucalyptus also increased since two years. Previously I was buying eucalyptus wood for 1,300 Birr and this lasted for a year. However, currently, what I am buying for 1,000 Birr does not even last 5 months.“

For many community members, selling a few trees enables them to buy food crop for their household as their own production is not sufficient, or to face other household expenses, such as this poor woman who has a son at Semera University and who explained: *“I face trouble sometimes to send him pocket money. However, thank God I have eucalyptus trees and I use them for him only. I sell them every year and get some 1,000 or 2,000 Birr.”*

Our respondents estimated that in the past three years, the equivalent of approximately ten lorries of the trees may have been sold in the community. In addition there are licensed traders from Dera and Atsbi coming to buy trees and take them for sale on the Dera and Atsbi markets.

Apple production and sale

Apples are grown in the community since a few years (it had been recently introduced in 2012). However, so far fruit production has remained small-scale and the profitability of this activity is not clear. Last year two young people involved in producing apples in an individual capacity sold a few kilos, at 30 Birr per kg, on Dera market; one of them said he *got* an income of 3,000 Birr from his sale. One youth group of fifteen members has undertaken to grow apple. They planted the trees but very recently, so they have not yet started producing and selling.

Frost is an even bigger challenge than for eucalyptus, and it can destroy one year’s entire production prospects in one bad frost. Water shortage is also a big issue, as well as sheep eating the fruits and children knocking them down the trees before maturity.

Hop production and sale

According to a knowledgeable woman head of a farming household, there could be as many as 1,000 farmers growing hops in the community. Its value market has increasing from 30 Birr for a kilo of grinded hops, to 40 Birr nowadays, so that it can represent a meaningful source of income.

The role of DAs and other agricultural modernisation agents is discussed in the Agricultural modernisation section below.

Livestock and products production and sale strategies

As noted in introduction to this Farming chapter, livestock production (including of livestock products) appears to have been picking up in the local economy and as an income-generating activity, whereas crop farming has been disappointing in the past few years but continues to be practised mostly as a subsistence-oriented activity. However, risks are also present in the livestock sector so that for instance, when asked about inequality, most respondents from the community explained that those most affected by the drought were the households with more livestock (hence drought had a wealth-equalising effect in their view). There was fodder aid during the worst of the drought in 2015/16 but it was not sufficient; most people gave priority to cattle, trying to sell other livestock such as sheep.

Within the livestock sector, cattle and shoat fattening and poultry production for eggs and meat seem to dominate the mix whereas honey production has been on the decline, and dairy is less prominent than fattening. This is reflected in the way knowledgeable respondents ranked the importance of different types of livestock and livestock products in the local economy. They indicated that chicken production and sale had become the most practised activity, ahead of shoat fattening and sale which used to be the most practised a few years ago. Cattle fattening stayed in third position. Beekeeping used to be important but is now in fourth/last position because people are afraid of the drought effects. So, eggs have become the most sold product in the community,

instead of butter and honey up to the recent past. There is not a lot of demand locally for milk, but whereas in the past households with milk surplus were giving it to households with children and no cattle, milk is now sold.

Knowledgeable respondents estimated the number of livestock heads as follows:

- Cattle: around 6,000
- Sheep: around 7,000
- Goats: around 4,000
- Chickens: more than 7,000
- Beehives: around 1,000 modern and 500 traditional hives
- Donkeys: around 1,000.

Cattle and cattle products

Cattle mix - Livestock, and cattle in particular, are a marker of wealth in the community. First, ploughing oxen continue to be a critical input for crop growing households. As indicated earlier, households who do not have their own get access to other farmers' oxen, often against some form of in-kind return such as giving their straw or providing farm labour during harvest times.

In addition to the value of oxen, respondents indicate that over the past five years there has been a slow but steady trend of people shifting from local cattle to improved ones, mostly for fattening. Foreign and hybrid breeds were introduced several years ago, around 1996 EC. However, they said, unlike in the past when only *kebele* officials and ex-fighters were early adopters to "*help the government*", nowadays some young traders who have enough cash also involve in this activity. But due to issues of high price and access to fodder, hybrid cattle fattening is not as widespread as it is hoped for, and hybrid cows are still a minority among the cattle of the community. One respondent estimated that no more than 10 out of 100 farmers might have a hybrid, and another respondent estimated that out of the approximately 7,000 cattle found in the community, only 50 were foreign (*ferenj*) breed and 150 were hybrid cows.

Access to breeds - Some of the constraints on widespread adoption of hybrids are their high price, lack of access to credit, and that they have to be bought from the market (instead of being provided by the *wereda*). However, most farmers get hybrid cows by breeding their local cows with improved or hybrid ones, by artificial or natural insemination.

Production inputs and risks - The other constraints are related to the inputs needed: "*wide land, fodder and water*", as well as labour to clean the cattle's house and regularly wash them. The most frequently mentioned challenge is about fodder. One respondent said that whilst they produce more hence are more beneficial, hybrid cows need three times more fodder than local ones. So, according to some respondents most farmers still prefer local cows that can survive on a small amount of fodder and can be sent to Afar for food when there is drought.

Other respondents noted that there are more community members interested by and buying 'modern' fodder such as *Fagulo* and *Frushka*, also introduced by the agriculture office, as they are known to be making livestock grow and be ready for market faster. However, the price of these types of fodder is an issue for most people (rich people may afford to buy them, poorer people may have to feed cactus leaves to their cattle).

Cactus was introduced as animal fodder after the Millennium drought; the fruit used to be consumed as food, but government officials started promoting the use of the leaves after roasting them to burn the thorns, as fodder. Almost all landed households have cactus trees in their homestead. It has also become a source of income for those who have a lot of cactus trees and not many livestock heads. One respondent mentioned the case of a man who sold cactus leaves and got 2,000 *Birr* from that sale.

That access to fodder is an issue is further illustrated by cases such as a middle wealth woman head of a farming household and who used to be model farmer, keeping her straw in her living room, otherwise nicely arranged and orderly (see picture below); or another woman who explained that she 'bought' grazing land from a household not needing it, paying 1,500 *Birr* for one year's user rights, and who during the drought *got* fodder from relatives living in a less drought-affected part of the *kebele*. As noted earlier, fodder aid was provided during the worst of the drought in 2015/16 but many respondents mentioned that whilst useful this was not sufficient, and our interviews include cases of households who sold some of their cattle to be able to continue to feed the others.



Model farmer keeping her straw in her living room

Market and sale strategies – Fattening is picking up more than dairy production in Harresaw. However, this is still mostly on a small scale, i.e. individual farmers selling one or two cattle at a time on the local markets; and according to knowledgeable respondents, the demand is higher than the supply. One of the challenges faced by people is that whilst the selling price of livestock is steadily increasing, so does the price of fodder. This is true for local fodder, with straw, grass, grassland and cactus leaves now being sold or exchanges; and fodder bought on the market such as *fagulo*. There are also people who reportedly, do not want to feed industrial fodder and especially, *fagulo*, to their cattle (or sheep) because they 'bloat' the animals. They make them ready for the market very fast, but the meat is less tasty than that of livestock fed with straw, grass and *atella* (residue of brewing *tella*). These people also say that oxen fed with *fagulo* will be lazy for the ploughing.

The main livestock market for people in Harresaw is Dera, for both fattened and non-fattened animals. That is where most community members take their cattle for sale on an individual basis. But there are a few traders in the community, who buy cattle from others and sell in Atsbi. These are very few though. Generally the price of cattle, both fattened and non-fattened, has increased since five years ago. There is seasonality in that, oxen are expensive during the farming season, and cows are cheaper in December/January. Holidays also influence market prices.

As said earlier, milk is no longer given 'for free'. Some of the milk produced in Harresaw is sold. The most notable cases are a young man who involved in hybrid cow-rearing as an early adopter and is now selling milk 10 *Birr*/litre in the community; and a woman who has hybrid cows and a certificate of competence, and she sells her production on the market in Dera and Atsbi. They also sell milk to cafés in Dera and Atsbi, but there is no one who sells big amounts of milk or who sells milk to dairy processing enterprises. One reason is the lack of easy road access to and in Harresaw, making it difficult to rapidly transport the fresh milk to towns or places where it could be processed.

Most of the milk produced locally is processed into butter, for which there is a much higher demand. And most of the butter produced in Harresaw is sold, with a higher proportion of it sold outside of the community. Generally, people's production is constrained by difficulties in accessing fodder so that a smaller amount of butter is produced than in the past, according to some respondents. But as the price has increased much, it is still an attractive activity and more people are involved in it than

in the past. The price of both milk and butter has increased compared to five years ago. Both are cheaper in August to September because the production is higher in that rainy period, and more expensive especially from January onwards because of the dry weather.

People processing butter from their milk sell it to customers in the community and in Dera and Atsbi markets. There are also people in town who collect butter from farmers and sell it themselves; and traders who sell it in Adigrat, Freweyni and Mekelle markets. Some butter is sent and sold in Afar to people who order butter from there.

One of the reasons for the continued preference for local breed, according to some, is that local cows are said to give less milk but more butter from the milk, and this butter tastes better. One woman also mentioned that some of the traders check the quality of the butter before buying it, exposing a small quantity of it to the sun to check that it was not mixed with other things such as edible oil.

Sheep and goat and sheep and goat products

Shoat mix - There are many more sheep than goats in the community, all of them local breed.

Production inputs and risks - Similar challenges face people who keep sheep as for cattle i.e. access to sufficient fodder. Sheep need a lot of fodder, straw production is insufficient and most people give preference to their cattle, and buying fodder is expensive. One new trend is to grow acacia as fodder for shoat. It is drought resistant and it grows new leaves rapidly after being eaten, and it is also good for bees. Some community members have started selling acacia as fodder.

In addition to these challenges, many respondents indicated that sheep are the livestock most easily affected by drought and disease, so that the number of sheep in the community has decreased over time. Our interviews include several cases of people who either lost sheep to drought or disease, or sold a number/most of their sheep during the drought and since then keep fewer of them.

As for goats the issue is that they feed mainly from bushes and by moving here and there to find them; however, with the drought and the stricter policy of forest protection, the area suitable to feed them has become much smaller. Goats are more suitable only in Harresaw *kushet* as the other *kushets* are highland with no bushes. But even in Harresaw *kushet* the goats have to be sent to feed far away, towards the border and within Afar, on a daily basis. People also send them for a few weeks during the *kremt*. The other issue with goats is diseases: a skin disease which frequently affects them, and a disease called 'zar' (bad spirit) which makes them crazy and they die after suffering a lot for no visible reason.

Market and sale strategies - Involving in sheep and goat production is done mainly for the meat – selling the animals or slaughtering them for the household at holidays. Shoat milk is not sold in the community. There is no wool production from the sheep. Butter from sheep and goat is sold in Dera and Atsbi markets, but butter from goats especially is also much liked in the community (as food). People sell shoat skins as well but unlike all other livestock and livestock product prices, the selling price of skins has drastically decreased. A sheep skin which used to be sold for 80-120 *Birr* a few years ago is now sold 30 *Birr* and it went as low as 15 *Birr* one year before the fieldwork, reportedly. Goat skins are also sold very cheap, at 25 *Birr*. And a cattle skin fetches no more than 40-60 *Birr*.

In contrast, the price of sheep and goat has increased compared to five years ago, as for cattle. So for sheep for instance, the following are current average prices:

- Fattened female sheep 2,000 *Birr*
- Non-fattened female 700 *Birr*
- *Magula* (very big male sheep) 2,700 *Birr*
- *Kafila* (young male sheep) 1,200 *Birr*.

Sheep (fattened and non-fattened) and goats are sold mainly by community members themselves in Dera market, to consumers and traders. There are no sheep and goat trader in Harresaw, but there are traders from Dera who buy sheep from farmers in the community and sell them in Atsbi, Wukro, Adigrat as well as Mekelle, because sheep from this *wereda* are in high demand in the Region, especially for holidays. The selling price of sheep is high around the holidays, especially Easter and New Year. It decreases during the rainy season and especially July, because at that time of the year sheep cannot be fattened as it is too cold for them. The price of goats fluctuates in the same way.

There is the same suspicion about 'modern fodder' bloating sheep and the meat being less tasty as for the cattle. Reportedly, people also are not interested in 'fattening vaccination' for the same reason i.e. they believe that the meat will lose its taste.

Chicken and chicken products

Chicken mix and access to breed – Most respondents talking about livestock mentioned poultry. They noted a definite trend towards keeping *ferenj* or hybrid rather than local chicken; almost all farmers keep some chicken, and it is a particularly well-suited activity for women, landless and poor people, and young people. When comparing local and *ferenj* or hybrid chicken, reportedly the latter are more beneficial, laying more eggs and producing more meat, but they need more food (and also, not any type of food, see below), and are said to be more vulnerable to diseases. However, most respondents highlighted that the benefits outweighed the disadvantages and risks, which explained the trend away from local chicken.

Importantly, there is easy access to hybrid chicken. One respondent mentioned that some people produce hybrid chicken themselves with hybrid hens and local cocks, but most people seem to buy hybrids from nearby providers. There are private providers i.e. young people in Dera, Atsbi and Ruba Feleg, involved in incubating young chicks and bringing them by lorry or *gari* and selling them to farmers at fair prices. One of them in particular, a formerly government agricultural worker, comes from Dera to Harresaw on important meeting days to sell his chicken and regularly, the demand exceeds the supply and he is asked to come back on the next day.

There are also a few young people who are involved in incubating locally though little detail was provided such as how many of them. One respondent said that the tailor, installed in the *kebele* centre, is one of them and he recently bought 300 chicks and sold them to farmers once they were a bit grown.

Production inputs and risks – Among the reasons why many people involve in this activity, respondents mentioned good access to hybrid chicken, access to useful advice by the DAs and to the vet service in Dera, and the fact that it does not require much land and can be started with little capital, unlike livestock fattening or dairy production. It can therefore be undertaken by landless people. Some even suggested that one of the reasons why there were fewer poor and very poor people in the community was because almost all of them could involve in keeping chicken and selling some eggs, and they could also benefit from selling eggs or the chicken for meat more rapidly than with fattening.

So, with high and increasing demand locally and on neighbouring markets, there are now many landless young people and women involved in this activity. One group of 12 young people recently submitted a request to the *wereda* to establish themselves as an association involved in poultry, and they are in the process of establishing themselves legally. They were trained by the *kebele* livestock DA and may not ask for a loan as members would contribute to the small starting capital needed. However, one woman said, it is not possible to keep chickens in a rented house so, one needs to have one's own premises.

Among the challenges and risks, some respondents mentioned that the hybrid chickens available nowadays are less profitable than those that used to be supplied by the *wereda* agricultural office, which grew and were ready for the market (for meat) in a shorter period of time. There is also the

issue that hybrid chickens and hens reportedly need more and better food. One woman explained that to lay many eggs hybrid hens should not be fed injera and flour but need grain, which must be bought in Dera. Diseases are also a risk. Chickens need to be well taken care of, fed and given water on time, their hut regularly cleaned, and they need to be let out from the hut at sunrise and brought back in their hut to guard against predators. Especially, good hygiene is important but even so, mass death may occur. Some respondents noted that medicines against the diseases are not as effective as they should be. Others, that chickens are more prone to diseases in the urban part of the *kebele*. One woman explained she had lost all her hybrid chicken but it was out of her own negligence as she had delayed going to the vet.

Market and sale strategies - Poultry production with hybrid chicken breed, for eggs and/or meat, was therefore considered by most respondents as a promising activity, with high demand in and outside of the community in addition to the comparatively easier access and lesser challenges. Some people highlighted that there is high demand even in the fasting season whereas others noted that there was seasonality in demand and price.

With regard to eggs, the price of an egg on average was 2.5-3 *Birr*, in the community. Local demand is high, especially in the urban part of the *kebele*, as people in the community have started eating eggs too. The price is the same for local and '*ferenj*' eggs, as local eggs are smaller but said to be more tasty; whereas owners of snack bars tend to prefer the *ferenj* eggs as they are bigger. However, most of the eggs produced in Harresaw (an estimate of 85% of the production according to one respondent) are sold outside the community, and this is said to be more advantageous too. One woman, who had recently bought seven hybrid chickens at once and already had laying hens, said the local snack bar owners had asked her to sell her eggs but she had refused as she could have a better price for them in Dera. In the same way, a few young boys who had started selling hard boiled eggs on the streets in the centre of the *kebele* as a new activity, said that there was good demand but their main challenge was to find farmers who would sell them eggs at a fair price.

So, most eggs are sold in Dera and Atsbi by the producers themselves. There are also traders in Dera who collect eggs from farmers in the community to sell them in bigger markets like Adigrat and Mekelle. Some of the buyers, both traders and local consumers, try to check the quality of the eggs by looking at them in the sun. Chicken meat is also in high demand, especially for holidays but there is good demand constantly as well. One respondent with ten hybrid and five local chicken sold eggs for 1,000 *Birr* in the last year. Another who at the time of fieldwork said he had 25 hybrid chicken, said that last year, he made 6,000 *Birr* profit buying young chicken and selling them for meat when they were bigger. A middle-wealth farmer said he had been involved in poultry since two years, buying and selling a hundred chicken for meat twice a year.

Beekeeping and honey production

Types of beehives - Modern beehives were introduced in the community more than ten years ago. The first farmers to adopt them were those old farmers involved in traditional beekeeping and especially, those living in Harresaw *kushet* as this is near a wide forested area with good access to food for the bees. This was promising for a few years and some of the early adopters have had up to 50-60 modern beehives. However, the recurrent drought affecting the area in the past five years had drastically negative effects on this activity. In the harsh weather conditions of the past few years, bees could hardly survive and unlike other livestock, as one respondent explained they cannot be tied to stay when there is no food. From a technology point of view this led many farmers to revert to traditional beehives, as bees can at least feed from the dung that the hives are made of (which they cannot do with the modern beehives in wood).

Access to beehives and bees – Those who have modern beehives bought them cash from the *wereda* agriculture office. Bees are bought from farmers, sometimes with the hive. Queen bees are never sold separately, but a farmer who bought a swarm and is not sure there is a queen bee can try to get a queen bee from another farmer who has a hive where there is more than one queen bee.

Production inputs and risks – Apart from the hives, keeping bees require skilled labour by “*wise and responsible people*”; and fodder for the bees. This has been a major issue in the past few years of recurrent drought in the community. Even though more acacia trees are grown, and also eucalyptus as said earlier, there is not enough quality fodder for the bees. Many farmers saw their bees flee away. Some are feeding them sugar and shiro flour, spending money on this just to keep their bees alive, without expecting any production. So, because of the drought the number of farmers keeping bees and the number of modern beehives have both decreased. Production has also decreased.

For instance, the only two investors in Harresaw are two brothers, who were born in Harresaw but are resident in Dera where they have shops, and who *got* a 15-year license for 10 hectares of land for beekeeping in Harresaw. They *got* the land one year ago, built a warehouse, fence and water reservoir, giving jobs to five people who worked as construction daily labourers; and they placed 45 modern beehives (with bees) on the land and employ one permanent beekeeper who is paid 2,000 *Birr*/month. But they have yet to start producing because of the drought.

Honey is produced in two ways as well, traditionally and in a modern way. In the modern way there is a wooden instrument that is put inside then taken out of the hive to collect the honey, and which easily transforms the honey bread into liquid. In the traditional way, the farmer who wants to collect honey will first fumigate the hive with special leaves that make the bees flee away so they do not come and sink and die in the liquid honey. Then, after washing his hand the farmer takes the honey bread and bakes it in his hands to transform it into liquid. One disadvantage of the modern beehives according to some respondents, is that it is not possible to extract honey regularly when one needs an income, unlike with the traditional hives.

Different types of honey are produced in the community: whole white, middle white, whole red/brown, middle red/brown, and black honey which is used as medicine. Honey is mainly produced in October-November after the *kremt* season. However, if the rains are good it can also be produced in May-June.

Market and sale strategies - The reason why farmers try to stick at beekeeping is that although production is small because of the drought, demand is high and the price has shot up in the course of the last few years. A kg of white honey which was sold 120 *Birr* five years ago is now sold 300 *Birr*, and a kg of red honey is sold 210 *Birr*. Little honey is sold in the community. At some point there was a woman producing tej and she was buying honey from farmers, but she stopped soon after starting. People usually prepare tej themselves for special occasions and those who do not have hives buy honey from others. Most of the honey produced locally is sold outside. Some farmers sell their honey in Dera or Atsbi; others with a bigger quantity sell it in Mekelle. There is also a trader in the community, who collects honey from the farmers and sells it in Mekelle.

For some of the respondents, beekeeping is no longer profitable. A middle-wealth farmer explained that he had started to use modern beehives but his bee colonies escaped because of the drought and also the cold and the frost. So he now has three traditional beehives and last year, *got* an income of approximately 1,000 *Birr* from selling honey, which is lower than he used to get. He used to be able to produce twice a year but last produced only once. One rich farmer did a bit better. He has 5 traditional beehives and last year made an income of 6,000 *Birr*, but for him too this was a decrease compared to some years ago.

One youth group has registered to invest in beekeeping and honey production. They *got* land, were trained by an NGO called CCA, but are yet to get the loan they need to get the beehives.

Agricultural modernisation

Overall, crop growing in Harresaw has not modernised much. Lack of rain and of reliable access to water for irrigation are the major reasons for this. Even DAs seem to implicitly recognise this as many respondents said they are no longer as active as before, except when it comes to ensuring that

farmers buy their quota of fertiliser no matter what. The picture is perhaps a little better in the livestock sector compared to the crop sector.

With regard to how innovations are introduced, this usually comes from the *wereda* through the *kebele* agricultural office (the DAs). The FTC is used for demonstrations (especially for crop technologies) though this is not always successful precisely due to the same reasons as those affecting the farmers. *Kebele* officials are usually among the first ones to adopt the new technology (e.g. new improved seeds), and model farmers or strong farmers may then follow them. Farmers also look on their neighbours and if they see others being successful in an activity may adopt it. But the highly unpredictable rainfall pattern makes any such investment risky.

According to most respondents, these risks and actual instances of losses are preventing most farmers from adopting modern practices; as some of them highlight, the adopters get the most harmed when the weather is poor, which has regularly been the case in the past few years. As a consequence, in view of the little return born by all these repeated efforts to modernise agriculture, there are a number of community respondents who challenged the wisdom of this continued focus in the case of Harresaw.

Various unsuccessful attempts

The following agriculture modernisation attempts were mentioned as well as the reasons why they had not led anywhere:

- Tractor ploughing – See above.
- Earlier on a new type of plough was introduced, but it was used only at the FTC as demonstration and no one adopted it (no specific reason was given).
- Seedlings of carrot, cabbage and *kale* (a local cabbage variety) were introduced by the FTC in the past and were used by those practising irrigation, but with irrigation at a standstill, these seedlings are no longer brought by the *kebele* agriculture office.
- Techniques such as gravity-fed irrigation, drip irrigation and motor pumps used to be practised in the community – albeit only by a few individuals. This has now all stopped.
- Sowing in line was also introduced some three-four years ago, and a few respondents mentioned having tried it. But it needs a lot of manpower, is time consuming, and is not productive in case of water shortage, so that those who tried basically wasted time or money as there was drought. Other respondents explained that farmers consider that sowing in line does not use their land fully and this is a waste.

Crop interventions - Fertiliser, improved seeds, pesticide

The use of **fertiliser** has continued to be a bone of contention. Its price has continuously increased (and credit is no longer available to get it). One knowledgeable respondent said that the price almost doubled over the past three years, from 700 to 1,300 *Birr*/quintal. Community respondents highlighted various ways in which DAs and *kebele* officials exerted pressure onto farmers for them to buy fertiliser, and whilst *wereda* officials explained that this is no longer allowed to happen, it is unclear whether these practices have really all stopped (see [p.82](#)). Cases in which such practices were still used quite recently include a man working as a guard, fired after he refused to buy his share; a woman head of household who stopped buying fertiliser a few years ago considering the poor rainfall pattern, and who was removed from the PSNP quota without explanation; as well as the instruction given to the irrigation user committee to refuse their water turn to members if they did buy fertiliser. One of the male farmers talking about influential people in the community identified the *kebele* officials as most influential, linking this to their decision of not distributing food aid in the 2007EC drought if the community refused to take fertiliser.

Improved seeds were recently introduced for wheat and barley, but the information on uptake and usefulness is quite confusing as different respondents said very different things. Costs have also

doubled over the past three years. *Wereda* officials explained that several types of drought-resistant seeds were introduced in the *wereda* after the 2015/16 drought, including both, local improved barley seeds (called *gunaza*, *reu* or *riea*, and *atena*) which bear more grain rows, have a shorter maturing period (120 days instead of 160 days), and are frost-resistant; and hybrid barley seeds called *fetina* and *hiriti*, which have the shortest maturing period (90 days), bear even more grain rows, and are not easily affected by crop diseases. One official explained that when farmers have already sowed and rain is late, they are made to sow again immediately after the first (delayed) rain, using these seeds. However, whilst this was successful in some *kebeles*, in Harresaw shortage of rain, frost and a disease called *rust* affected the barley.

In Harresaw, some respondents noted that the improved seeds of wheat and barley that were introduced gave almost twice as much production as the local seeds; and the wife of a rich farmer said that her household used drought-resistant seeds brought by the cooperative union after the drought and they had better production. However, most respondents mentioned that these seeds need good rainfall (and indeed, the rain pattern was better in 2016/17 – i.e. the year in which the woman said her household used the seeds), and/or were not available on time. Some of them said the seeds came after most farmers had already sown their farm. If, as explained by *wereda* officials, the idea was that farmers should use these new seeds to replace those previously sown and that would not grow well because the rain was late, this was not well understood.

The high price of seeds was also an issue as like for fertiliser, farmers have to buy them cash. Several respondents mentioned having to use the cash received as payment for PSNP to buy fertiliser or improved seeds. Some limited effort was made to take local conditions and especially, the effect of the drought, into account. In this respect, but as a one-off, the *wereda* provided 25kg of improved wheat seeds and 25kg of improved barley seeds for free to female-headed households, for the season following the 2015/16 drought. One of the respondents noted that she had better production that year, although as noted earlier better rainfall in 2016/17 must have helped too.

There is seldom mention of **pesticide** in the interviews, and only in relation to beans. In 2012 the DAs strongly pushed farmers to grow beans on irrigable land, given their higher market value, although farmers were resisting because of their susceptibility to frost, very frequent in the area. *Wereda* officials mentioned that since then, new local and hybrid seeds of beans and small beans were introduced at *wereda* level. But they indeed recognised that in Harresaw frost was a problem. In addition, production was affected by bean diseases called ‘chocolate spot’ and ‘root rot’. Some respondents in Harresaw mentioned having tried beans last year but they were attacked by a disease. A pesticide was available, but it was only provided for groups of seven or eight farmers and as they could not access it individually the crops were wasted.

Effects of the drought on crop growing

All respondents agreed that the worst drought in the past decade was the Millennium drought (2000 EC, 2007/8 GC), with no production at all. The drought of 2015/16 (GC) was as bad in that there was also no production at all, not even of straw for the livestock; but a big difference was that the following year (2016/17) was better and there was some production, whereas the Millennium drought lasted two consecutive main rain seasons. However, after this one year of better production the last season at the time of the fieldwork (2017/18) had again been very poor. The main difference with 2015/16 was that there was some straw production, and a few farmers with more fertile land had managed to have some production. However, and in contrast with 2015/16, the PSNP support was extremely late and there was no emergency food aid.

The first and most major effect of what people in Harresaw called the ‘recurrent drought’ is of course the disappearance of irrigated crop growing, except on a very small scale by people watering a few vegetables from communal or private water points when they have not dried up.

Examples of effects of drought on crop production were given in many of our interviews. A group of knowledgeable men explained that in a good year, like for instance in 2005EC (2012/13), most of the (landed) households had yields that could feed them for 9 months on average; whereas at the time of the 2007EC drought the average production was not even sufficient to feed them for one month. For most farmers poor production meant they had to buy more staple food for their household whilst at the same time, they could not take out of their own production to cover these expenses, and the selling prices of livestock had plunged (see below). For households with more fertile and enough land and who usually produce a small surplus, this can be more than halved from a good to a poor year.

Modernisation of livestock production

None of the initiatives with regard to modernisation of livestock production in Harresaw were new and most had been introduced ten or more years ago, but several of them had become more widely adopted in the past few years. These included a slow shift towards **hybrid cattle**; the use of '**industrial**' fodder such as *fagulo* and *frushka* for cattle and sheep; and a shift towards **hybrid chicken** for reportedly the large majority of the many people involved in poultry.

However, these more modern practices continued to coexist with traditional ones – for instance, most cattle were still by far local ones. Other practices, new yet not really 'modern', had emerged as coping strategies, such as the use of cactus and acacia as alternative fodder for cattle and shoats respectively. Moreover, all products such as butter, were still manually processed. With regard to beekeeping many farmers were said to have reverted to traditional beehives, storing their modern beehives in a corner of their homestead.

With regard to fodder, the practice of cut-and-carry seemed to have been relatively well accepted, whereas it was still controversial in 2012. It is noteworthy that with the growing importance of livestock, the high cost of industrial fodder, and the reduced production of grass and straw due to drought, all local types of fodder are now monetised, including cactus leaves and acacia branches and leaves.

With regard to adopting hybrid/improved breeds (of cattle and chicken) this continued to be discussed in terms of advantages and disadvantages, the latter including higher costs and production costs, but also market-related considerations such as the taste of meat or eggs.

Research Officers and several respondents noted that community members seemed to shift and increasingly focus on livestock production rather than on crop growing – involving especially in cattle or shoat fattening for the market and poultry production as income-generating activities, as opposed to merely keeping animals for sale in case of emergency and/or for household's consumption. Honey production was on the decline, but it had always been done mainly for the market and this was still the case for those who had not given up.

At individual level none of these activities were undertaken on a large or even medium-scale. The only 'aggregation' was done by local traders (a few from Harresaw for e.g. honey and cattle, and most from Dera or Atsbi) collecting the produce of farmers to sell it on a larger scale. It is difficult to estimate the proportion of produces aggregated in this way, but it likely that most of the livestock and livestock products were still sold by the producers directly to individual customers (including hospitality businesses and private customers in Harresaw and local markets such as Dera and Atsbi).

The effects of drought on livestock production

Wereda officials explained that at *wereda* level, the livestock programme responded to the 2015/16 drought by encouraging community members to minimize their local cattle and buy hybrid and better breed of cattle. Also, fodder for cattle was provided as assistance, alongside food for people and water for both people and livestock. One respondent also mentioned that the government is

trying to protect honey production by providing sugar to those keeping bees as a priority, as they have to feed them water with sugar (or *shiro* flour) to avoid that the bees flee away.

The provision of fodder aid was appreciated but in general, did not prevent many households from selling livestock, as many examples illustrate in our interviews. Sheep were the first ones to be sold as they are said to be more vulnerable to drought, and because people who had other livestock were generally giving priority to cattle and especially, to oxen. For instance, one woman explained that her household had to sell five sheep and a cow and her calf, in order to buy fodder for their oxen and also food for the household. Whereas the wife of a rich farmer said they had to sell an oxen and a donkey in addition to three of their sheep.

Here is what one woman, middle-wealth farmer and head of household, explained:

“She coped (with the drought) by selling a cow and donkey and using some savings to buy food for the household and fodder for the rest of the cattle. She sold the donkey for 1,100 Birr, and the cow for 4,300 Birr, and withdrew 400 Birr from her savings. She bought food, fodder, and also grazing land from a household who did not own livestock at the time, paying 1,500 Birr to use it for one year.”

She has continued to involve in cattle rearing, and has one hybrid cow, but she is not keeping as many of her offspring as she used to do five years ago i.e. she is selling more of them, because of the continued issue of access to fodder. The issue of access to fodder is also illustrated in this other example, of the young man who among other activities has two hybrid cows and sells milk on a regular basis in the *kebele* as well as with a monthly contract with some businesses in Dera. He explained that:

“Due to the successive drought that hit the kebele, it is hard to get animal fodder, and the livestock are starting to lose weight. I worry that my income from milk and milk products might decrease because unless the cows get enough food they cannot give enough milk. At the same time, I have to buy grain to feed my household and when the price of crops increases, he faces extra costs and a reduced income...”

Returning to the peak of the drought, in aggregate, farmers' coping strategies prompted a collapse of livestock market value. As seen above sale prices have rebounded, but the loss of income continues to be felt especially by the more vulnerable households.

In spite of this, there seems to be a consensus about the fact that diversifying in livestock production activities for the market is a sensible option; and even a few people saying that this has contributed to make the community richer than two or three years ago, although they seem to be a minority.

Crop and livestock clusters

Wereda officials mentioned a plan to develop production clusters for crop, permanent trees and livestock, and that this had started being implemented with regard to crop last year. As for livestock, training was given to *kebele* experts and the *kebele* leadership, but implementation has not yet started. The purpose is to increase productivity through focusing on specific products in areas with specific potential for these. Clusters were identified based on each *kebele's* resources and the products' potential. At *wereda* level three crop clusters (barley, wheat and pulses) and four livestock clusters were identified (honey, meat, dairy and chicken).

Harresaw has been grouped into the barley cluster (around Dera). *Wereda* officials said this followed from barley being found to be the most common crop grown for cash and at the same time the main staple food in the community. It has good market value and value could be added by selling it as *kollo*. The *wereda* is also planning to attempt to introduce malt production for beer, in the barley cluster. Several respondents from Harresaw mentioned a shift from wheat to barley in the advice they get from DAs, and this and the introduction of improved barley seeds might be part of the clustering strategy, even though most community members have no awareness about it.

With regard to livestock, Harresaw is due to be part of the meat cluster also around Dera, focusing on cattle and shoat fattening and especially, in the case of Harresaw, on shoat fattening. In addition, all *kebeles* of the *wereda* including Harresaw will be part of the chicken cluster. *Kebele* leaders in Harresaw confirmed they had been told about the plan.

Modernisation changes taken together

A small group of respondents knowledgeable with regard to farming in the community noted that generally, the agricultural changes promoted by the government would be beneficial if there was no drought. However, the recurrent drought and ensuing shortage of water hence the disappearance of irrigated crop growing, are major challenges. All the promoted activities require water, be it for crop growing or livestock production and the necessary access to fodder. Moreover, all these activities also require access to some land, so that they are not accessible to landless people and especially, young people who are mostly landless.

In turn, this prompts another major challenge namely, the attitude of the youth. In these respondents' opinion, most young men and women of Harresaw are not interested in staying and working in the community, "*they just dream about Saudi*" and in doing so, "*they underestimate (give low value to) the jobs that are available in the community*". At the same time, those respondents also highlighted that "*the government should bring changes which are relevant to the community*" – that is, promoting and supporting activities that take into consideration the recurrent drought and lack of water on one hand, and young people's landlessness on the other hand; with more focus on irrigation, and on non-farming activities that do not require land.

In addition to the specific issue in relation to agricultural modernization and young people, the respondents also emphasized that the changes promoted are mostly beneficial for people who have enough capital and are made aware of opportunities early – that is, *kebele* officials, model farmers as well as traders with some capital. In contrast, women are benefitting least from agricultural modernization because they are less involved hence less aware, and more often lack capital.

Overall, in their opinion non-farming activities should be promoted much more, and there should be mechanisms for those who do not have capital to be able to start involving in these.

Diversification

Diversification is nascent in Harresaw. It was more visible in 2018 than in 2012 with, among other, more small businesses of various kinds in the *kebele* centre, but it seemed to be in large part driven by landlessness. Knowledgeable respondents talking about farming estimated that three quarter of the landed households still depended exclusively on farming. The Research Officers confirmed that in spite of the recurrent drought, having or getting access to farmland is still the most important thing in the community, and most people's mindset is still oriented towards farming.

However, some of the shifts mentioned above are a form of diversification. This includes the trend of growing more eucalyptus; the shift to increasingly involve in market-oriented livestock production activities even on a small-scale, and the associated increased monetisation of locally produced fodder. Moreover, besides the fact that most farmers are selling some of their farm products for subsistence, one respondent estimated that about 10% of the community are involved in trading of agricultural products beyond their own production, to generate an income. These are usually the richer farming households and so, not all of the diversification is driven by necessity.

However, at the other end of the range compared to these richer farmers, are the people who engage in daily labour (locally and outside of the community and especially in Afar), petty trade and other petty services because they are landless or because they need an income to supplement their farm production insufficient to feed the household. There are landless people who one way or another have succeeded in non-farm businesses to a level beyond subsistence and have in fact expanded their portfolio over the years, but they still are few.

Migration abroad is both, considered as diversification driven by the lack of local options, including in farming, and considered as a potential stepping stone towards other forms of diversification. Many households or individuals invest the high amount of money which has become necessary to travel to Saudi, hoping that this will bring the capital needed to diversify meaning, complement their farming, or leave it altogether, or start something else if they have no land. A few households/ individuals manage to save substantial capital; remains to be seen whether it will be invested locally and in what proportion if so. For many others (and most respondent said these are the majority), migration abroad brings nothing else than impoverishment, or stagnation at best. This is described and discussed in more detail in the *Migration* chapter, below.

One more form of diversification is about renting a house or a room.

Individual cases of diversification are widely diverse, ranging from those for whom this is an opportunity to do better to those for whom it is an absolute necessity, as illustrated in *Box 13 Examples of diversification* below.

Box 13. Examples of diversification

Successful diversification

One 35-old young man, landless but renting-in 1.2ha land, is also involved in crop trading which in the past one year was his major income source. He started the crop trading with his own capital which he earned from shop keeping and he has a license. He is the largest crop trader of Harresaw. He has his own warehouse. He is also involved in distributing beer to drink houses in the *kebele*, he has a billiard for entertainment, and he is fattening oxen.

An elderly farmer from a most influential family, with more than ten *timad* of land, is also involved in cattle and sheep fattening. He inherited houses in Atsbi and Dera which he passed to his children. His children are established in different business activities, including trading, sheep fattening and sale, and a grinding mill. All contribute to the wealth of the extended family.

One rich farmer with 1 ha of land and another ¼ ha sharecropped-in has two houses in Dera and one in the *kebele* centre, and beehives. His main income is from farming but he gets 900 *Birr*/month from renting the houses, and last year he sold for 6,000 *Birr* of honey. He has three children in Saudi and they send remittances that help for clothing, holidays and various other expenses, but they mainly save at the bank. The older son saved 700,000 *Birr* over four years, his daughter saved 200,000 *Birr* over three years. The third travelled recently and has not yet started saving.

Cases in between

A group of respondents from Harresaw *kushet* explained that many of the houses built in the *kebele* centre were built with migration money and are rented out to people living or running businesses in them, whereas the owners continue to live on their farm. The successful young man running the largest snack bar and the largest shop of the *kebele* centre as well as a bakery is renting his work and living premises in this way.

The second largest shop in the *kebele* centre is run by a couple. The wife has land inherited from her grand-mother and generally farming is still the largest part of their income. They too rent the house in which they live and have the shop, for 500 *Birr*/month.

At the very low price end of the range, a destitute woman, living of charity and petty trade, PSNP beneficiary but not included in CBHI non-paying members, with two children and a daughter who died recently as she could not take her to health institutions, and with a relation with a man who has another legal wife, from whom she is pregnant, lives in the centre of the *kebele* in a rented room for which she pays 50 *Birr* per month. She considers it as a big support that she pays her rent only when she has some money.

Diversification is one of the topics that came into the discussion when people were talking about inequality. Many respondents, often among the poorer, highlighted that one reason why rich people were rich (and some thought that they had become richer) was their ability to diversify, meaning,

diversifying away from crop growing – which could include profitable livestock production activities, trade and businesses, as well as the ability of sending one's children abroad. This ability came from the fact that in good seasons they had better production. This is a major difference with the poorer people unable to access the capital needed to diversify/undertake an activity beyond hand-to-mouth ones like daily labour.

For other respondents, diversification was important for poor people too. They highlighted that as poor people engage (more than in the past) in daily labour, petty trade, small scale poultry production etc. this, alongside government support, means that there are fewer of them, and/or that they have become less poor than five-eight years before. So, whilst agreeing that poor people could engage only in hand-to-mouth activities, those respondents saw a positive side in that these activities were available and undertaken.

More details on these activities and their importance in the local economy are found in the *Non-farming* chapter of this report. Further discussion of inequality trends in Harresaw including in relation to diversification is found in the *Economic and political inequality* chapter.

Credit and other sources of resources

As such, the 'package loans' for fertiliser and livestock that used to be available through the *wereda* agriculture office are no longer in existence. Individuals have to buy cash any input for crop farming, supplied through the multiservice cooperative of the *kebele*, as well as any livestock and livestock production inputs. Loans to get cash are in principle available from Dedebit, but in practice there are many restrictions.

First, even though as a *kebele* Harresaw has a relatively good loan repayment record (with a debt of only 700,000 *Birr* vs 5.2 million for some other *kebeles* in the *wereda*), at *wereda* level repayment is poor and this affects all *kebeles*. *Second*, loans to individuals are very hard to get. Most loans are given to groups, which people do not want. *Third*, the process of getting a loan is cumbersome and long, and subject to approval by the *kebele* officials. Several respondents said that people with influence, such as rich people because they are believed to be able to repay without problem, and/or with blood or marriage relationship or another form of connection with *kebele* officials are given loans more easily than others. *Fourth*, several respondents noted the small amounts given as maximum loans (higher amounts were lent in the past, but this had recently been reduced to 15,000 *Birr* for an individual and 30,000 *Birr* for a group). *Fifth*, high interest rates (18%) and other difficult preconditions and repayment conditions make it inaccessible for most people.

There are individuals getting loans from Dedebit on an individual basis and managing to repay, but it cannot work for anyone. For instance, some respondents explained, it is "ok" to get a 30,000 *Birr* loan to engage in cattle fattening; as long as the livestock multiplies, it is possible to repay within three years as is supposed to be the case. But generally, the tight repayment schedule and high interest rate are a big issue, for investment in farming and anything else as well. Also see the *Non-farming* chapter of this report.

Loans are also available from the community savings and credit association that was established in 2008 (GC) and was still finding its feet in 2012 at the time of the WIDE3 fieldwork. The RUSACCO has now 540 members (membership is on an individual basis) including 350 women. Joining as a new member costs 27 *Birr*, and monthly savings of 14 *Birr* are mandatory. The RUSACCO is lending to its members with a 12% interest rate. Any borrower has to have two members of the RUSACCO as guarantors and her/his request is screened by the loan committee. The maximum amount of loan is 6,000 *Birr*, to be fully repaid within two years, with the first repayment within six-month.

The association has access to lending capital from the *wereda* level union from which it can borrow at 9% interest rate; it has borrowed 108,000 *Birr* thus far. They received a grant of 96,000 *Birr* from EU-CARE. They are in charge of collecting 120,000 *Birr* worth back from farmers who had taken loans

from the same organisation for goats, and the repaid money will also accrue as capital for the RUSACCO. In 2018 it had 650,000 *Birr* capital, of which 250,000 *Birr* of savings from its members.

Among our interviewee farmers, the middle-wealth woman farmer head of household and ex-model farmer has taken loans repeatedly from the association to support her cattle rearing and fattening activity. She is also saving and has always repaid timely. She found the service useful.

Co-operative farming

Crop co-operatives – rainfed and irrigated

As said earlier, an irrigation water users' association was established in 1986 EC when the dam was built. At the time there was strong support by the government and the community was highly motivated to using irrigation. However nowadays, hopes that irrigation might transform the life of the community have faded away. The association is nonetheless still alive, with 135 members and a five-member management committee selected from the two *kushet* which in principle have access to irrigation from the dam. As long as there was a bit of water the association was managing turns for access to water among its members. Anyone not respecting his turn was fined 50 *Birr* and the issue was seen by the *kebele* social court. The association leader deplored that this was being used as a way of exerting pressure on members to take fertiliser as well, as he was instructed by *kebele* officials to not give water to those who had refused to buy it..

The multiservice cooperative of Harresaw is not involved in farm production and also not in marketing farmers' products. It provides agricultural inputs to farmers and as such, it has a key role in the farming sector, although little information was provided on it. It was established in 1989 EC. There were 500 members back then and now this has increased to 2,050 members. The registration payment is 2 *Birr* and 10 *Birr* for yearly contribution. There is a chairperson, cashier, deputy chairperson, secretary and accountant. The Multipurpose Co-operative paid dividend for its members only once since 2003 EC. (after the last auditing was done). The value is 15 *Birr* per share.

It provides improved seeds and fertilizer. They do have a plan to buy outputs from the farmers. But they did not start doing this so far. The cooperative is a member of the union found in the *wereda*, and the leader of the multiservice cooperative of Harresaw is also the chairperson of the union. In the non-farming sector, it is providing goods at subsidised prices although on an irregular basis (see *Non-farming* chapter).

Livestock co-operatives

There is no livestock cooperative in Harresaw.

Other group farming

The only form of group farming are the youth associations/groups formed relatively recently, of which some are engaged, or are in the process of engaging, in eucalyptus production, beekeeping/honey production, apple production, poultry production, and goat fattening. These are described in more detail in the *Youth livelihood* support interventions section in the 'youth' chapter of this report. None of these 'farming' youth groups has started production, unlike the two quarrying groups also recently established. For most community members as well as *wereda* officials all these (including beekeeping etc.) are considered as 'non-farming' activities as 'farming' appears to be understood as grain/pulse growing. There is no youth group involved in growing grains or pulses or vegetables.

Investor farming

The only form of inward investment in Harresaw is in beekeeping and honey production. The two brothers have each one *timad* of farmland in the *kebele*. The brother who was interviewed used it to grow crop until last year when he planted apple trees. He used to live in the *kebele* and support his family's farming until 1992 EC. Then he took a 1,500 *Birr* loan from Dedebit, moved to Dera and

started a shop as well as crop trading. His brother has a clothes' shop in Dera, where he lives too. They work on their businesses separately except for the beekeeping investment. Their businesses went well and they decided to invest together.

They *got* 10 hectare investment land one year ago, for fifteen years and for beekeeping. As said earlier, they currently have 45 modern beehives but they have not started production yet because of the drought. In the agreement they are expected to expand up to having a thousand beehives on the land. There was some opposition to their being given the land, who was communal land, by three people who used to collect firewood from there. But most of the community did not oppose and they *got* support and permission from region and *wereda* levels. They did not comment on the fact that drought was possibly threatening their whole plan. No one among our interviewees did.

Government and non-government farming interventions

Wereda level

Wereda officials talking about farming interventions mentioned irrigation, somewhat separately the cluster development programme in crop, livestock and permanent trees (giving more detail on the first two) and efforts in introducing improved seeds, and a number of other specific actions or intentions with regard to livestock. Most of these interventions are described above in the *Agricultural modernisation* section. This section provides additional information on other aspects.

In the *wereda* 16 of the 18 rural *kebeles* are said to have access to some form of **irrigation**. Gravity, motor lift and traditional irrigation are all implemented in different places in the *wereda*. *Wereda* officials explained that 1,758 ha of the *wereda* land was identified as suitable for irrigation, although only 824 ha land is irrigated in practice, thus far. In their view, the irrigation potential is important in five *kebeles* which have between 150 and 300 ha of irrigable land. This includes Harresaw with 224 ha of irrigable land in theory, although currently none of this land is irrigated due to drought and lack of water.

With regard to **livestock**, in addition to the planned implementation of the cluster development programme, *wereda* officials explained that the programme emphasised:

- Livestock health protection (vaccination, treatment through pills and chemical washing to protect animals from external parasites)
- Artificial insemination and manmade hybridisation service
- Fodder development activities
- And advice with regard to chicken hybrid and production, cattle and shoat fattening, and dairy production.

The *wereda* government is no longer involved in credit for farming inputs.

Agricultural research institutions

None of our respondents made specific reference to an agricultural research institution with regard to interventions in the farming sector.

Kebele level extension services

Extension services in general

The lead DA mentioned the following areas as those paid special attention in the '*wereda* programme for the *kebele*': modernization of agriculture through using alternative water sources for irrigation (he gave no further detail), advice on beekeeping and fattening, and environmental protection. He said he was trying to also apply 'systematised knowledge management'. This is a new system whereby individual farmers are identified for skills or best practice in a specific area – e.g. in terms of beekeeping or of applying fertiliser – and farmers are made to share their experience among them so that best practice of one can be learned from the other and vice-versa.

In his view, the main issues of concern in the *kebele* were the loss of interest of farmers in taking and using agricultural inputs, especially fertilizer, as well as the reluctance of the community to participate in, and interruptions in soil and water conservation activities. However, he also noted that farmers have a “*positive attitude to all agricultural programmes though there are problems in implementation*”, due to farmers’ lack of financial capacity and fear of indebtedness if there is drought. The recurrent drought is also preventing the DAs from showing the benefits of agricultural inputs to the community through demonstrations. He also highlighted severe budget constraints. He would like the government to provide motorcycles to DAs, as well as sufficient manpower, laptops to make presentations on best practices, and agricultural inputs at lower prices because the community is highly affected by drought.

In relation to crop growing

There appears to be a disconnect between the *wereda* programmes and plans and the reality on the ground, especially pronounced in relation to crop growing in the case of Harresaw. For instance, *wereda* officials noted that as routine practice, they give annual targets to the *kebele* with regard to how much land should be developed with irrigation, and how much fertiliser ‘they’ (i.e. the DAs) should distribute to farmers. Whereas it seems that there may be an implicit understanding that targets with regard to irrigated land are useless and inappropriate in the case of Harresaw, this is not the case with regard to fertiliser, as we have seen in the *Crop interventions - Fertiliser, improved seeds, pesticide* section above.

The DAs in Harresaw, squeezed between these targets and worsening local conditions, are poorly considered in the community. Opinions range from benign ones, noting that DAs give “*routine advice to grow market-oriented crops such as beans, and to use fertiliser, improved seeds, as well as sow on time and in line*”, to more outspoken ones highlighting that whilst using fertilizer during shortage of rainfall is useless for crops, the agriculture workers do not consider this situation. Several respondents noted that the DAs were not active (see above in relation to the dam issue); they did not take responsibility to try and support farmers to increase their productivity, instead “*only focusing on forcing the farmers to demand fertilizer as well as improved seeds.*” “*They are weak at serving the community kindly... They only work to implement programmes stepped down from the wereda without considering the community’s ideas, needs and benefits.*” Several people mentioned that former DAs were giving better advice.

Fertiliser and improved seeds seem to be available exclusively through the *kebele* multiservice cooperative, as was the case in 2012. A few respondents raised issues regarding timeliness of supply e.g. of improved seeds, but generally in relation to input supply the biggest concern of the community is about having to take fertilizer which has been useless for most farmers in at least two out three years in the past few years.

Wereda officials mentioned that apple seedlings were available from youth cooperatives established in neighbouring *kebeles*, though none of the community interviewees mentioned this (perhaps unsurprisingly given the limited uptake of this activity in the *kebele*).

In relation to livestock production

Community members have a somewhat more positive opinion, generally, of the role of DAs and the *wereda* agriculture office in relation to livestock production, including the vet service, than is the case for crop production. As noted above, the government support in relation to poultry is appreciated, although some women noted that this does not go beyond advice and vet services; and a middle-wealth farmer who wanted advice from the livestock DA on how to construct a poultry house did not get a response from her. In relation to cattle, the same farmer highlighted that the current DAs did no longer supply seeds of animal fodder, which the previous DAs used to do. However, seedlings of acacia and ‘*tukur berberie*’, another kind of tree whose small branches and leaves provide good fodder for goats, are available in the nursery in Dera.

The vet service is generally appreciated. There is a vet in Dera (and also in Atsbi) and this is relatively easily accessible. The services mentioned include

- A monthly vaccination service for cattle, sheep and goats as well as service available at all times in Dera
- Medicine for cattle diseases for instance for diarrhoea which emerged three years ago and was cured very quickly
- Similarly, sheep were affected by a disease during the worst of the drought but vaccination was provided by the vet centre to cure them
- 'Fattening medicine' for cattle and sheep though people are not interested by that; and for chicken though apparently only available for groups
- Skin washing chemical available to wash and heal goats' skin as goats are often exposed to a skin disease in Harresaw
- Vaccination and treatment for chicken where there is a disease, although a group of women stated that in the latest occurrence of a chicken disease vets were not willing to come to the community and individuals had to take their chicken to Dera (one woman lost all her chicken as she said she was careless and did not go on time).

The *wereda* agricultural office also provides technical advice on honey production, as well as modern production materials such as wax, modern hives and the manual machine to extract honey from them, all on cash payment. The office also recently brought a machine to produce milk products though no further details were given in any other interview.

In Harresaw, one important actor in the livestock sector is an ex-agricultural worker who has settled in Dera as a supplier of small hybrid chicken, which he produces through incubating very small chicks he buys somewhere else in the *wereda*. *Wereda* officials mentioned youth cooperatives involved in incubating in the *wereda*, but this man appears to be working as an individual private entrepreneur.

Natural Resource Management

The main activities in this respect is the *wereda* programme whereby all able-bodied adult members of the community should take part in the annual voluntary community labour, supplemented by the PSNP Public Works (see details elsewhere in this report). The DA mentions that in addition, recently 658 farmers (including women heads of households) took a training organized by an NGO called CCA (Climate Change Adaptation, or Green Diversity) which focused on the role of the community in the effort to 'green the environment' and especially, on how to prepare seedlings and the benefits of afforestation in resisting/curbing effects of climate change.

The lead DA is the NRM DA. He explained that he enjoys his job for the results they obtained in environmental conservation and rehabilitation, which led to the development of springs for irrigation. He mentioned the Zerehoha watershed which, at a nascent stage of development in 2012, was among the only water points in the *kebele* that did not completely dry up in the 2015/16 drought. The general problems he observed is the attitude of the community in preferring temporary benefits to lasting benefits, prioritizing individual over communal benefits and the disobedience of the community to rules and regulations they agreed upon.

Other government roles in farming

There was a straightforward note by a *wereda* official that as production is very small in Harresaw, no work is done in relation to agricultural marketing. Indeed, support to marketing was not mentioned by anyone in Harresaw, from among community respondents, *kebele* officials and experts.

Several respondents highlighted issues with access to credit for farming, and although in theory the government has a reduced role in loan provision, in practice the *kebele* officials play an important role in agreeing (or not) to write support letters for Dedit and there are issues with this as noted

above. In contrast, the two women who talked about the RUSACCO (respectively, a young woman living in the centre of the *kebele* and running a shop with her husband, whilst also having some farmland; and a middle-age middle-wealth woman farmer head of household) highlighted its usefulness including in terms of comparatively better ‘independence’ of the loan committee, and both seemed to find it useful.

Beneficiaries of government farming interventions

As noted elsewhere, there is a sense that well-connected individuals, model farmers (or ex-model farmers, see below) and *kebele* officials are better informed on government interventions, hence better able to seize opportunities. Women were said to be at a disadvantage. However, being well-connected and close to the *kebele* leadership is also a double-edge sword as the same people are also expected to be “*early adopters*” of the modern practices “*stepped down*” by the *wereda* – including in terms of fertilizer use etc. and they therefore are the most harmed when the intended results do not materialize.

In Harresaw government farming interventions are seen as fairly distinct from government interventions to support youth. Most of these, such as beekeeping/honey production, poultry, fattening, eucalyptus and apple production, are agriculture-related, though in the community and even among officials at *kebele* and *wereda* level these are considered as non-farming interventions. The DAs do not seem to be much involved at all. These youth-focused interventions are discussed elsewhere in this report.

There is little mention of anything specific in relation to women’s farming, except the occasional reference to gardening, and the fact that activities such as poultry production are considered as well-suited to women.

In 2012 and as some respondents mentioned, up to five years ago, there were model farmers selected for their productivity, who were champions of government programmes and sent to training as well as experience sharing. They were demonstrating the possibility of being better-off by using modern agricultural practices. Ex-fighters were often among them, and they were instrumental, for instance, in gradually interesting other community members in hybrid rearing and fattening. As explained by an ex-model, woman farmer head of household, “*they were selected as models in the kebele because of their involvement in farming activities, using all agricultural inputs, increasing their production as well as implementing all interventions in the kebele such as latrine and hand washing usage and keeping livestock to improve their livelihood*”.

These days, all respondents indicated that no such recognition had been awarded recently. Former model farmers may still be known as such and may also have maintained some of the practices for which they were awarded (such as the lady just mentioned, who has still a well-organised house, a functioning latrine and hand-washing station etc.). But some respondents explained that model farmers are no longer so wealthy and influential. Model non-farmers have started to emerge instead, such as business owners and people involved in cattle fattening, and their influence is growing. At the moment there is no formal recognition programme of model non-farmers in rural *kebeles* (there is formal recognition of model businesspeople in municipalities like Dera), but when the Green Diversity NGO asked the *kebele* to identify model entrepreneurs, they selected three among the successful people involved in non-farming activities.

A few individuals appear to have received special attention and support to their farming activities, as illustrated in the Box 14 below. However, this also occurred a few years ago.

Box 14. Support to an individual young farmer

Some years ago, this young farmer attempted to migrate to Saudi, which did not work well at all, so he decided to change his life staying in the community. He started using irrigation on land that he rented-in and showed good performance in this. He was selected for individual support by the

kebele officials wanting to take him as an example for other *kebele* residents. He has no special connection with anyone among the *kebele* leadership or at *wereda* level.

The *kebele* cabinet, then council, reviewed his case and decided to give him 50m X 25m (1250m²) land (outside of the lottery system for farmland reallocation, and as an individual and not in a group), to plant apple trees. He *got* a package of support in 2006 E.C. This included the land, apple tree seedlings at discounted price and a 30,000 *Birr* loan as well as being sent for training and experience-sharing at *wereda* level twice a year. He received training on how to prepare land for seedlings of eucalyptus and apple trees, when and how to take care of the apple trees, and methods of sowing vegetables and root crops.

He started planting apple trees in 2006 EC. He has 150 apple trees which started yielding fruits and last year he earned more than 3,000 *Birr* from sale. The main problems he is facing are frost, shortage of water and hail. He is continuing to grow vegetables for the market as well. He is watering the apple trees and vegetables by carrying water using his donkeys. He has the intention of continuing by expanding his current irrigation.

He also has two hybrid cows and is selling milk on a regular basis, including on monthly contract to businesses in Dera.

Non-government organisations

There seems to be little NGO activity in the farming sector in the *wereda* as a whole. *Wereda* officials mentioned an NGO called Bee Lives which provides training in some *kebeles*, for selected farmers interested in involving in beekeeping, but this NGO does not seem to be active in Harresaw. In the past World Vision was active in Harresaw, promoting the adoption of hybrid livestock. They are not active at the moment and had already stopped their activity in 2012.

Two NGOs appear to be currently active in Harresaw, both related in some ways to the farming sector. First, the NGO CCA (Bio/Green Diversity) trained the youth group who registered to invest in beekeeping/honey production but has yet to start (see above). Other respondents in Harresaw mentioned a recent training activity by this NGO, some said on tree planting and environment, others mentioned vegetable growing and yet others, entrepreneurial skills. *Wereda* officials described their activity as “*working to strengthen the green economy in highland areas*” and noted that the five-year project had started recently and they were at the awareness-raising stage. What appears to have struck most the respondents from Harresaw who mentioned the NGO was that each participant to this recent one-day training had received 500 *Birr* as per diem.

Second, an NGO called SURE (Sustainable Under-nutrition Reduction in Ethiopia) has started working in 2009 EC. According to the NGO representative in Atsbi, the programme focuses on improving the community’s productivity and diet using local crops, and in general creating awareness on nutrition. It works across sectors, with both health extension workers and agriculture and rural development experts. In addition, there is a *kebele* level committee of ten members (health, agriculture, education, *kebele* chair, *kebele* manager, propaganda, women affairs, youth affairs, social affairs and water resource). All have been trained. HEW and DAs give advice walking door to door on food preparation and breast feeding; organise food preparation demonstrations; arrange meetings with the development teams and discuss about nutrition. Beneficiaries are selected to be 10% of the pregnant and lactating mothers with children under two-year old. In 2009 E.C. vegetable seeds and root crops such as carrot, potato, cabbage and apple tree seedlings were given. It is also planned to give six chickens to each selected woman. The representative highlighted problems of transportation, shortage of health and agriculture experts, and lack of coordination among activities.

In Harresaw, the HEW explained that the NGO told them to select 10% poor women from the community who have under-two children. The NGO provided 6kg of potatoes and six seedlings of apples for each selected woman to plant in their garden. In addition, they will receive six chicken and their fodder soon. The purpose of the support is to improve poor women’s and children’s nutrition. The HEW’s role is of selecting beneficiaries, visiting home to home to create awareness, and

following up their progress collaborating with agriculture workers. She and one DA should team up to visit beneficiaries home to home; her role is teaching them about nutrition while the DA informs beneficiaries that they could get seedlings of vegetables and chicken on credit and teaches them how to grow vegetables in their garden. In addition, the HEW's role is showing women how to prepare balanced diet food at home. For instance, there is porridge preparing show for women in the health post every month. A few women among our interviewees mentioned the NGO support.

Non-farming

Non-farm work opportunities

Non-farming in the local economy

People in Harresaw, including officials at *wereda* and *kebele* levels, tend to consider activities such as beekeeping/honey production, livestock fattening, poultry etc. as 'non-farming'. In this report, these activities are described in the **Farming** chapter.

Excluding these farm-related activities as well as farming daily labour, local non-farm work opportunities include: non-farm daily labour (unskilled and skilled e.g. woodwork, construction); crop, livestock and livestock product trade; a few service businesses (shops, bars/cafés and local drink houses¹⁵, hairdressers, barbers, leisure services, and shoe shining/repairing as well as bicycle repairing services); even fewer productive businesses including one bakery, two blacksmiths, two or three tailors (also repairing clothes), a few broidery makers (women), and two grinding mills in activity. Although these are more numerous than in 2012 at the time of WIDE3 fieldwork (as further discussed below), the local non-farm sector remains small, and very few people are exclusively relying on it for their livelihood. Most of these non-farm businesses are located in the *kebele* centre except some local drink houses, small shops, one grain mill house, and the blacksmiths.

Migration for work (in Ethiopia and abroad) is, arguably, the most important non-farm opportunity in several ways, including in terms of the number of people involved in one or another form of migration, the multiple effects that this has on the community, and the general perception of migration (especially to Saudi) as one of three most pressing community problems (mentioned as such by most respondents asked this question).

Permanent employment, of either educated or non-educated people, is rare and generally not local except for some of the school staff and the *kebele* manager.

However, one knowledgeable respondent highlighted the importance of the non-farming sector in relation to connecting the community to the outside world. As he put it:

Traders and business people from the community have more of economic links with traders and enterprises outside the community. This is a kind of relationship between sellers and buyers. For example, traders buy products from wholesalers in big cities and towns like Mekele, Wukro and Atsbi and retail in this area. On the other hand, local traders collect agricultural products from the community and sell to wholesalers in towns. These links have positive impact for the community. This is because the community easily gets industrial products and sells agricultural products through these trade links.

¹⁵ Local drink houses could also be considered as productive businesses as the owners produce the local drinks they sell; however, many houses sell both local and industrial drinks. In this report, all drink houses will be treated as hospitality services.

Changes since 2012

Locally, there are a few more non-farm work opportunities than in 2012 (WIDE3) – some of these generated through migration money though not all. Also, as noted earlier, in the realm of ‘ideas’, non-farm work is perceived at least by some community respondents as gaining in importance. Hence, for instance, the emergence of model non-farmers and their growing influence. Even though they are not yet formally recognised, *“everybody in the kebele refers to them as exemplary in meetings to mobilise the community and especially the young people to work hard and change their lives as the models do”* (middle-wealth man residing in kebele centre). Two female respondents mentioned as model non-farmers a young man with a shop, a snack bar, the only bakery of the kebele, who is also fattening breed cattle; a middle-age man involved in breed cattle fattening and trading; and another livestock trader also having a shop and distributing beer to drink houses.

In relation to the community’s wealth, for most respondents who gave their opinion on this topic the community in 2018 was not richer than in 2012, mainly due to drought. However, a number of respondents highlighted the role of the non-farming sector in nuancing the picture. Some explained that since the Millennium drought (2008 GC) or over the past few years, more (or most, some said) community members had involved in non-farm activities. Some others said that a few households had become richer than they were, because of their ability to involve in such activities.

However, on the whole, this has not been sufficient to compensate the reduction in local opportunities of farming daily labour (due to the drought and almost complete stop in irrigation activities (see **Farming** chapter), and to match the continuous increase in the number of more educated young people from the community.

Reasons for this include, from the perspective of people from the community:

- The lack of inward investment by outsiders – no factory or other investment in or near the kebele.
- The fact that no one from Harresaw who managed (through migration) to get a substantial amount of money is investing locally. At the same time, some respondents highlighted that the expansion of the kebele centre (houses, shops, services etc.) is by and large due to migration and *“this is a longer-term benefit of migration, and it is development in itself”* (adult men in FGD on migration).
- The fact that non-farm activity (like running shops, small enterprises) etc. *“is not something we are used to and know how to do”* (same respondents as above). Other respondents note that the community is not open to new businesses. For instance, a young woman who tried to open a hairdressing salon is struggling to attract customers as women continue to go to traditional hair braiders who provide the service for free, or to braid each other’s hair; another who tried to sell *tej* found out that people prefer continuing to produce it themselves when they have a special event such as wedding etc.
- The small size of most local businesses, run by the owner and her/his family in case she/he needs support, hence not providing job opportunities.
- The limited demand/market for most products/services. This was even raised as a constraint to investing in Atsbi – *“Everyone is opening a shop or a pub or starting metalwork, but Atsbi is a small town and the market is small. So, if I started something I might get bankrupt. That’s the reason I don’t want a loan from the bank – and in addition, the interest rate is very high”* (Saudi returnee now living in Atsbi and who does not see what he could do). In Harresaw this was aggravated by the drought, which reduced the purchasing power and therefore demand of people from Harresaw for non-farm services of all kinds (see below).

- The mismatch between some of the training opportunities and local demand – “*There are technical training such as hair dressing and woodwork which are good to be involved in one’s own work. However, there is no opportunity for such work in the community after taking such training*” (18-year old middle-wealth young woman).
- The lack of or inadequate support to non-farm activities - and most notably, issues with access to capital. More generally, for some people, the misguided focus of the government on livelihood activities that all require access to some land. See more on this in the *Government involvement in non-farm self-employment* section below.

To sum up, it seems that although slowly, the non-farm sector expanded in the sense that more households and people depended on non-farm activities for more of their income. However, for many of them these were about survival; there were only few cases such as the young ex-shoe shiner, who were able to diversify beyond survival (see more on diversification for different wealth groups at [p.113](#)).

Impact of drought on non-farm activities

For most of the community respondents, the drought had negative effects on non-farming activities as well as on farming. As mentioned in the *Farming* chapter, the demand for farming daily labour or employment (e.g. shepherds) decreased, due to both, lower production hence less work, and potential employers lacking money to hire people. It also reduced demand for goods and services, especially for businesses such as shops, beer and snack houses, because people lacked money and at the same time prices had increased. Generally, therefore, businesses suffered.

Trends in agricultural product trade were more complex. Most people explained that the volume of crop trade reduced. Moreover, demand and supply were not balanced, though people had different opinions on the overall balance. Some respondents highlighted that demand exceeded supply as most people needed to buy crops to supplement their own production and food aid (PSNP and EFA) and at the same time, everyone had less production so those usually producing a surplus had none or a much smaller one. Others noted that both supply and demand were down because people lacked money to buy crops. In some cases, the same respondent highlighted both trends.

With regard to livestock there was also a trade imbalance and all respondents agreed that the supply exceeded the demand; most people wanted to sell and few wanted to buy livestock, mainly because of difficulties in accessing water and fodder, and because of the need for cash to buy other necessities including food. Livestock prices rebounded since the drought, as further discussed below.

Most people thought that crop traders were negatively affected, especially the small retailers and the numerous producer-traders, because the higher price they got for the crops they sold was not enough to compensate the much lower volume that they were able to sell. However, a few respondents highlighted that those traders who could buy at low price, store and sell later on at high price benefitted from the drought. One respondent estimated that no more than 5% households were in that category.

At the same time, many respondents also highlighted that one effect of the drought was to ‘force’ people to start ‘non- farm activities’ (though for many this meant ‘non crop growing activities’ hence including fattening, poultry etc.), and they considered this as a positive development.

Non-farming activities, women and young people

Some of the female respondents, generally adult women, thought that there were more women and young men involved in non-farm activities than in the past and this was a positive development. E.g. women are more numerous to trade chicken, shoat and livestock products such as eggs and butter, or to involve in petty trade and sale of traditional drinks; young men are more engaged in crop trading as well as businesses like shops, barber shops, billiard/*carambula*. Younger women usually

were less optimistic, highlighting that opportunities remain more limited for women. They noted that generally, women's activities are on a smaller scale; most shops, leisure services etc. are run by men. Migration is rising among women (see below) but there is still a sense that men have more opportunities to move for work than women.

With regard to young people and non-farming, in summary, all issues mentioned above are exacerbated. In particular, several respondents highlighted the ineffectiveness of government interventions. This is further discussed in the *Government involvement in non-farm self-employment* section below in this chapter and in the 'youth' chapter.

At the same time, most model non-farmers, considered as successful as they have a diversified portfolio of activities, are generally young people. One young woman highlighted that young people were more hard working and striving to establish independent livelihoods than in the past when they were depending only on farming, and in her views, this contributed to the community being economically better-off than two or three years before. However, few shared her opinion with regard to the trend in the community's wealth.

Crop and livestock trading

Trading generally

Trading of agricultural products is very important in Harresaw. According to a knowledgeable respondent, about 10% of the community members are involved in trading as a regular business (including livestock and livestock products). Moreover, all farming households are producer-traders, selling small quantities of their own products especially in good harvest seasons, to get cash and be able to buy other necessities. Reflecting the rising importance of livestock production in the farming system of the community (see in the *Farming* chapter), trading of livestock and livestock products appears to be increasing. There does not appear to be a similar upward trend with crop trading. Agricultural products are mostly traded on local markets i.e. Dera, Atsbi, and Kuneba in Afar, which are the three nearest crop and livestock markets for Harresaw.

Crop trading

As noted earlier, all farming households trade small quantities of their own crops to cover other expenditures, including purchase of other food stuff.

There are no large-scale crop traders in the community as the level of production does not allow this. There are four well-known bigger traders (one in Enda Gebriel, two in Harresaw and one in Enda Mariam Wu'o gots) who buy and sell many different types of agricultural products. They use donkeys to collect the grain from farmers and vehicles to transport it to the towns; and they export some of the grain they buy to more distant destinations such as Mekelle, through selling to traders over there. However, even the bigger traders also retail on local markets; and they import crop to sell locally in the lean season. There are between ten and fifteen smaller traders. There are no women among the larger traders.

With regard to grain and pulse crops, lentils, beans, horse beans, wheat and barley are supplied to the market. Previously, vegetables such as carrots, potatoes, cabbage etc. were sold and this was a good income source for some households, but this disappeared as irrigation is almost completely stopped. Eucalyptus trade is emerging, as explained in the *Farming* chapter, and a few people have also started apple production for the market. However, most eucalyptus is still sold locally, and apple production is insignificant and sold directly by the few producers in the nearby markets.

The comparative profitability of each crop depends on many parameters and it fluctuates a lot seasonally and from one year to the next. Some respondents mentioned that lentils were the most beneficial, others mentioned peas and beans, yet others noted that wheat could yield a good profit,

and some others highlighted that barley has a good demand as it is used to prepare *tihini* for *tihlo* (the traditional staple meal in the area).

Traders mentioned different ways of fixing the price they pay to buy and the price they ask to sell crops, depending on their size and where they sell. The bigger traders are connected to traders in other areas and get information from them on prices of different crops and when to buy and sell what. Smaller traders survey the more local market. One of the women traders interviewed explained that traders communicate with each other to decide buying and selling prices so that there is no competition.

Bigger traders

The bigger trader interviewed by the ROs is a 35-year old landless man. He never went to school though he can read and write and count. He also rents-in land: in the year before being interviewed, he rented-in 1.2 ha farmland of which 0.25 ha is irrigable but there was not enough water for this. He also fattens oxen, has a billiard business, and distributes beer to drink houses of the *kebele*. In the past one year he earned more from his crop trading activities than from any other activity, making 37,000 *Birr* profit. (In another conversation he mentioned 50,000 *Birr* earnings from trading 150 quintals of wheat).

He started trading crops in 2003 EC with savings from running a shop, and he considerably strengthened his business since then although he is working alone with his wife and children (he has employees for the other businesses, see *Private employment* section below). He has his own warehouse, so he can buy crop in December-February when prices are low and sell in June-August when the price is high. He mainly trades barley and wheat, sometimes pulses like beans and peas, sometimes sorghum, and he also trades straw as fodder for livestock.

He sells both locally to individual customers on local markets, or to traders from outside of the community, generally Mekelle. When he buys/sells on the market transactions are in cash but when he deals with traders he is paid through bank transfers. He has a network of several large traders who buy from and sell to him. He finances his purchases through his own capital; but when he faces a shortage of capital he gets advance payment (when he collects crops to sell them) or in-kind credit (when he buys crops to sell them locally) from his business partners in Mekelle. For instance, he recently faced cash constraints but one of his partners loaned him 30,000 *Birr*, sending the grain and accepting that he would pay it later when he would have sold it. He helps them in the same way when they need it.

He has a licence; last year he paid 2,700 *Birr* of tax. He faces limited competition from other traders in the *kebele* because they are all small-scale. Also, they do not support each other, whereas with traders from outside of the community there is at the same time competition and collaboration. He faces some competition by traders from Dera and Atsbi for instance, but as noted earlier he closely collaborates with the Mekelle traders. The multi-service cooperative which is providing crop at low prices also competes with his direct local sales, but only for some of the crops and also *frushka*, and they are not able to ensure a regular, continuous supply.

Smaller traders

Smaller traders may not trade continuously. For instance, one woman who sells crop (usually barley, wheat, and beans) every Tuesday and Saturday in Dera and Atsbi markets, buying from farmers and also other traders to retail it, stopped for two months during the drought as she could not make enough profit to finance her purchase. She resumed after doing daily labour for two months. Another smaller trader, a man who trades barley, beans and maize that he buys in the *kebele*, Dera and Kunera, and sells in Atsbi and Dera markets, is involved in crop trading only during the dry season whereas the woman also trades during the seeding season – selling crop for seeds. However, other traders believe it is important to never stop trading even when prices are not favourable.

They also may not store crop. That is the case for the woman just mentioned, whereas the man stores some crops. He buys from farmers and also, bigger traders, and sells to consumers. He said he is usually making a good profit because there are not many people buying crop in Afar. However, last year his trade was affected because he was confiscated the grain he bought in Afar as it was food aid. Like the larger scale traders, smaller traders also have other activities. The man, for instance, used to also trade livestock although he said he stopped because of difficulties in accessing grazing land and fodder; he has one *timad* of farmland. He started his trading activity in 2007 EC with savings from migration to Saudi and he is quite happy with it. He mentioned a profit of 15,000 *Birr* over the past one year, but also that he borrowed 20,000 *Birr* from Dedebit to run his business. He has his own donkeys to transport the crops, which helps.

The box below presents the case of another woman who considers herself as a small trader. Her constraints are likely applying to most smaller crop traders in Harresaw and relate to transportation, access to crop for sale, and access to capital.

Box 15. Small-scale female crop trader

She started trading ten years ago, from savings she got by selling tea and beer in the community. She saw an improvement in her trade. At the beginning she was trading only barley, but she is now trading various grains (barley and wheat) and beans. Prices have also risen. And she is selling a bigger volume of crop, between 50 and 200 kgs each Saturday in Atsbi. In addition, over a year she may sell 5 quintals to two or three bigger traders who have permanent shops in Dera and Atsbi, but she prefers retailing which is more profitable. She gets between 20 and 50 *Birr* profit every market day (twice a week).

Her main problems are transport, access to supply, and access to capital to expand her trade and so that should could also store crops. Regarding transport, she uses donkeys and buses, but buses charge 20 *Birr* for half a quintal in addition to 10 *Birr* for herself to travel from Dera to Atsbi and so, she is forced to limit the quantity of grain that she brings to the market as she cannot afford transporting more at once. With regard to supply, the difficulty is that farmers prefer selling their produces themselves. At times she buys from the cooperative. In terms of capital, she is also trading plastic shoes, buying them in Atsbi on Saturday and selling them in Dera on Tuesday, and her two activities cross-finance each other depending on the profit she is making from each. Last year she also sold a sheep to finance her crop trade. She would like to take credit but she is afraid of not being able to repay the loan, especially considering that production has been so poor in the past few years. So, she wants to wait for a good harvest, then she would take credit. She does not have a license and does not pay taxes for any of her trade.

Some of the smaller traders are worried about their irregular status. One of them, a PSNP beneficiary who is also farming rented-in land and fattening sheep, explained that last year he sold more than 30 quintals of crop (he only sells to individual consumers, and when he started he sold just 8 quintals) and he made a profit of around 10,000 *Birr*, so he was worried that the revenue officials might catch him. He would like to either expand his business and get a license, or stop crop trading (because there are many small crop traders) to invest in fattening and milk production.

Producers-sellers

All farmers sell some of their crop. Usually they sell during the harvesting season when they have crops available, and this is generally a role left to women. Transportation is not an issue as they sell small quantities and Dera is nearby and it is easy to walk there. They also do not sell regularly, but only when they need cash for something else. Trade is not a business, but a source of money for household consumption. For instance, one woman explained that she sold for about 400 *Birr* of barley in Dera over the past one year and used it for expenses such as sugar, coffee and grinding mill services. Her only concern was that she could not sell as much crop as she needed to cover these expenses because of the poor production of the past few years.

Livestock trading

There are a few people from Harresaw who can be considered as cattle or shoat traders (although they usually also have other activities); they buy cattle and shoats from farmers in Harresaw and sell them mostly in Atsbi's market to traders. More commonly, community members sell cattle and shoats on the market to other farmers and buy in the same way. They also buy and sell from/to each other without going to market. The main markets for livestock are Dera and Atsbi. Individual farmers usually go to Dera to sell their livestock, usually one or two at a time, whereas cattle/shoat traders may go to Atsbi. The market in Dera has become bigger since 2012 and it is expected to expand further as Dera has recently become a municipality.

Although one cannot talk about cattle export as individual transactions still represent most of this trade, for sheep this is a bit different. There are no sheep traders from Harresaw but there are traders in Dera who buy sheep from farmers in Harresaw and take them to sell them in Atsbi, Wukro, Adigrat as well as Mekelle, especially during holidays, because the *wereda* is well-known in the region for its quality sheep production.

Chicken are bought from the agriculture office, farmers as well as traders in local markets. One new source of supply is a young man, ex-government agricultural worker, who incubates small chicks in Dera and sells them to farmers in Harresaw. A few young people in Harresaw have undertaken to produce chicken on a large scale to sell them after they grow up, like one of the tailors who recently bought 300 small chickens and sold them back after they grew up. Chicken are sold for meat to farmers and traders in local markets. There are a few traders in the community, buying chicken from people in Harresaw and selling them to customers and other traders in Dera and Atsbi markets. According to several respondents, almost all farmers in Harresaw produce chicken for sale and sell them either directly or through these traders.

The price of cattle, sheep, goat and chicken is determined by agreement between seller and buyer on the spot, sometimes (for cattle especially) with a middleman as mediator. Some respondents say there are no middlemen in the chicken market, whilst one woman said there are middlemen for chicken (and bees) in Dera and Atsbi markets but she had no information about it.

Bee colonies are usually bought by farmers from other farmers, going to their home. Sometimes they are sold to traders who then retail them back to farmers.

Livestock product trading

Livestock products in Harresaw include eggs, milk and butter (of cattle and shoat), honey, and cattle and shoat skins. There is no wool production. Skins used to be exported in 2012, to Atsbi and from there to Mekelle, but this is on the decline as selling prices have substantially declined.

In contrast, eggs and cattle dairy products, especially butter, are sold more than in 2012. This includes local sale i.e. to other community members. But for eggs and butter, most of the production is sold outside of the community. Egg producers sell directly to customers in nearby markets, or to traders, including from Dera who buy and export them to larger towns such as Adigrat and Mekelle.

Butter producers mostly sell themselves to individual customers in Dera or Atsbi. There are also people who collect butter and sell it on these same markets, and in Afar. It used to be uncommon to sell milk but this has changed. Most of the milk is sold locally to other community members. In addition, there are a few individuals who sell milk on a larger scale and/or outside the community, including to cafeterias in Dera and Atsbi. However, there are no dairy production enterprises nearby so that no one is selling milk in large quantities.

Honey is also mostly exported, either directly by the producers who sell it on the markets of Dera and Atsbi; or through traders for those who produce larger quantities. There are some local honey traders. One of them collects honey from local farmers to sell it in Mekelle.

See in the *Farming* chapter more information on prices, constraints etc.

Productive businesses

All productive businesses

There are no large productive businesses in Harresaw. According to a knowledgeable man, there are three broidery makers, two or three tailors, four people with woodwork and construction skills (working on contract or daily labour basis), two blacksmiths, one bakery, and two grinding mills in activity. All these businesses are owned and run by locals. In the respondent's views, they are not sufficient for the needs of the community.

This section excludes people (mostly women) involved in producing and selling local drinks and food; although it could be argued that these are productive activities, most of these places also sell industrial drinks; they are described in the *Hospitality services* section below.

Innovations

Innovations in terms of productive businesses are linked to the availability of electricity. The same applies for some of the other (non-production) services described in the next section, such as barber shops. In terms of productive businesses allowed thanks to electricity, the bakery was established two years ago, and it is the most striking innovation in the *kebele* in that it is a new technology, and it also introduced a new product and new food consumption practices. Other electricity-dependending businesses are the grain mill houses. Unlike the bakery, this is a new technology, but grinded grain is not a new product for the community. A few households have an electric *mitad* (oven to bake *injera*) but these are not used for commercial production. See *Food processing* section below.

Construction

People involved in construction work tend to combine working locally and in Afar, where there is a lot of development and construction work going on.

One skilled construction worker, involved in bricklaying and roof covering, noted that in Afar there is good demand and therefore he generally does not face any issue due to competition. Work in Afar is better paid, and one can work more than locally as there are no religious and saint holidays there. He mentioned a wage rate of 150-200 *Birr/day*, and that in six months in the last year he had made 40,000 *Birr* in cash. He did not have any travel expense as the place where he worked was not far (one day of walk). Some of the issues include mistreatment by some Afar employers. He mentioned that he and his friends involved in the same activity went to ask the *kebele* to 'be organized' as a professional association, but the *kebele* officials told them that they could not form an association as they do not have a certificate of competence.

Some people are also going to Afar and get involved in construction work for a lower wage rate, as unskilled workers, and often doing this as well as other kinds of work such as camel herder. Construction work is also a common occupation for men migrating to Saudi, either as daily labourers or on contract for a specified duration or piece of work. One young man, 3rd year student at the TVET in Atsbi, was employed as construction supervisor though he gave no detail about where.

According to another respondent local construction work is well paid too, at 200 *Birr/day*, and 130-150 *Birr/day* for workers quarrying the stones needed for house construction. This compares to 80-100 *Birr/day* for farming daily labour. The main source of local construction work opportunities is when young people are allocated residential land, although in some cases they organise themselves to pool labour and skills so as to build each other's house without payment. It is important that they find a way of building a house as otherwise they lose the land they are given.

The two honey production investors mentioned that they also gave construction work to five individuals for three months to build a warehouse, a fence and a water storage for their business, but the work is now completed.

Skilled self-employment

We do not include here people (women and men) engaged in e.g. hairdressing and barber shops. These also require skills but are not productive businesses and are described under the *Other services* section. As explained above we also consider women engaged in selling local drinks and food as hospitality services, though there is a production dimension and it can be argued that these activities also require skills.

Tailoring

The ROs interviewed one of the tailors of the community. He also has a barber shop, and he shares his time equally between the two activities. He learnt dressmaking by seeing others. But now he is planning to take training in tailoring at TVET level. He works on the roadside in front of his house. His customers are all locals, and especially they are the residents of the centre of the *kebele*. He has one sewing machine, scissors, threads and other materials. He bought the equipment from Mekele, with his own money which he got from migration to Saudi. He does not employ anyone.

There is no competition as there are only two tailors in the *kebele*. There used to be three but one of them recently stopped and started producing vegetables on rented-in land that he irrigates. The demand for tailoring services fluctuates throughout the year. The busiest months are from November through February, as this is the time for weddings; the rest of the time, sometimes there is not enough demand. Tailoring is anyway not a fulltime activity, as for this tailor, and the other who also incubates young chicks.

In the last one year the tailor interviewed here earned 4,000 *Birr* from this activity. He does not have business licence and has never paid any tax. He faces difficulties to work at night as there are frequent interruptions of electricity, so that when he has urgent orders, he uses a torch when this occurs. He did not receive any government or other assistance. When he needs any help with regard to this work, he goes to Dera town to get his friend who is also a tailor, and is able to repair his machine and also to show him how to maintain the machine in case he faces the same problem another time.

Blacksmith

The blacksmith interviewed makes and repairs tools needed by the community such as knives, sickles, ploughs and other metal items. He acquired his skill from his parents, working with them first. He then established his own household and started his own business in 1990 EC so he has been working for 20 years in this way. He is working from his house. He has the tools he needs for his work like a hammer, pincers, a blower and others. He bought the hammer and pincers on the market but he made the blower himself, from a goat skin he bought. He bought his equipment from savings he made from working as a daily labourer. He repairs the tools when they stop working. He uses charcoal, which he buys on the market too, as there is no electricity in his area. He does not have the capital needed to buy a modern electronic blower, which costs around 6,000 *Birr*.

He never employed anybody. He works with his children. His customers are the farmers in the *kebele*. He is busiest in June and July, at the start of the agricultural season. He and his brother are the only metal workers in this *kebele*. There are some metal workers in Dera town and he faces competition from them. He goes to his brother when he needs something, wants advice or has a problem related to his work. He and his brother support each other with regard to tools and equipment.

Most of the time he is paid in-kind. For instance in the last year, he had 50 customers, and he got 2 and half quintals of barley and three days of oxen labour for his own farming, as payment for his

services. He has no license and does not pay any taxes. He has his own one *timad* farm land, and he shares his time between his agricultural and metal work in parallel. In addition, he gets PSNP transfers for five of the eight members of his household. He does not involve in PWs like others to get paid, and instead, get the payment for guarding the protected forest which is near his house.

Non-skilled manual productive labour

When it comes to non-skilled manual labour, most of the individuals who engage in this do not discriminate between farming and non-farming works. This is illustrated by the case of a daily labourer who spent the last one year alternating farming daily labour, splitting wood for firewood, and cleaving stones for house construction. He explained that in this year he worked on farming-related activities during the rainy season and on the other activities during the dry season. The daily rate for the non-farm activities is better (120-130 *Birr/day*) than for farming daily labour (70-80 *Birr/day*). He usually is provided food and drink by his employers besides the payment, and he sometimes gets a bonus of 20-30 *Birr* for a day's work.

Over the past one year he said he worked for ten different employers, four of them female-headed households, for a total of 60 days and he earned 5,000 *Birr*. He also travelled to Afar to work as daily labourer on similar activities there when there was no work in the *kebele*. In the past year he also farmed three *timad* of land which he sharecropped-in, to which he gave priority. In future, he said, he wants to focus on farming work only (his own and for others) as the wood and stone-related labour is hard and negatively affects his health.

Food processing

The businesses considered here are the bakery, and the grinding mills. As noted above there is only one bakery, recently established; and two grain mill houses in activity. There are no butchers in Harresaw and no any other food processing services in or near the community like dairy co-operatives, flour factories and others.

Bakery

The bakery is owned by a young man who in 2012 was the first and only shoe shiner of the *kebele* and also repairing bicycles, and who since then has grown to become the owner of the largest commodity shop, the largest snack bar of the *kebele* centre, and the only bakery of Harresaw, in addition to being involved in hybrid cattle fattening and some farming on one *timad* of land he got through lottery. His case is described in more detail in the *Other services* section below. Suffice to say here that he is a self-made man, having lost his parents when he was very young and raised by his brothers.

He produces bread rolls and *hambasha*. He rents the house in which he is producing his bread (as well as the rooms for his snack bar and his shop). He buys the inputs he needs to produce bread (wheat flour, baking powder, salt, and oil) in Mekele, and finances this from all his businesses. His two major constraints in this business are about transport, and wheat supply. The first issue is that most Isuzu transporters only provide services for a full load, and he does not have enough capital to buy at once a full load of inputs. Sometimes, his suppliers give him goods on credit, which helps. The other problem is that he cannot buy all the flour he needs from the factory directly, at 800 *Birr/quintal*. He was given a quota of 4.5 quintals wheat per month that he can buy directly. But he needs 15 quintals for a month. So, he must buy the rest from traders, at 1,400 *Birr/quintal*.

He does not employ anyone. He gets some help for no payment by the friend to whom he gave his shoe shining business, and also by the young boy he employs mainly for taking care of his hybrid cattle. Generally for all his businesses he gets this help and also his wife and sister-in-law are helping to run the shop and the snack bar. He is working on all his activities in parallel. However, recently he wanted to recruit an employee because of the work load, but he could not get anyone because young people in the *kebele* do not want to work in their area.

He sells breads with the food he prepares in his snack bar, and to individual customers. Initially he was selling only to individual customers; the other snack bars/teashops in the *kebele* did not want to buy bread from him as they bought it from Dera town. Then he opened his own teashop/ snack bar. The bakery has been in business for two years and the teashop/ snack bar for one year. He is increasingly successful in selling bread, to local residents but also now, to some people from the neighbouring *kebele* (Ruba Feleg).

There is no local competition as it is the only bakery in the *kebele*. He made about 80,000 *Birr* profit last year. He paid 6,000 *Birr* as tax, which he finds fair. He has a license for the bakery. He paid 300 *Birr* for it, which is also fair, but he had a hard time to get it because the bakers established in Dera town tried to prevent him from getting it.

He never received any support from the government. The most critical thing he would want is the possibility of buying more flour directly from the factory, to further cut his production costs. When he needs advice related to his work, he goes to Atsbi to ask his friend who also has a bakery. He also got some guidance from trade and industry experts when he processed his bakery license.

Grinding mills

There are only two grain mill houses in activity in Harresaw, one in Enda Gabriel got in the *kebele* centre, and the other in Enda Mariam Wuo got (with access to electricity from the line going to Dera town); and this is not sufficient for the community. One has been established a while ago, the other is new since the WIDE3 fieldwork in 2012. In addition, one other grain mill house stopped giving service for lack of premises.

The household running the grain mill house in activity in the centre of the *kebele* are considered as wealthy. The wife supports one poor woman, giving her food and also occasionally giving her work such as helping at the mill and milking their cows, for which she is giving her left-over flour. They also employ on a more permanent basis a very poor man who is also a beneficiary of the PSNP, but instead of working on PWs like others, is paid to guard the FTC. From his work at the mill he usually gets around 50 kgs of flour in a month and this is very useful.

The man who wanted to invest in a grinding mill business but was stopped is a quite wealthy farmer, who got most of his wealth from repeat migration to Saudi over many years. He bought a grain mill with the savings from his last migration journey to Saudi two years ago. He worked with it and was quite successful for a year but then "*some people became jealous*" and he was stopped. He had 'bought' a room in the *kebele* centre, but the owner then denied that he had sold it and as this transaction was informal, the buyer could not do anything. The man then tried to work from his own house, but the *kebele* administration said he needed separate work premises. The *wereda* officials instructed the *kebele* to give him working premises but not in writing, and the *kebele* administration did as if they knew nothing about this.

Now, he still has the license and pays for it. He had five employees but had to stop paying them except one whom he pays (350 *Birr*/month) to guard the grain mill. However, the machine is idle in his house and so, this is just "*eating his savings*". He angrily explained that "*all he wants is that the government allows him to work with his money*"; specifically, he needs the *kebele* leader to provide him a place to install his mill but he has not been granted this so far. He is angry and frustrated and reportedly, he is accusing the administration of bias and partiality.

He, Hagos the baker as well as the tailor noted that frequent electricity cuts or the power being too low are major constraints on their businesses.

Non-farm producer co-operatives or groups

The only forms of productive activities organised as cooperatives or associations are those of the various youth groups in Harresaw. Most of these are actually farm-related (poultry, fattening, eucalyptus production, honey production). The only really non-farm associations are those involved

in stone and sand quarrying. There are two such associations, and they are the only ones that actually started producing, as they did not require any start-up capital to start activities. However, this means that they rely on the tools that are being used for the PSNP Public Works so they cannot be continuously involved in this business.

The other constraint that the representant of one of the groups mentioned is also linked to non-investment, that is, the fact that the association will soon have finished exploiting the land they were given by the *kebele*, except if they are helped to get a crusher to also be able to exploit bigger stones. He noted that they had not faced any issue of lack of or low demand as they sell the stones to a contractor who is constructing irrigation channels around Dera. However, it is not entirely clear that once this has been completed there would be enough demand to sustain the activity.

The sand producing association is facing a similar constraint and has filed a request for replacement land. The member of this association who was interviewed considered that the association is unsuccessful because they are not operating up to their full potential. For instance, each of them works only 4 days per month and 6 hours a day only. They also faced market problems as buyers prefer buying from unlicensed farmers. He said to continue in this work the government should give them a loan and tools to extract sand. Otherwise the members are getting frustrated and might quit, especially as their license has to be renewed annually.

These and other youth associations are further described in the *Young people's economic and other experiences* chapter.

Other services

All services

There is no market in Harresaw. The nearest and most important market in the community is Dera, and next is Atsbi.

In early 2018 there were two (2) snack bars; eight (8) groceries (trading alcohol and soft drinks) of which six (6) are in the *kebele* centre, one (1) in Harresaw *kushet* and one (1) in Endemariam Wuo *got*; five (5) *tella* and beer houses selling both bottled and local drinks, all in the *kebele* centre, and; seven (7) drink houses which sell only *tella*, all in the *kebele* centre except one (1) in Abidera *got*. Compared to the population size and demand these are said to be not sufficient. There is no competition among these businesses, the price is the same in all and they agree with each other, and they are all owned by people from the community (no external investor).

There were seven (7) shops, all owned by married couples: four (4) in EndaGebriel in the *kebele* centre; one (1) is in Ekunta *got*, one (1) in Harresaw *kushet* and one (1) in Endemariam Wuo *got*. There were six (6) barber shops and another one was being built at the time of the second round of fieldwork, five (5) traditional women hair dressers and one (1) young woman trying to open a 'modern' hairdressing salon, two (2) shoe-shiners who also repair bicycles, and about ten (10) leisure service business places. Transport services were limited to one horse cart, and about fifteen (15) individuals renting donkeys, usually outside of the community (including to transport goods to and from Afar). A few young girls and women were involved in petty trade on days of market in Dera.

There were no health services other than the government health post and health centre, and no education services other than government schools.

There is one multi-service cooperative, which also has an important role in the farming sector in providing crop and livestock inputs to farmers in Harresaw.

Shops

The largest shop is that of the young man who is also owning the largest snack bar of the *kebele* and the bakery. His case is presented in *Box 16* and the pictures below.



From being the first shoe shiner in Harresaw in 2012



From shoe-shining in 2012 to most successful young entrepreneur

Box 16. Young successful businessman

This young man is 24 year old, grade 6 dropout. His brothers helped him when his parents died by letting him farm their parents' land. He was also assisting one of his brothers who was running a shop, before migrating to Saudi where he stayed for eight years.

Hagos then started the first and only shoe-shining business in Harresaw in 2002 EC (he was shoe-shiner at the time of the WIDE3 fieldwork); he gradually expanded his trade by repairing and hiring bicycles. He did this until 2006 EC, then he passed this business to a school dropout friend and started his shop. He got some help by a trader in Atsbi who gave him goods on credit, so he could start selling them. He otherwise had no other help by relatives or from the *kebele* or *wereda* for his non-farm activities. He started the bakery in 2008 EC with the profits of the shop. He started the snack bar in 2009 EC with the profits of the shop and the bakery. He is selling some of the bread he produces in his own snack bar. In the snack bar he offers simple food (*foul*, eggs and bread) and industrial drinks (soft and beer). He has the only refrigerator of the *kebele* to cool his drinks, and entertains his customers with a TV. He runs all these businesses with his wife, his sister-in-law, and occasional support from his employee and the friend to whom he gave the shoe-shining business.

At some point he thought of migrating to Saudi to get capital to expand his shop but his brother who had just returned discouraged him from doing so. He has licenses and pays taxes for all his businesses. His main problems are not about this, but that even though he is informally recognized as a model non-farmer, he gets no support from the *kebele* or *wereda*. He and other young people in the *kebele* have no opportunities to get training on entrepreneurial skills. Moreover, currently he is renting his living and work premises for 1,000 *Birr*/month. He would like the *kebele* administration to give him land so that he could build his own work premises. With this and some entrepreneurial skill training he is confident that he can achieve his plan to expand his current businesses and also to start renting bedrooms.

He is farming 0.25 ha land and he has started fattening hybrid cattle, from which he expects a good profit. However, he is considering renting-out his land to better focus on his different businesses.

He lives in the centre of the *kebele* where he also has his business, has a bicycle, a smartphone, and lives what can be described as a 'modern' life in Harresaw.

All seven shops sell different types of consumable factory products. Two shops, including that described above, have a wider range of products, and residents from other *kebeles* are also coming to shop there. One of the other shops in the *kebele* centre is owned by a married young couple who

started it with a 30,000 *Birr* loan from Dedebit and runs it from a rented room as well as renting the rooms in which they live (for 500 *Birr*/month for the whole). They also have some farmland and for them, the income from their farming is more important than that of the shop. Another smaller shop was started by a Saudi migrant returnee, now married, with the savings from his migration. Yet another was started by a young man living with his parents and who started it when he dropped out from school because of illness. He made 8,600 *Birr* profit in one year and used it to expand the shop. He said he would like to resume schooling but like Hagos for his bakery, he finds it difficult to get someone to work with or to hire.

The constraints that these three shop owners mentioned include lack of support such as the provision of entrepreneurial skill training opportunities, the costs of having to rent their work premises, and competition by individuals selling without licenses hence cheaper. However, the same woman also explained that the shops do not compete and agree with each other on prices. One of the two smaller shop owners said he is also worried because the number of shops in the *kebele* is increasing and he fears that competition may get too tough. However, the other is not concerned by this, saying that it is a matter of surveying the market and responding to people's needs.

Hospitality services

Even more so than for the shop, hospitality services differ by their size and what they offer. The largest snack-bar is described above. The only other snack bar is described in **Box 17** below.

Box 17. Selam snack house

The Selam snack house is owned by a young woman. Offering food and beer, it is the second snack bar in Harresaw. She also rents a house in the centre of the *kebele* for her business. Previously, she had a shop and beer wholesale business with her husband before he migrated to Saudi. She does no longer have news of her husband, and she stopped these businesses when he left. She used the money she got from selling the beers and the goods to liquidate the businesses, to start her snack bar. She also gets in kind credit from the traders from whom she regularly buys her inputs (beer, onions, tomatoes and eggs) - refunding them after she sells her beer and food. She is working by herself with the support from a younger sister.

Her customers are dwellers of Harresaw, mostly old men. Her business is seasonal: there is less demand in January because this is when many social ceremonies such as marriage are held. But, there is good market during the rest of the year.

One issue she faced is that she was told by the *wereda* trade officials to construct a toilet and maintain the building with cement floor. She maintained the toilet but could not do the cement floor because of the costs. Instead, she got a plastic cover from someone to cover the floor. Another issue is the competition by Hagos. Although he started after her, he has the capacity to sell more food and beer and he has more customers than her. She was doing her business in the building that he is currently renting but he told the owner that he could pay the rent for one year at once, so that he won over her and took the building because she is not economically strong enough to pay one year's rent. So, she moved to her current building.

She made 100-200 *Birr* profit per month in the last year. She has a license for her business and last year she paid 1,860 *Birr* in tax. This was a big issue as it is not fair compared to her profit. Her husband no longer sends money from Saudi so she had to borrow 1,000 *Birr* from her sister who has a restaurant in Dera, to be able to pay.

Another woman who is selling soft drinks and beer but no food also highlighted that location is of great importance for this kind of business. She is running her business from her house, on the road side of the *kebele*, but does not have many customers as it is far from the centre of the *kebele*.

Among those selling traditional drinks, one young woman selling *suwa* from a room belonging to her parents in the centre of the *kebele* was quite dismissive and wanted to migrate to get capital to "open something better like a shop or a café and get a better income." In contrast, a much older

lady said that she was not rich but her drink house was her pride (see **Box 18** below). One difference with the younger woman is that she is also selling beer.

Box 18. Selling tella, areki, and beer

She is selling *tella*, *areqi* and beer, every Sunday and Friday. Her main sale is *tella*, she only sells beer in small quantity. She also has some farmland but it is infertile: she gets maximum two quintals from it, in a good year.

She buys sorghum from the cooperative or from individual traders in Dera market when it is not available there. She also buys firewood, barley and hops from traders in Dera. She finances her supplies from her profit. She is running the business by herself, though her nieces occasionally help. Formerly she was helped by a girl whom she was bringing up. But she was also supporting her to study, so she completed grade 10, trained as a police and is now employed as police in Assossa.

Most of her customers are old men, and a few young men when they return back from Afar with some money. Her business does well in November and December but there is less demand in January and during the harvest season. There is also good demand for *tella* during the rainy season. There are some ten other women selling *tella* and *areqi* like her in the community but each of them have their own customers, and her customers come for the high quality of her *tella* so that she is not much affected by competition. All women consult each other to fix prices. For instance, this year they decided together to increase the price for a glass of *tella* from 2 *Birr* to 2.50 *Birr* because the price of inputs increased.

In a month she gets 400 *Birr* from selling *tella* and another 400 *Birr* from selling beer and *areki*. She does not know how much profit she made in the past one year but is happy with it. She has no license for her business and she does not pay tax. She sells beer illegally as it is normally not allowed for traditional drink houses to do so. Her main problem is that the price of firewood increased because of stricter enforcement of forest conservation regulations so farmers stealing it make people pay for the risks they take. She also buys eucalyptus to replace the firewood from the forest but that too is becoming costly. Two years ago what she was buying for 1,300 *Birr* lasted for a year. However, currently, what she is buying for 1,000 *Birr* does not even last 5 months. She never had anything to do with government in relation to her business.

The 'modern' snack bars and groceries selling industrial drinks tend to have a clientele different from the traditional drink houses. This is partly related to age and mindset. Beer is a lot more expensive (8 *Birr*/bottle) than *suwa* or *tella* (2.5 *Birr*/glass), yet it is not rare to see young men who have already consumed three or four beers in Hagos's snack bar before noon. As noted earlier and further discussed in the **Migration** chapter, beer drinking is reportedly widespread among the migrant returnees from Saudi, partly to 'show off', partly out of frustration ("hopelessness" as some respondents say).

Personal services

Personal services include barber shops, traditional hair dressers and one 'modern' hair braiding salon, and two shoe shiners (which could also be considered as petty services).

All six barber shops are run by young men, and located in the *kebele* centre as they need electricity. One of them is run by a student who provides services after school, from a house belonging to his parents. Another young man opened his barber shop on return from a relatively successful migration experience in Saudi, which also allowed him to marry. The clients are usually young men too, and especially, Saudi returnees or young men who want to copy them and the 'urban hair styles' that they adopt and which are much disliked by older members of the community.

However, these businesses cannot suffice to make a livelihood. Several of the owners indeed have other activities, such as tailoring or running a grocery. At the time of the second fieldwork a young man was busy constructing a shed to open a seventh barber shop, with funds given to him by a rich friend. He had recently returned from an unsuccessful migration experience in Saudi, which had left

him with a debt to repay. However, the 10-15 *Birr* daily profit he thought he might make would be nowhere near enabling him to repay his loan, he said, adding:

I do not have high expectations even in terms of an income. In fact, I am considering migrating again. If there was a way to make 30,000-50,000 Birr with a local business (instead of investing this in migrating) then I would not go again; I would prefer living here. But I do not see how. If I could get oxen to fatten, or donkeys to offer transport services, this could be ok, but this barber shop is just to be busy with something instead of spending my time drinking and gambling.

The story of 'modern' hairdressing for women similarly illustrates the difficulties faced by young people trying the kinds of activities commonly presented by the government as options; and how, therefore, migration appeals to them as a better option in spite of the risks. In early 2018 a young woman had opened a 'modern' hairdressing salon, the first ever in Harresaw. However, according to other young women

The salon is closed most of the time because the owner does not get customers as needed. This is because most young women go to Dera for hair dressing service. The young woman does not have the ability to make their hair as they want. For instance, she is only able to make strait style. She is not able to make curled style. Thus, women go to Dera for better hair dressing styles especially for wedding ceremonies.

By the time ROs returned for the second round of fieldwork three weeks later, the salon was closed and the young woman had migrated to Saudi. In the meantime, another young woman, who had taken a three-month training in hairdressing with the help of a sister, had opened a salon where she provides "*professional hair braiding services*". She opened her business with 200 *Birr* savings she made from selling jerrycans and 100 *Birr* she got from her mother. With this she bought chairs, benches, posters and decorations, as well as combs and synthetic hair – all bought in Dera or Atsbi. But she too is facing competition, this time from the traditional hair braiders. She is offering a service for which people are not used to pay cash. She would like to provide services other than hair braiding but this requires equipment she cannot afford; she is also worried that frequent power cuts would affect her business. She is also afraid of having to take a license and pay a big amount of tax.

One of the two shoe-shiners seemed more established, and content with his activity. As explained above, he got the business (the shed and the tools) from his friend when the latter decided to open a shop. Before this, he had worked with this friend, who was controlling the income as he had started the business, but he was also getting a share. In this way he learned the trade. He is also repairing shoes, and bicycles. He is not able to save much at once, with an income of 100-150 *Birr/day*, but he is of the opinion that "*one has to toil hard before getting something.*"

The other shoe shiner is a Saudi migrant returnee, who also has a table football business (*joteni*). He repairs bicycles too. He first started the *joteni* business, with savings from migration to Saudi, then with the profits from the *joteni* he bought the shoe shining inputs from Mekele or Atsbi. The price of shoe shining is fixed: 2 *Birr* for simple brushing and 10 *Birr* for using shoe cream. To maintain or fix shoes the price is negotiated. He is working the whole year, but the demand decreases during fasting seasons: from ten customers in an average day in the New Year and wedding season in January, he may not get even one customer in fasting seasons. He is also worried that there are few customers as Harresaw is a rural area, and he faces high competition from the other shoe shiner who started before him and has a lot of customers. He earned about 3,000 *Birr* profit from his shoe shining in the last year, but earlier this year he was stolen a big amount of money whilst travelling with it to Mekelle to buy inputs.

Leisure services

The game most commonly found in Harresaw is billiard (or *carombula*). There are nine of them in the *kebele* centre. There are also two *joteni* or table football businesses. Most of these businesses

are owned and run by young men, and clients are also young men. In many instances, the business owners also allow their clients to gamble money on the game even though this is not allowed. There is one young woman, a Saudi migrant returnee, who is running a billiard business as her parents did not want her to involve in an alcoholic drink business, but she has fewer customers because her parents do not want her to also allow gambling. In addition, her room is not on the main street of the *kebele* but in her parents' compound and this is also less favourable.

This kind of business, especially coupled with gambling, as well as the beer selling and to an extent the barber shops, are linked to the emergence of this group of 'drifting' young men mentioned in the *Cultural ideas and practices* section above. They express through 'anti-social behaviours' their frustration with the lack of 'worthwhile' local livelihood opportunities; they aspire to a life different from that of their parents, and migration abroad reinforces this whilst allowing only a few to 'get there quickly'. All adults in the community dislike these behaviours but at the same time, they do not dismiss the associated business opportunities. The headteacher of the school in Harresaw goes one step further, explaining that in his view, leisure businesses could be associated with healthy competition between youth groups instead of gambling.

Petty services

A number of poor women, young and less young, are involved in petty trade, selling a few goods on the way to and from the market in Dera. One of them is also supported by the rich household running the grain mill house in the *kebele* centre. Another explains:

She is selling oil, biscuits, chewing gum, salt, matches, coffee, baking yeast and candies every Tuesday on the way to the market in Dera, for people who return back home and have forgotten something and do not want to return or go to the kebele centre. She has around twenty customers every market day. Competition by other women doing the same thing is not an issue because there are many market visitors. Petty traders like her get their goods from big commodity traders from Dera or Atsbi, who give them the goods to sell on credit (i.e. they pay only when they have sold them). In her case, she has a revolving capital of 500 Birr i.e. this is more or less the value of what she is selling every Tuesday. On this she makes a profit of 100-200 Birr, but she is using it entirely on the market to buy food for her household. There is one woman who is her regular goods supplier, and gives her credit for more than a week if she has not sold all the goods she gave her; she can keep the unsold goods, and repay the following week when she has sold them. This petty trade is her main livelihood option although she is also involved in chicken production. She wants to use her profits from the chicken production to increase her petty trade volume.

Another poor young woman, 18-year old and living with her parents, has recently started preparing and trading *kollo* in the markets of Dera and Atsbi. She dropped out from school because of not being able to afford school materials. Now with the profit from her *kollo* trade she is able to contribute to her household's expenses such as coffee and other small items. She estimated that she made a profit of ten *Birr* every market day (twice a week).

Non-farm service cooperative

Besides providing agricultural inputs, the multiservice cooperative of Harresaw is also providing goods such as coffee, sugar, grain, flour and livestock fodder to *kebele* residents, at cheaper prices than on the market. For instance, there is a five (5) *Birr* discount on the market price for coffee. According to the leader of the cooperative, this alternative supply has been particularly useful during drought seasons as it somewhat helped stabilising the market. For him, this should be considered as an achievement of the cooperative. However, very few respondents mentioned this when talking about prices during the drought and about inflation generally.

Of note, a number of small traders said that sometimes, they bought grain at a cheap price from the cooperative to then retail it on Dera or Atsbi markets. On the supply side, shop owners did not spontaneously mention competition from the cooperative as an issue. One of the traders noted that he faces some competition from it, for instance for *frushka*, but this is not a big issue as the cooperative is not able to supply goods on a continuous basis. Interruption of supplies was indeed acknowledged by the leader as a constraint on the cooperative's achievements, as well as their inability to engage in marketing farmers' outputs, thus far.

Theft and burglary

Theft and burglary were raised as issues. No one mentioned things like organised or systematic robbery, but one trader for instance, said robbers broke into his house while he was away trading in Afar, and they took 10,000 *Birr* in cash as well as gold and blankets.

One respondent explained that theft of crop was not heard of, but there were cases of conflicts in which one household might destroy another household's crop or straw by setting it on fire. Another respondent said that there was stealing of sheep and chicken. She had been victim of this several times, which prompted her to stop her sheep and chicken production activity, and she knew neighbours who had similar experiences.

A group of women also mentioned that mobile stealing is becoming common (as was already mentioned in 2012) – but this happens to people from Harresaw when they are at the market in Dera. Thieves are jailed if they are caught doing it, but incidents continued to occur.

The same women explained that there are mugging incidents, with people robbing others who return from having taken money at the bank. They told a recent story of two people who did this to a friend. Other respondents mentioned a stabbing incident, for money as well. In that instance, a group of friends was drinking together as one of them had just withdrawn several months of pay from the bank and was paying drinks to the others; at the end of the evening as they were going home, the others mugged and stabbed him to take his money. It is not clear whether these are the same or different incident.

One respondent explicitly linked 'criminal activities' to young people, noting that they can easily use their phone to communicate and coordinate to escape after committing any crime. Yet another noted that more than theft and burglary, the "*bad habits*" of young people returning from Saudi (such as getting drunk, refusing to pay and fighting with the bar owner, shouting and disturbing the *kebele* residents, and fighting with their parents and breaking things in the household) were a bigger concern for community people. One woman said church burglary and stealing were common, explaining that in the past few years cash was stolen twice and recently, precious crosses were missing after a funeral ceremony (see p.25).

Government involvement in non-farm self-employment

Most respondents involved in one or another form of non-farm self-employment explained they never got any support from the government. As said earlier, *wereda* officials recognized that the *wereda* does not focus on agricultural marketing in Harresaw as the production is too small.

On the community respondents' side, 'the government' was at times presented as non-responsive - in the case, for instance, of the young businessman wanting the *kebele* administration to provide him with a place to build his own working premises; or even obstructive – e.g. by the man wanting to install his grain mill house but not being given work premises by the *kebele*. Whilst these examples of local dynamics cannot be seen as reflecting a government policy, there also were cases of government regulations seen as unhelpful. These include the cases of the woman running the Selam snack bar who was told by *wereda* officials to improve her premises (presumably to comply with hygiene standards) as well as the men engaged in construction and who wanted to organize in

association but were told they could not do so as they do not have COCs. This was also often raised in relation to taxation (further discussed below).

More generally, when asked to talk about government support to non-farm self-employment, many of the female respondents said they had *“no idea about this”*.

Among those respondents who had an idea about this, there was a consensus that government support was too little, and also, not grounded in consideration of the local environment, in which landlessness and recurrent drought are prominent factors. For instance, one man called for *“changes that are relevant for the community considering the lack of rainfall and drought in the area”*. An elderly lady, influential and considered to be ‘modern’ as she had travelled abroad to Eritrea years back, stressed the need for *“other interventions that could support people to improve their economic situation through off-farm work”*, such as labour work for young people in factories in the area:

“Where do you see a factory in this village? Let alone a factory, do you see any micro/small enterprise? Yes, there are more schools, we are more educated, but schools cannot be eaten”.

This opinion was shared by notable people, including some of the government employees. For instance, the community police highlighted the limited range of government support (for poultry, fattening, beekeeping) hence the issue of supply exceeding the demand – or what he called the *“rigidity in the programme, with no change in what is offered since years”*. Other issues in his views are the lack of entrepreneurial skill training and of follow up; and the fact that most of the support is provided to groups whereas *“group work is a challenge; groups have a lot of problems and are incapacitating themselves”*. He summed up saying that *“policies and programmes are good but they are hanging in the sky, they never come to the ground”*.

For one of the priests of Harresaw, *“the programmes for the youth are inefficient in terms of coverage, sustainability and implementation”*. Whereas for the head teacher of Harresaw school, *“there is a lot of talk, research, studies, by the wereda and other people, but little action”* and at the same time, *“young people are naturally impatient so, when they have to wait six months for a loan, they get fed up and if and when they eventually get it, they use it to migrate.”*

Support – land, training, credit

As can be seen above, there were issues with the three most obvious potential forms of government support to non-farm self-employment - that is, access to land, training and access to credit.

Access to credit

Problems in accessing credit, already mentioned as a constraint on farming activities, was also the most often mentioned constraint to engaging in or expanding one’s non-farm self-employed activity. The main issues are as follows:

- There is a limited number of lending institutions accessible to Harresaw residents, with only Dedebit, and the savings and credit cooperative formed under the multiservice cooperative which lends only to its members.
- The amount of total loan capital available for the *kebele* (and *wereda*) as a whole is limited (due to the *wereda*-level low performance in repaying loans, affecting Harresaw even though loan repayment performance of the *kebele* is better than average, see p.62). As a result, for instance, a group of youth which came with a proposal was told all the money available had already been allocated and they should resubmit their proposal when some other money would be available.
- Many respondents also mentioned that the maximum loan amounts were too small (6,000 *Birr* for individual loans from the RUSACCO; 15,000 *Birr* and 30,000 *Birr* for Dedebit loans to

individuals and groups, respectively). One young woman, migrant returnee, explained that the cap at 15,000 *Birr* for individual loan is recent. Her husband went recently to enquire about a loan but he was dismayed when he heard this, and they decided against taking this too small amount as they feared they would end up spending it on household consumption.

- The preconditions and in particular, the preference for loans to groups are found onerous. Most respondents wanting a loan or access to capital talked about individual activities they wanted to expand or engage in. One woman explained that mixed gender groups are especially problematic as women cannot trust men who “*may disappear on migration*”. One migrant returnee explained that even the loans they were told would be available on return when the government called them back from Saudi to avoid deportation (in 2013), were finally not available for individuals but for groups of three. This was a big disappointment and he decided to migrate again.
- One other issue is access to loans by under-18 young people, for which they have to have their parents’ signature and if the parents already have a loan, they do not have any chance. One unmarried young woman stressed that even for those above 18 years-old, the *kebele* administration tend to refuse to provide them with support letter saying they are too young to shoulder the responsibility. A group of mostly young returnee migrants put this as follows:

“Those who say that 15,000 Birr is too small never tried their luck with migration. We, who have been there, we know that with that amount you can do something meaningful. But, the government has a lot of prejudices, like saying that young people who are not married are not mature, instable, will not be able to manage the money. Yet, they are the ones with energy to work hard.”

In addition, several respondents pointed other ways in which the *kebele* administration is selective in supporting access to credit. One poor woman mentioned that preference is given to “*rich people who are able to get anything they want because they have good connections*” and “*get loans easily compared to others because they are trusted to repay back*”. A middle-wealth man similarly highlighted the importance of “*some kind of network*” including blood or marriage relationships, with *kebele* officials. One of the two honey production investors noted that in town, being a formally recognised model businessperson brings benefits such as easy access to credit.

- The high interest rate, especially by Dedit where it stands at 18%, was highlighted by several community respondents with a range of different profiles (young and adult people, men and women) and even government employees, as highly problematic. The *kebele* manager explained:

This 18% interest rate is a big disincentive. It discourages people and here, it is far too high considering the situation. Harresaw is very dry, a very tough place. As people living at the periphery, we need special treatment by the government.”

Young people were even more critical. One of them said this interest rate was “*disastrous*” and mentioned a perception that “*the government is taking advantage of us who are poor people by charging this high interest rate, and using the money for profitable investments with rich people*”. In his views, borrowers could be asked to repay more quickly - for instance, within a year instead of three years as currently the case, but for loans without interest or with a much smaller interest rate like 3% or 5%.

- Delays in getting a loan seem to be widespread. The limitations in how much loan money in total is available for the *kebele* partly explains this but inefficiency and slowness in handling submissions also play a role. For instance, none of the youth associations recently formed in Harresaw had got the loans that were promised to them, several months after getting the

land from the *kebele* administration and even training in the case of one beekeeping association. Yet, as one of the group members explained, on their side they already spent 57,000 *Birr* to construct a house for the guard for their land and 1,270 *Birr* to buy their stamp. But they are still waiting for the loan to buy the beehives.

Unsurprisingly, several respondents concluded that microfinance and credit services were among the worst in the *kebele*. Several young people (men and women) highlighted the gap between the “government’s messages to the youth to be organized and benefit from credit and training services” and the lack of action in practice, giving this as a reason for the prevailing “not good” relation between the youth and the government.

Training

The story is not better in relation to training. Again, most people involved in or wanting to involve in some kind of non-farm self-employment activity said they never took or had access to training.

One exception was the young woman who had opened the modern hair braiding salon. She had taken a three-month hairdressing training, presumably at a private institution, with the support of her sister paying the 3,800 *Birr* fees required. However, as two other young women noted, even if training helpful for self-employment was available, for instance for beauty salon, wood work and business skills, “it does not work in the *kebele* because there is no support for such skilled young people and there is no demand by the community for such businesses too.”

Among the young men interviewed, most said there was in practice no training opportunities provided by the government. Several young men mentioned that being party member or having good connection with the *kebele* administration gave more of a chance to get access to opportunities such as training. Like for credit, there was a sense of frustration with the government failing to act on its promises. For instance, one young woman mentioned that some months ago ten young women with grade 10 were selected for training in Atsbi but there had been no news after that. On their side, *wereda* officials explained that the last time they had called illegal migrants to return and promised them training and credit again (like in 2013), they then changed their mind. They found that there were three categories of returnees, those with no money at all, those with a little bit of money, and those with a substantial amount of money (like a young woman who had come back with 200,000 *Birr*). They decided that the priority was to provide training to the latter group because often they did not have an idea of what to do with their money.

Even the successful young businessman noted the government inaction, stressing that he and other like him needed training in entrepreneurial skills and in how to become successful. The policeman was of the same opinion, explaining that

One missing element is the provision of entrepreneurial skills, so that the young people would know how to use the money. If you are not taught, you finish the money then you migrate. There is insufficient follow-up. After all, these are relatively little educated people (dropouts before grade 8), they should not be just given the money and that’s it.

As for the priest already quoted earlier, in his opinion:

(with the 70-80,000 Birr needed to migrate legally) you could also do something here. For instance carpentry, tailoring, getting a driving license, installing a grain mill. Why does this not happen more? Lack of money and lack of skill training. That’s squarely on the government’s side. They should provide skill training so that with one trained, skills can be passed to others like siblings and others who would learn by working with the trained person.

TVET training

The Women Affairs leader was enthusiastic about the recently established government TVET in Atsbi, whereas in 2012 at the time of WIDE3 fieldwork the nearest government TVET was found in

Wukro. This, in her opinion, has the potential of changing things for a number of young people. She said that *wereda* officials made a lot of sensitisation about it, explaining to parents that their children who are not good academically should take this opportunity etc. They enrolled students from everywhere including 15 male and 20 female students from Harresaw. She believes that attending such kinds of training would better equip these young people with skills for the kinds of jobs they could get in urban centres.

Her enthusiasm was not shared by the head teacher of Harresaw school, who believes that it will take years before this could make a real difference. The reasons for this, he said, include that the TVET first focuses on people from Atsbi and only a few from the *kebele*. Moreover, it is “*not mature*”, they do not have the means to teach the students properly. The *kebele* manager also explained that most students were from Atsbi; and knowledgeable respondents from the community did not know anyone from the *kebele* studying there.

However, as seen above in the case of the tailor, there may be a few people who see that this could bring them a way to improve their non-farm activity.

Business licences and taxation

As explained earlier (see *Taxation and contributions* above), in the *kebele* it is the *wereda* tax office employees who collect all kinds of tax other than the land tax – and it is the responsibility of the business owner to go to the tax office to make the payment. In municipalities like Dera, this responsibility, including the estimation of businesses’ revenues as bases for calculating the tax amounts due, is transferred to the municipality, but under the supervision of the *wereda* tax officials. Several women from Harresaw mentioned that *wereda* officials come and close businesses who tard to pay or do not have a license, and that those who own businesses in the centre of the *kebele* generally complain about the high amount of tax they are asked to pay.

The Selam snack bar described in *Box 17* above and paying 1,860 *Birr* of annual tax whilst allegedly making 100-200 *Birr* profit a month, is a case in point. In addition, fear of high taxation levels also deters people from trying to expand their business, like in the case of the young woman having opened the modern hair braiding salon, who would like to provide a wider range of modern hair dressing services but (besides lacking capital) is “*afraid of being forced to take a license, which then leads to too much tax payment.*”

However, some other bigger businesspeople mentioned that the tax amounts they were asked to pay for the last year were lower than the years before and this was fairer. This includes the baker, paying 6,000 *Birr* for his bakery from which he made an 80,000 *Birr* profit. The comparatively bigger crop trader who also has a beer distribution business and a billiard business also thinks it has become fairer; last year he paid 1,500 *Birr* for his crop trading business, down from 3,100 *Birr* before that. He also paid 1,000 *Birr* and 800 *Birr* for the beer distribution and the billiard activities, respectively. They and a few others instead highlighted that there was no improvement with regard to getting a license and this was still a long process. As the case of the baker illustrates, it also is a process prone to interference by business owners already established, who do not want competitors and try to prevent licenses for new businesses to be issued.

In Harresaw most agricultural product traders do not have a license, generally arguing that they do not have a ‘permanent place’ like a shop or a store. But as highlighted by one woman, those with a shop or a store are now forced to have a license and pay taxes and this is a recent change. The larger trader with his own warehouse does have a license; one of the smaller ones without a license said he was worried to be caught by the tax officials.

With regard to shops, some of the smaller ones may not have a license, which was highlighted as unfair competition by the couple owning the second largest and licensed shop in the *kebele*. Like the smaller traders, it seems that thus far local drink houses do not have licenses.

The recently established youth associations have to be licensed to get credit. However, they have not yet started paying taxes; for most of them this is because they have not yet started production. It is not clear whether the stone and sand production associations, which started working some eight months before the fieldwork, will be asked to pay taxes after their first year of activity.

Non-farm employment

Most of the young men and women interviewed noted that there are more grade 10, 12 and even college completers/graduates than in the past, but this raises various issues.

First, there are no job opportunities for them in the community. As one young woman put it

“... government is not paying attention to rural youth. One of my brothers is a teacher after having studied at Adwa TTI, and another is now student there. But there are very few young people who have this chance. The government does not have a strategy for providing jobs for the more educated youth, and yet, they want to convince them to not migrate, that this is risky etc. But they don't have any alternative to offer them, so why should the youth listen to them? If they cannot have anything that brings them hope here (“tesfa”) then they will continue to migrate.”

Young women with grade 10 or 12 and who cannot get further either come back and help their parents or get married, or (in most cases according to some respondents) go and live elsewhere to find a job or try and continue their study or both. Increasingly, migration to Saudi is one of the options they consider and that some do take. For instance, one of the women interviewed has a 17-year old daughter who failed at grade 10 and she worries that she might decide to migrate to Saudi as there is nothing to do for her.

For young men with the same education level it is equally frustrating, and even moving to towns to look for a job may not succeed, as explained by another woman talking about her nephew:

“He completed grade ten and has no job. He is moving here and there in search of a job but he is not successful. He always quarrels and disagrees with his parents out of frustration of being unemployed.”

So, and even more than young women, unemployed young men migrate to Saudi.

College graduates appear to be doing better although several respondents said that even for them it is hard to find a job; although studies like engineering and medicine give a better chance. Moreover, whereas there are still young people who consider teaching as a worthwhile opportunity, others noted that *“these days even teachers are migrating or shifting from teaching to trading”* (25-30 year old poor young man). One poor woman narrates how she lost her son who died when he migrated to Saudi two years before, having quit teaching as he found the salary too low.

Generally, people with college/diploma education also do not stay in the community. One exception is a young woman who is a level 4 TVET graduate¹⁶ from an agriculture college. She came back after graduation and lives with her parents. She is trying to follow up on vacancies in Atsbi and Wukro: she passed some interviews but has been unsuccessful so far. She said she is the only one at her education level who has returned to Harresaw. Others try their luck from outside of the community, but this too is not easy. Another young woman gave the example of a girl she knows, who graduated from technical college and lived for a year with her sister in Atsbi but did not get a job. Finally she moved to Agula near Wukro where she is employed as housemaid. Others take jobs such as waitress in cafés whilst waiting for better jobs. But as one young woman who is considering migrating to Saudi said, in this kind of job *“in Mekelle one gets 300-500 Birr per month, that's not meaningful”*.

¹⁶ The TVET system is organised in five levels.

Formal government/NGO employment

From a knowledgeable source, there are 53 residents in Harresaw with formal government jobs. These includes many who are not from Harresaw, but also some of the teachers, the head teacher of the Harresaw school and the *kebele* manager (who graduated as a teacher and started teaching then applied for and got his current job), who are from the community.

In addition, there are more educated people from the *kebele* who are employed elsewhere than five years ago. Among the interviews there were several mentions of children or siblings with government jobs, including one woman with two sons employed in agriculture; a young woman with a brother graduated from Adwa TTI and now teaching and another brother studying there; a woman whose son is a member of the army. Other cases include the young woman now employed as police in Assosa; and two young women who graduated from university and were employed by government somewhere in Tigray.

But this is relatively insignificant compared with many other less successful cases and also the many who do not succeed to move high enough to apply for such kind of positions.

Employed by the kebele

There are a few *kebele* level paid jobs. These include the accountant (500 *Birr*/month) and the shop keeper (700 *Birr*/month) of the multiservice cooperative as well as the auditor of the savings and credit cooperative. Some other *kebele* level jobs are paid by the PSNP transfers and so, only for the months when PSNP transfers are made. These include the guards for the protected forests, the communal grazing land and the FTC, as well as the man who is controlling the water turns in the irrigation association. There are also guards for the health centre and the two schools (it is not known if they are paid in cash or by the PSNP transfers).

All other *kebele*-related functions that are not fulfilled by employees paid by the *wereda* are fulfilled by volunteers (see above).

Private employment

Locally, there are very few cases of private employment beyond daily labour. One knowledgeable respondent said there are no more than five people employed by private businesspeople and working for them for some time.

These include the young boy who is working for the baker, who was hired primarily as agricultural worker to take care of his employer's hybrid cattle (see [Box 12](#) above), although he is also helping in the snack bar and bakery businesses. The man interviewed as a bigger trader and involved in a number of other businesses has three employees: two young men, one to feed his cattle and the other to manage his billiard business, and a young woman who distributes beer to the *kebele* drink houses. He hired the young man employed at the billiard house on a daily basis and the other two were monthly salaried. The two beekeeping investors hired five individuals for three months for construction work on their land but this is now completed. They still have one permanent employee as beekeeper, whom they pay 2,000 *Birr* per month. The man who tried to start a grain mill house said he had five employees but as he had to stop they migrated and he now has one man who is guarding his mill, whom he pays 350 *Birr*/month.

As noted above, there are a number of (mainly young) people who migrated to towns, including Atsbi, Wukro and Mekelle, for jobs in private businesses. One adult woman interviewed on young people's prospects mentioned that education is "very essential to get at least small jobs, and some young people who learnt up to grade 10 are moving to other areas and get involved in different kinds of work and get an income."

Actual cases mentioned by community respondents include those of a young woman who worked in a café in Mekelle whilst also studying; another young woman without any education and who is

employed to take care of a child in a physicist's household in Atsbi; a young man who is working as assistant driver for his uncle, in Mekelle, at least part of the time, and whose mother hopes that his uncle will help him to get a driving license; and the young woman graduate but who could not find a job and is now employed as housemaid in Agula.

Government involvement in non-farm employment

As further outlined in the 'youth' chapter, unemployment or underemployment, especially of young people, is considered as a major problem by Harresaw respondents. Several of them called on the government to address this, stressing that if young people cannot hope for something locally, or at least in their country, they will continue to migrate and there is nothing else they could do. Many mentioned that the government should establish more factories, locally or elsewhere. For instance, one of the Saudi migrant returnees wanted a *"factory or something like that established nearby, for uneducated youth to get jobs near their home"*. The Youth Affairs leader (who is also a Saudi migrant returnee) also explained:

"We are not looking for white collar high profile jobs, but for jobs. Of course, totally uneducated youth wouldn't qualify for those type of factory jobs, but there are a good number of high school leavers who would qualify. Same with the textile factories, which generate a good number of jobs."

However, he added

"We hear that there are a lot of factories in the Region. But we don't get the information about vacancies. These opportunities only go to those who live nearby."

Haftom, the other migrant returnee, explained that young people in Harresaw do know about factories elsewhere – for instance, in the industrial park of Mekelle. But it is difficult to get recruited. A year ago there was a recruitment process and some young people went to pass an exam in Atsbi. Some of them passed the exam and they were told that they would be recruited but it is now more than a year that they haven't had any news.

In the *wereda*, *wereda* officials talked about five licenses recently given for water production factories, of which two have started operations; and more than fifty licenses for hotels. However, presumably in the same way as for vacancies in farther industrial parks or factories the young people in Harresaw are not informed and/or these jobs are first taken by the many unemployed youth from Atsbi town itself.

Migration

Migration emerged from the fieldwork as both, indispensable to the local economy, and the biggest issue in the community. All of the community respondents asked about the three most important problems of Harresaw mentioned migration, and a large majority linked this to un(der)employment of young people. Most people, talking about migration, actually think about migration abroad which in Harresaw, means migration to Saudi. For most of these involved, migration to Afar is more like commuting. Migration to towns is also rarely evoked as migration. All of these forms of seeking work outside of the community are discussed in this chapter.

Migration changes

The main evolutions in the migration pattern since 2012 (WIDE3 fieldwork) are the drastic changes in the risk/benefit balance of migration to Saudi; and the fact that an increasing number of women now also migrate there, in spite of the much higher risks. Migration to Humera appears to have declined. Most people gave as reason the risk of malaria. For the Youth Affairs leader it is also because most jobs are taken by people from other Regions, which *"bothers us because Humera is in*

Tigray". Instead, migration to Afar has taken an even more prominent position than in 2012 as a migration destination. Each of these aspects is described in more depth below.

Commuting

There is no daily commuting as Harresaw is too far away from any place where there could be regular work opportunities. Many individuals commute on a longer basis between Harresaw and Afar and some also between Harresaw and towns like Mekelle or Wukro, spending there a few weeks or even months once or several times in a year. This is further described in the sections on *Migration to Afar* and *Migration to towns* below.

One specific form of commuting concerns rich farmers who have houses in towns (Dera or Atsbi) and live part of the time in town, but regularly return to Harresaw to fulfil their *kebele* residents' obligations there (paying land tax and participation in the annual community free labour) in order to avoid losing their farm land. There are between 50 and 100 farmers in this case according to different respondents. Commuting in this way is one of the options to keep one's farm land. Another option is for some members of the farming households to permanently reside in town and other household members to work on the land and fulfil the *kebele* obligations. In all these cases the household members all have IDs from the *kebele*.

Migration for work

Migration for work concerns both men and women, mostly but not only from the younger generations. Migration forms include occasional rural-rural migration to neighbouring *kebeles* and seasonal migration to neighbouring *weredas* for farming daily labour (e.g. one respondent mentioned Edaga Hamus and Adigrat) as well as to Humera though this is on the decrease as said above; migration to towns of various sizes; migration to Afar; and migration to Saudi. Rural-rural migration is rarely mentioned in interviews; it is not described here. Migration abroad elsewhere than to Saudi was not mentioned even once.

All respondents who spoke about the effects of the 2008 EC drought mentioned increased migration as one of them, as many more people moved to towns, to Afar and to Saudi to find food and/or money for their household. Several respondents said that the relief was useful but not sufficient.

Migration to Saudi

Several respondents thought no one from Harresaw travelled legally to Saudi. In the interviews, one man from Harresaw *kushet* had a son who migrated many years ago and is legally employed as a driver; this does not mean he is earning more money, but the big difference is that he is free to come and go as he wishes. However, legal migrants seem to be a very small minority and the rest of this section focuses on illegal migration, by far the most common form in Harresaw¹⁷.

Perceptions by the community

Box 19 below outlines the views of a man, nicknamed Kofi Annan for his oratory and mediation skills and respected for these skills as well as for his principled positions. He used to work as a guard for the FTC but was sacked for opposing the *kebele* administration directive that all farmers had to buy fertiliser, flatly refusing to do so. This earned him respect among the youngsters as well, as young men also challenged the *kebele* administration on that issue, telling them that there is "*no law or anything saying that farmers have to do so*". 'Kofi Annan' worked as social court member for

¹⁷ In this instance, the term 'illegal' may apply. People from Harresaw travelled against the ban by the Ethiopian Government and, since the issuing of the new Proclamation regulating work abroad, outside of the provisions of the Proclamation; they cross Djibouti and Yemen without visa; and they stay in Saudi without legal documents authorizing them to stay and live there.

several years. He is now helping people to submit cases to the court or the administration by writing letters for them against a fee.

Box 19. The dilemma of migration to Saudi in Harresaw

Youth migration to Saudi is still increasing. The ban was not effective as anyway people migrated illegally and continued to do so. There is seasonal migration in Afar but that is not an 'important' issue. That's also not what's most important for the young people, their real interest is to go to Saudi. There was a government campaign, but this was not effective.

Some of the migrants manage to save and some try to invest, but most often they migrate again. There are three main categories of people in that respect:

1. Those who return with some money and invest in something may want or need more capital.
2. Those who returned having failed and coming back with nothing or not even enough money to refund the costs of their trip, often taken as a loan, so they have to return.
3. Those who took a package from Dedebit and were not able to repay. They borrow informally to migrate to repay both the Dedebit and the other loans. If they get captured in Yemen their families have to pay money for their release. So, they get into an impoverishment cycle.

In most cases people who return with some money return with relatively little, hence all they can do is investing in the kind of small activity you see in Harresaw (shops, teahouses, barber shops etc.). A few get more money and can for instance invest in grinding mills. Another very few get enough to invest in houses in Atsbi or Wukro and move there. Nobody with a lot of money invest locally. They are anyway very few.

With regard to people's opinion about migration there are two categories:

- The older generation, 50 and plus like himself, are generally advising young people to stay and use the opportunities created by the government such as hillside land management or investing in irrigation. There are some young people who are successful in doing this. Others are not, as he just said, and those ones migrate to repay the loan they took for the package.
- The young people – when they talk, say that they are convinced and won't migrate. But this is not genuine conviction, and as soon as they are no longer in a meeting with their elders, they talk differently, and go. This is especially the case, again, for those who have a loan they can't repay which, they say, is *"worse than risking our lives"*.

It's also truly difficult. Some young people tried to invest for instance in irrigation, they started producing vegetables, but there has been a severe frost problem and everything was lost so, they got frustrated. *"We listened to you but see, there is no other option than migrating"*.

Government is doing something but not enough. There are good policies and programmes at the federal, regional level, but a big gap with implementation. For instance for the package, the policy says that loans can be given up to 30,000 *Birr* but in practice this is restricted to 10,000 *Birr*. In addition, the packages get delayed. So the youth get frustrated as it's *"too little too late"*.

In one year there may be something like 200 people going, or more, but there are also the same number of people returning so, it's a flow out and in. People migrate due to a combination of factors. Mindset is only one. Drought is an important one. There is also a tradition of migration. Earlier on people were migrating to Eritrea. But even then, migration was a response to hardship (drought, loans to repay, unemployment). Migration is a response both to current economic problems, and anticipated ones, and one hears young people saying, *"If I'm staying here idle my savings will get finished and I'll be in trouble"*.

The older generation advises against migrating but at the same time, in Harresaw life without migration would be impossible. If there was no migration the community would be 100% dependent on rich people and on government aid, including food aid and PSNP.

Making it legal would not change anything, people would continue to go illegally because the legal way is expensive (passport, visa) and there are a lot of procedures with immigration etc., so it's a

headache. In addition, the destination countries have prerequisites that wouldn't be possible to fulfil for the people of Harresaw. So, legal migration would target only the rich part of the society.

'Kofi Annan''s position is exemplary of how migration to Saudi is perceived by many respondents of the 'older generation' (40-45 and above) in Harresaw. Most of the adult respondents talking about migration to Saudi first note the higher risks than in the past (see below). For a few, in spite of this, migration is an integral part of the solution for a place like Harresaw. This is the position, for instance, of the relatively wealthy man who is trying to invest in a grain mill house but barred from doing so by the *kebele* administration not giving him work premises. He first migrated to Saudi in 1991 (GC) and has since migrated two more times, for several years. This was critical to his becoming wealthy and he knows other people in similar cases. Now his children are migrating; the oldest migrated when he was 16, he came back recently but did not even stay for two nights and migrated again; the younger one is now preparing for migrating. It is not out of economic necessity that his children are migrating, but he wants them to become economically independent.

For most, like for 'Kofi Annan', migration to Saudi is a big issue (because it should not be part of the solution), but it is hard to see what else can be done except if there is a dramatic change in getting jobs for young people. One priest of the same age as 'Kofi Annan' tries to explain this as follows:

I personally stand very firmly against migration and those who think it is a solution. Yes, we are in problems, this is not new, and if nothing changes we will remain in problems. But migration will not bring any sustainable livelihood change. My advice to the youth is to be patient and work hard here. But they don't listen, out of frustration, which I understand. I don't support migration, but I understand their frustration so I cannot criticise them harshly. What do I have to tell them? As for the Church, when our government is asking us to educate the youth, for instance against migration, we do so. It is part of our responsibilities as members of the community. But the Church will not formally condemn the migrants.

As noted earlier, he is one of those who find the government programmes for the youth "*inefficient in terms of coverage, sustainability and implementation.*" Even officials like the community policeman are caught in the dilemma, recognising the reality of the factors that push people from "*a rough environment*" like Harresaw to migrate abroad, and also reckoning that whereas government is trying and there are policies and programmes aimed to give alternatives to people, too often they are "*hanging in the sky*". Others like the *kebele* manager and a number of adult farmers also recognise that even though there is an effort at reallocating land and giving hillside land to youth, this cannot be sufficient considering the big number of landless youth.

So, even if, according to a group of knowledgeable women, most returnees from Saudi do not have a better life than other community members, continuously going, coming back on deportation and migrating again, as one man put it, "*for our children, going is a necessity*".

Young people's perceptions are outlined below, and in the 'youth' chapter.

Who migrates?

Most migrants (to Saudi) are young; the community police estimated that between 10 and 20% of the migrants are adult people. Many respondents noted that migrants to Saudi are more diverse than in the past. Some highlighted that whilst in the past it was mainly uneducated young people who were interested, these days educated youth, but also teachers, development agents and other government employees want to migrate. As one knowledgeable young man said:

"Most want to have enough money in order to move to towns and lead life there. To get that money in short period of time, they consider migrating to Arab countries as the only best option they have."

Even priests and deacons migrate. A group of knowledgeable women said that at the time of the fieldwork there were some five priests and three deacons who were serving again in community

churches after returning from Saudi, which as noted earlier, upsets some community members. One of the priest returnees even built a house in the urban centre of the *kebele*.

One major change is that more (usually young) women are now migrating to Saudi and elsewhere in Ethiopia. All six young women interviewed noted this. As one of them put it:

“Migration was not common for young girls in the past, even though it was for young men. However, it is getting very common for young women these days, due to low economic situation of the community as well as lack of employment for girls who fail at grade ten. Therefore, they migrate to Kunewa (in Afar), Dera, Atsbi, Wukro and Mekelle as well as Saudi in search of jobs such as employment in businesses like shops, cafés and restaurants as well as to be housemaid. Every young woman who migrates hopes that she will be rich after migrating to Saudi.”

Older women said that even married women are migrating, sometimes divorcing their husband to do so; or young women drop out of school with the aim of migrating.

Sometimes couples migrate, like a young couple now living in the *kebele* centre and whose story was narrated by the young wife as follows:

Her husband went first, then she joined him. She did not have the time to start working as she was caught and deported rapidly after her arrival. He stayed longer, though finally he was caught too and deported. He had some savings and they have invested in various activities. They also have a young child. She mentioned his dismay in hearing about the loan conditions (see above) and did not rule out that he would go again and if she called her, she would go again, leaving her child with her parents.

In another case, the couple first migrated together, then they returned, then the wife migrated again alone but she died over there.

For many respondents, migration to Saudi is more frequent among and easier for young people from rich households. Then if the youngsters are successful, rich households can further improve their life, build houses in town etc. including for these youth. But many poor parents *“lack the money to send their children”* (one poor young woman). Or, they have to sell their cattle, rent-out their land, take loans to send their children. (See below for more on *Financing migration*).

Some respondents note that poorer people therefore migrate to Afar, which has become *“like little Saudi”*. For a 23-year old middle-wealth young woman talking about women’s migration, *“those who migrate to Saudi are young girls from medium and rich households and young women from poor households migrate to Kunewa (in Afar) and Atsbi for labour and domestic work.”*

See the [Child migration](#) section with regard to migration of under-18 (considered as children in the Ethiopian legislation) in Saudi and elsewhere.

Trends over time

Most respondents estimated that nowadays, 200 to 300 people from Harresaw annually travel to Saudi, down from about 500 people five years ago. But as the policeman and others say, for 200-300 who go there is the same number who return, in most (if not all) cases because they are deported, and therefore *“there is high mobility in the area”*. As the *kebele* manager noted, between 2008/9 and 2013 the number of migrants was steadily going up. It had started rising just after the Millennium drought (2000 EC) as so many people were indebted with government package loans that they could not repay. For a few years migration to Saudi was promising. People could repay their loans and save and invest. One migrant returnee said that in 2013 he travelled with a group of about 500-600 people in which 10 were from Harresaw; another who migrated first before the Millennium drought travelled with 110 people, all from around Atsbi and Edaga Hamus. The youth

affairs kebele leader who migrated in 2002 EC (2010) travelled with 16 young people from the kebele.

But since 2013 fewer people go, as conditions on the journey and in Saudi have deteriorated (see **Migration decision-making** below).

“In 2013 there was the ban and mass repatriation. So, people in the community knew that the route was closed and everyone stayed quiet. Then after two years or so, people were told that the route was open again. So, they decided to go again. The first information was by the government. The information that the route was opened again, and one could travel came from brokers” (returnee).

Overall, fewer are going in a year but the number is still very high. According to one knowledgeable woman there is not one household in the community who did not have at least one household member in Saudi at some point in time in the last five to seven years. Just for women, the 18-year old poor young woman cited above said she knew around 10 young women of her age, just from the Ekunta got, who migrated to Saudi and are working there as housemaids. A slightly older one (20-year old), poor as well, was talking about 20 young women of her age who are in Saudi, and 30 who returned, either by choice or being deported, many of whom now living outside of the community.

Factors driving migration to Saudi

Those like Kofi Annan, the community police, the priest and many other adults mention poverty, landlessness and land fragmentation, the recurrent drought, the harshness of the place, the very limited resources in the area, un(der)employment and the lack of options for young people as push factors. The community police also noted big weaknesses in government repatriation programmes:

In 2013/14 (2006 EC) there was a repatriation programme but in reality, returnees were not taken care of and this had big implications, driving many to go back. There was again a repatriation programme in 2009 EC, and it was done a little bit better as they had learned – but not really sufficiently yet.

This was confirmed by several returnees who talked about empty promises; how for instance the loans which they were promised turned out to be group loans or were not available (as said earlier); or how even more basic things like covering their costs of travelling back home in Ethiopia were not done. Their stories (in the box below) do not quite confirm that the more recent repatriation programme was done better, something that even the kebele manager recognised in his account of how it was implemented in Harresaw (also in the box).

Box 20. Repatriation programmes in Harresaw

Saudi migrant returnee, married with a young child, with a small shop in kebele centre - *“When the government called on all illegal migrants to return (in 2013), I considered staying as I had good relations with my employer and he could have helped me. But the Ethiopian government also said they wouldn’t take any responsibility for those staying so it was quite uncertain, and I decided to take up the offer to return. I was content with my salary in Saudi but it wasn’t that much, and that also played in my decision to return. When we came back, the government people gave us vouchers, telling us not to lose them and that we would be called etc. Many promises were made but then nothing happened, these were all empty promises.”*

Saudi migrant returnee, 18 or so, just opening a barber shop in a shed in the kebele centre (one more barber shop) - *“I went to Saudi in 2016 but stayed only 6 months. Then the government called those who were there, and I decided to come back as they said. I had heard about the previous repatriation and empty promises. In fact, in the group with whom I travelled were people who had been in Saudi and repatriated in 2013. This time again, although the government people talked about plenty of jobs that would be created nothing happened. We were dropped in Addis and even had to cover the costs of coming back to Harresaw by ourselves”.*

Wife who joined her husband in Saudi (in 2013) and was caught and deported a few months before him - *“Those caught (by the police in Saudi) were put in a camp for 8 days. We were treated ok and given food. Then we were put in a plane for Addis. The plane was full of women like me. In the plane we were well treated, we got food and those who didn’t have clothes got some. But in Addis we were just dropped there with nothing. Even worse, some people from Addis took advantage of us by renting rooms at outrageously high prices for the women who were waiting a few days before going home – a small room rented for four or five people, each paying 400 Birr/day. In my case, I had to pay this even though I didn’t even stay for the night”.*

Kebele manager on the 2009 EC repatriation programme – *“There was a call by the Government, following the ultimatum given by the Saudi authorities. The Government sent planes to Jeddah to repatriate those Ethiopians who presented themselves. There were 72 returnees from Harresaw. When they came back, they were welcomed and the kebele organised a coffee ceremony and the returnees were asked to tell the community about their experience and they showed their commitment to work here. But, they didn’t get a lot of support. They were told to form groups for packages, but at that time there was no loan money available. So, some of them started something by themselves, others remained idle waiting for support, and approximately 20 of the 72 migrated again. The lack of loan money was a big issue. The kebele tried to offer opportunities based on land but this also failed because land is scarce.”*

Whilst on one hand recognising the very real challenges faced by the community at large and young people in particular, many of the respondents, among both officials and community members, also noted that there was a ‘mindset’ or what others called ‘attitudinal problem’. A few were harshly critical, like this 62-year old rich farmer with two houses in Dera:

The government should punish those lazy youths who are posing security problems, throwing stones to doors and wreaking havoc to the kebele residents. They never want to do work even though there are job opportunities for daily laborers at 100 Birr per day.

Most others talked about misinformation, peer pressure (and as part of this, the influence of Saudi returnees and others wanting to migrate when they see their clothes, hair styles and ‘modern outlook’), and illusions – so that *“people are made to believe that they can only be rich by going abroad”, and young people want quick gains*” (community police); they are *“ambitious to become rich ‘through shortcuts’”* (successful young businessman). Yet others talked about frustration, and that young people are misguided (*“they have the wrong attitude toward work”*, successful young businessman) and lack role models of locally successful people and information about them.

Brokers also featured more prominently in migration narratives than in 2012, as discussed below.

As for the young people themselves, in summary, on one hand there are those (both men and women) saying they never were interested and will never migrate - like the more successful shoe shiner, or the 23-year old, middle-wealth young woman graduated from Wukro agricultural college (currently unemployed) whose role models are *“those women civil servants in the wereda, who serve in their profession and are economically independent from their husbands”*. But they may be in minority. A few others may have considered migrating at some stage then chose another option, like Hagos the baker who said he had been convinced by his brother and also noted the help he got from a trader in Atsbi to start his shop. But they too are few.

On the other hand, many of the returnee migrants interviewed stressed that migration to Saudi was not a choice, but a necessity as there was no other ‘meaningful’ option. The quotes and stories below are exemplars of the reasons given by most of those who wanted to migrate, had migrated and were considering migrating again, or explained what they had in mind when they migrated.

“... we are dying here because lack of job opportunity and drought. No possibility of improving our economic situation when we stay here. However, we have half-half possibility

of death and better life when we migrate to Saudi” (young man chatting informally with friends in a drink house).

“We are here (in the drink house) spending our time because there is no the opportunity of labour work or factories where to be employed in our kebele. We cannot involve in farming because we do not have land. Thus, we migrate to Kunewa and Saudi aiming at establishing our independent livelihood because to be dependent on our parents at this age is not fair. However, that also cannot be a solution. We spend some of our time in migration and return back to the community having some money. We spend it on drinking because it is not enough to establish our own livelihood. What we need is permanent income and a work which would allow us to be settled in the community” (another, in the same conversation)

“There is no young person in the community, who never thinks about migration and who never plans to migrate to Saudi. The problem is lack of money to migrate. I know that there is a risk of death and other problems while migrating illegally. But, I cannot help it because it is not an alternative to stay here. Thus, my hope is that the man who rented my father’s farm land will give me 10,000 Birr extra loan to use our farm land, and I could migrate to Saudi” (18-year old poor young woman)

“... parents who have male children are lucky because their sons can migrate to Saudi and change their life. My household is unlucky that we have no older son who could migrate to Saudi. Our household would be better off if my parents had a son who could migrate to Saudi” (the same young woman).

“Most of the time young girls from poor households who cannot afford to buy educational materials drop out from school and they borrow money from relatives or the government. Not to continue their education because they fear they will not be able to repay it if they do not get a job afterwards; but they hope they will repay it rapidly after migrating to Saudi and working there as they look at the few young women who previously migrated and were successful through migration” (18-year old middle-wealth young woman).

“Some young women who were in Saudi told us that they suffered a lot. Some of them were raped by the brokers and other men on their way. However, they still plan to migrate illegally again. When we asked them why, they said that there is no job opportunity here but they might be lucky this time even though they suffered a lot in the previous migration. They say ‘to try is either to win or to lose!’” (same young woman).

“Many young people migrate saying, it is about ‘death or success’” (woman affairs leader).

Those who talk about it more coldly note the high rate of landlessness and that less than 10% of those currently landless have a chance to get land through reallocation; and aspirations which have changed, with most young men wanting to migrate to involve in business and trade later on – seeing that even teachers nowadays do this. This 27-year old poor young man, who migrated once from 2002 EC to 2005 EC when he was deported and is planning to migrate again, explains

“I have no hope to get land anytime soon, and there is no job opportunity at all in the kebele. Young people migrate because they lost hope in the government. There has been no effort by the kebele or the wereda to solve problems and address the reasons why youth are migrating”.

Migration decision-making

The balance of potential benefits vs risks and actual harms has completely changed since 2012, which leads to a situation of continuous flow in and out as noted above. This is due to a combination of factors including (as mentioned by various respondents, migrant returnees and others who never migrated):

- The ban on the Ethiopian side, though most respondents – migrant returnees and others – blamed the government as lukewarm in implementing it and in raising awareness;
- The official Saudi policy of much stricter crackdown against illegal in-migrants and regular mass deportation;
- The ‘saturation’ of the labour market in Saudi - It is more difficult to find work, as illustrated by several returnees mentioning sometimes months spent without working;
- The lower value of the Saudi Riyal against the *Birr*, making work less profitable;
- The much tougher travelling conditions due to a mix of stricter crackdown at departure points (most often Djibouti), war and lawlessness in Yemen, with the Yemeni army or (worse) militia and bandits capturing migrants to demand ransom, and smugglers adopting ever more extorting methods as they know that their ‘customers’ are at their mercy;
- The much higher financial costs, reflecting the hardening of the smuggling networks. Most people talked about needing 30 to 40,000 *Birr* nowadays, to reach Saudi. The community police explained, it costs 5,000 *Birr* to reach the coast, 10,000 *Birr* to cross the sea to Yemen, plus the costs of crossing Yemen; if you are unlucky and are caught in Yemen the ransom is minimum 20,000 *Birr*. From the interviews it seemed that being caught was so common these days that it resembled an organised racketing, with at least the complicity if not the direct involvement of the Yemeni army.

Box 21 below presents a number of accounts illustrating how tough the travelling has become.

Box 21. Travelling to Saudi in the past few years

A repeat migrant now settled in Atsbi explained that in 1998 EC, he paid just 3,000 *Birr* which at the time covered all expenses up to Yemen. In Yemen there was the choice between taking transport and walking but he had finished all his money, so he walked. This was fine too, at the time “*Yemeni people were kind and giving them food*”. The next time he travelled, in 2001 EC, was tougher. As he was crossing Yemen his group was stopped by soldiers who held them hostage and asked for a ransom. Yet at the time it was still small, 400 rials/person (approx. 1,200 *Birr*), not like the 20,000 *Birr* that have to be paid now. He had someone in Saudi who paid the money for him, and after the money was paid the soldiers brought them to the Saudi border.

Haftom, another repeat migrant, also had a journey which went well the first time he travelled in 2005 EC. He paid 2,500 *Birr*, up to the crossing only. He left Saudi out of his own choice when the Ethiopian government called people back in 2006 EC; he had made 30,000 *Birr*. He opened a shop but in 2007 EC he decided to migrate again, but this second trip was “*a disaster*”. This time the price to pay to the local broker was 7,000 *Birr*. They faced a first incident when bandits tried to capture them before they boarded but managed to deal with it without paying. However, he was then captured twice whilst crossing Yemen. They were first captured by Yemeni bandits and told that they had to pay 20,000 *Birr* per person or else they would be shot. They phoned their families and this amount was paid, but instead of releasing them the first gang sold them to another gang. There again they were asked to pay. They were jailed and tortured and his best friend was shot next to him. Finally, they paid again and were left alone. When he left Harresaw he had 10,000 *Birr* from liquidating the stock of his shop and 15,000 *Birr* at the bank. His trip finished all his money, and in addition he had to borrow 10,000 *Birr* from each his father and his sister.

In spite of these multiplied risks and harms, the numbers of those going are still staggering, as said earlier.

Like in 2012, migration by young people living with their parents may be a decision by the youth her/himself, who nag them to go, or sometimes go without consulting them, using savings from other activities or asking them money under other guises. In the household of a rich farmer with a house and living mostly in Dera, two of the children are in Saudi. The mother said they both went

without informing them. The son migrated with savings from labour work in Afar during school break and chicken production alongside his studies, dropping out from grade 8. The daughter dropped out from grade 7, she asked 2,000 *Birr* to her father to trade during the school break and used the money to travel, and they had to send more money to save her life as she was caught on the way.

But, although none of the adult respondents with a migrant or returnee child said this, allegedly it may also be parents “*who aim to send their children to Saudi to improve the household’s livelihood*”. In one teacher’s views, these parents let their children drop out early; they do not want to invest in their education because they plan to send them off.

Perhaps most of the time the story is in between, with young people wanting to go and parents ‘letting go’, more or less happily, as they also do not see alternatives. For instance, in the rich farmer’s household just mentioned, the mother said she is unhappy and wants her children with her, but she adds that she wants to build houses in the town for them if they send remittances, so they have something on their return. In a group of men from Harresaw *kushet*, all 45 or above, one of them with children in Saudi said that if they had not gone, “*I would worry all the time about their next steps*”. He added,

“I don’t want to see my children suffer from continuously worrying about their future. We don’t push them but we can’t disagree when they decide. They bring a lot of arguments, like – do you see our farm, what do you want me to do here – or that they cost food and should rather go. It’s difficult to disagree with them.”

‘Nagging’ is part of many stories, like one young woman who said she nagged her parents into selling their only oxen to pay for her travel; unfortunately, she was deported before she could work and she now feels guilty as they are poorer than before because of her. She said there were many households in the same situation because of “*their children’s obsession of migration*”. (See more below on [Financing migration](#)).

The role of brokers

As noted earlier, the role of brokers appeared to be more prominent than in 2012. Based on different interviews, [Box 22](#) below presents an overview of how ‘local’ brokers seemed to operate.

Box 22. How brokers operate in Harresaw

Brokers operate in a hidden way. Their business starts in drink houses where they observe people and talk about their plans etc. When an individual wants to migrate they ask whether he knows others who would be interested. In this way, from one to the next they ‘collect’ a good number of people. The ‘local’ brokers are in charge up to when the group arrives to the crossing into Djibouti. That is where they pass the group to other brokers on the other side, and can get their money.

Some brokers are people from Harresaw, others are from Atsbi, and for others, people did not know where they lived. They are people with migration experience. That is how they know well the profile of potential would-be migrants. They work both in getting requests, and in proactively approaching people with such a profile. The priest added that brokers pay a commission to those who are bringing them other people.

Brokering is a way of making big money quickly in a much less risky way. For instance, the transport to Loggia (the Afar-Djibouti crossing) costs approximately 3,000 *Birr* (all included); the broker asks double that amount and the balance is for him. Brokers do not necessarily travel with the groups up to Loggia; they have a chain of contacts or agents in each ‘centre’ where the group stops, and each agent passes the group to the next one. They pay the last agent on the chain before the crossing. In this way, they pay only if they reach the crossing.

Groups can be as large as 500 people. For a broker making 3,000 *Birr* on each person, this means 1.5 million *Birr* profit to share between himself and his agents.

It seems to be common practice for brokers to be paid through a bank. One respondent suggested that bank employees are involved. Payments are made by the migrants or their families on an

account held by a bank employee, who holds the money until he/she hears that everything is all right (i.e. the group arrived at the crossing), then he pays the broker. (That is a different account than that above, saying that migrants pay the last agent on the Ethiopian side of the crossing).

Mobile phones are indispensable in this business. This is the way all agents communicate between them and with groups, telling them what to do, where to go to sleep and where to go next.

There was a wide range of perceptions regarding the role of brokers. For a number of people, explicitly or implicitly making a difference between 'brokers' and 'traffickers' who are "*capturing people and demanding a ransom*" (young male returnee), brokering is like a regular job.

"You can go to the house of a broker and ask "would you be interested in sending my child". They are indispensable, people could not go by themselves. It's "like when you want to enter a house which is locked, you need the one with the key. Brokers hold the key to migrating abroad"" (Women Affairs leader).

In the same way, the elderly lady who said that "*schools cannot be eaten*" also said they in her views, it is wrong for the government to stop the brokers. "*When there are no opportunities, everything should be considered as legal*". The young man distinguishing between brokers and smugglers added that "*people in the community do not have problems with brokers, they do their business and would-be migrants benefit from it. How can we hate people who show us the way?*"

Some of those with migration experience said that brokers are indispensable at least the first time one goes (after that, someone with experience can go by himself), but they are not the ones who have influence on youngsters. "*Often, these young people do not even see the broker. It's their own decision*" (40-year old man whose wife died in migration).

For others, brokers are nefarious. For instance, the priest who said he does not support migration but understands young people's frustration had this to say:

"They (the brokers) violate the natural order whereby God, parents then the government are children's guardians, by taking them away. Only we parents, can know how much we toil to raise our children and push them into adulthood, worrying about putting food on the table and taking care of their health. The Bible says parents will take care of their children and later on, children will take care of their parents. But what we see is that brokers make our children move away from the Bible's teachings. They go and lose their lives after all the troubles we have taken to raise them. We should ostracize these brokers, deny them from being members of the community's social networks".

There were a number of stories in which the distinction between brokers and smugglers tended to be very blurred. In Haftom's story (see [Box 21](#) above)

"The broker was in Djibouti when we faced the bandits who wanted to prevent us from boarding the boat and he did nothing, just disappearing and leaving us to deal with the bandits. We were lucky to be helped by some Afar people working for the broker who knew the bandits and could talk to them. Then when my group was captured by the first group of bandits in Yemen, there was an Ethiopian man with them who knew the brokers of all the different groups by their names and the number of people travelling with each broker. When we were asked to pay the ransom I and my friends tried to call our broker, but he told us he knew nothing about the gang and hung up the phone on us... I am sure there is a connection between our broker and this gang. Otherwise, how would the Ethiopian man with the gang know his name and how many we were to travel with him? But I don't know whether he also has a connection with the second group or if that is just between Yemeni people."

So, he said, right now he is just waiting for an opportunity to get this man arrested. More broadly, there is a shift underway in Harresaw, with several respondents suggesting that it is right to punish

brokers if something happens to a migrant on the way, regardless of whether the migrant is still in Ethiopia or in the hands of other smugglers in other countries on the way.

One knowledgeable respondent explained that this is because the brokers' networks surely extend up to Saudi, where there are Ethiopians who are settled and involved in brokering. So, it is very likely that all of the people on the chain know each other, and *"the responsibility of someone doesn't stop at one particular point"*. So these days in Harresaw, when something happens to a migrant whilst travelling, unlike in the past when parents and relatives considered this as bad luck, the brokers are reported to the government. In cases involved death one has to go to the zonal level and it is the zonal administration which come and investigate the cases. If plaintiffs are found to be right and if the broker is not around, reportedly the government jails his family until he surrenders himself.

At the time of the fieldwork, two brokers from the neighbourhood, a father and a son had recently been arrested in this way (*"bad luck for the son as he is now in jail just after having started this business"*). This was the reason why migration was at a standstill in Harresaw, *"because anyone else who might have been tempted by brokering will be cooled down for a moment"*.

Financing migration

These days, would-be migrants need a lot more money to migrate, especially considering that abductions in Yemen seem to have become a regular occurrence. As noted earlier, it is therefore easier for young people from richer households to migrate.

Among poorer individuals and households, some people finance their migration through liquidating the business they had started but which they thought was not successful enough (see Haftom in [Box 21](#) above). In other instances, they or their parents sell an asset, sometimes a house, often livestock – like the girl mentioned above, who nagged her parents into selling their ox. Other examples included a young woman whose husband is on migration; she was asked by the man who was her husband's business partner to repay her husband's 57,000 *Birr* loan, which she knew nothing about. She had to sell the residential land and house she had in the centre of the *kebele* to do this. She is now living in a rented house for which she pays 400 *Birr*/month.

In reportedly many cases, people get themselves, their household or their parents' household indebted: they take a loan, formally i.e. from Dedit under other guises, or (more often) informally from anyone who can lend them money. If anything happens before the migrant repays the loan this is problematic. The young man opening a barber shop after returning from Saudi with an outstanding loan explained that there was no way he would ever be able to repay it with the profit of his barber shop; the only option he saw was to sell his mother's house, which he thought was a bad idea. Yet in his case, he is young, able to work, and alive! A similar case is Selam, who is running the second snack bar of the *kebele*; her migrant husband, who no longer gives any news, had taken a loan which she is asked to repay. She too does not see how she can do this whilst she already is in trouble to pay the tax amount she was asked to pay last year. In other cases, the community police explained, the household does not even have any labour capacity, and this is a hopeless situation.

In an increasing number of cases, households wanting to finance a migrant rent-out their land, 'de facto' using it as a collateral. This transaction is called 'loan access' or 'returnable'. Land is rented-out against a one-off loan from the person renting-in to the person renting-out; besides the money, the person renting-out gets a small share of the production or the straw depending on the agreement, and the person renting-in can exploit the land as long as he/she is not repaid. Men were more reluctant to mention this practice, but women gave examples of how it created many conflicts: if, at some stage, the 'seller' denies access to the 'buyer', or the 'buyer' refuses to recognise that he/she was repaid, there is very little that the other party can do as the transaction is informal.

When this kind of arrangement is used to finance a migrant, again if anything happens to the migrant this creates big problems. There were several examples of migration financed in this way in the interviews and several examples of the kind of problems that may arise. The wife of the wealthy

farming household with a house in Dera explained that they rented-in two plots of land against loans. For the first plot, the woman who rented-out repaid her loan and they gave her land back. They rented-in the second plot from her sister, who wanted a loan of 5,000 *Birr* to send her daughter to Saudi. This became a big problem as follows:

“Now the daughter is in Saudi but my sister passed away, and she had not repaid the loan she took. Yet, my sister’s husband asked us to give the land back, claiming that his wife had repaid her loan before her death. My husband told him that we cannot give him the land back because the loan was not repaid. We took the case to the LAC more than a year ago but it is still outstanding.”

What do migrants do

Men work on construction, or irrigation, or as camel herders, as daily labourers or on contracts with Saudi employers. Women work as housemaid. Examples of work included

- Work on irrigation paid 700 Riyal/month in 1983 EC, plus food and accommodation;
- Work on irrigation paid 60 Riyal/day in 1985 EC;
- Camel herding paid 1,400 Riyal/month plus bonuses, in 1992 EC;
- Construction daily labour paid 100 Riyal/day (for experienced people), unskilled construction labour paid 1,500 Riyal/month in 2001/2 EC;
- Date collector paid 1,000 Riyal/month in 2013 (approx. 5,000 *Birr*/ month at the time);
- Housemaid for 1,800 Riyal/month in 2013;
- Construction daily labour paid 120 Riyal/day in 2008 EC (experienced people);
- Housemaid for approx. 16,000 *Birr*/month in 2016/17.

Migration to Saudi and technology

The interviews clearly show that two inter-related technological developments matter in relation to migration to Saudi: the mobile phone network and widespread availability of relatively cheap mobile phones, and the increased presence of banks and bank branches in the area.

Mobile phones are ubiquitous in all migration stories. That is the way would-be migrants contact migrant friends or relatives to ask information or get information through social medias for those who have a smartphone. Migrants keep in contact with their family through mobile phones. But also, mobile phones are indispensable to the brokers’ activities. This is also the way migrants can (directly or through their broker) contact their family to ask help to pay their ransom if they are abducted and do not have the money with them.

Mobile phones are also used for bank transfers. It seems that a large proportion of the money flows related to migration are now taking place through bank transfers and no longer cash. This includes payments to brokers as well as remittances and savings sent by the migrants. As illegal migrants cannot open a bank account in Saudi due to being illegal, they use the services of intermediaries, often Ethiopian nationals legally established in the country (e.g. as shop-keepers etc.) and who transfer their money for them against a small fee – around 25-30 Riyal or 150-200 *Birr*/ transaction.

Migration to Afar

Migration to Afar was mentioned far more often than in 2012 (WIDE3 fieldwork), presumably linked to the decline in local labour opportunities. Those migrating to Afar have a range of profiles. Students go during the school break. Others, including school dropouts and those who completed but failed Grade 10, go any time to look for jobs. There is a seemingly quite large group of adult people, most often poor and landless, whose main source of income appears to be repeat migration to Afar for durations ranging from a few weeks to several months, alongside PSNP. Landless men, especially, migrate repeatedly when there are no or few daily labour opportunities in the *kebele*, like a 30-year old married man who migrated for the first time in 2003 EC and since then more than

twelve times. Young women mentioned some young women who go longer (like a year) to make savings so as to be able to engage in trading or business activities.

Destinations in Afar include rural and urban areas and work include farm and non-farm work. The most often mentioned destination is Kunewa¹⁸.

Men work in agriculture and construction. Women open teashops and restaurants (e.g. for migrants working on construction worksites or salt mining or processing sites) or get employed in such businesses; some of them also work as daily labourers. Many of the repeat migrants to Afar pick up some Afarigna, which helps. According to some respondents there are as many people migrating to Afar than to Saudi, but it is difficult to know as there are many different types of migrants and they often come and go.

For some respondents, migration to Afar is a better alternative than migration to Saudi, because of the lesser risks and in their opinion, there is a possibility of making some savings.

“... young people are becoming economically independent and can involve in different income-generating activities. And at least, they do not sacrifice their life and dignity and the respect of other community members, unlike in illegal migration to Saudi¹⁹ ... Those who migrate to Afar are able to show change in their life more than those migrating to Saudi. They have a chance to save some small amount of money. But those young people who migrate to Saudi and are able to save some money only waste it on drinking and gambling when they return back home” (young woman whose husband regularly migrate to Afar).

One 20-year old poor woman knew another who had migrated for a year and made some savings and she was now *“leading a better life with her husband, whom she met there then they married here”*. However, for quite a few others, migrating to Afar is just a hand-to-mouth strategy only allowing a household to temporarily overcome a problem, shortage of money or of food. As one knowledgeable man said

“Most people from the community migrate to Afar seasonally. Most of the migrants to Afar work as daily labourers and stay for less than one year. Most of them are young male. Some are adults who are married and do not need to leave their family for long. Most of them are landless but some who have land also migrate and work temporarily in their break time. Most of the migrants to Afar are those who are unable to cover migration expenses to Saudi as it’s expensive and has so many hassles.”

There were also several mentions of migration to Afar having become more problematic over the past one year. Afar people were less welcoming, and some respondents mentioned incidents in which young people or children would harass Tigrean migrants, and if one did anything in response they would accuse them and the Afar administration would side with the Afar youth. One respondent said that as an Ethiopian one should be able to go and work anywhere but this was less and less true in Afar.

Migration to towns

Migration to towns overlaps with migration to Afar as the latter includes migration to Kunewa town for various jobs including in construction and trade. Other towns and cities mentioned as destinations are all in Tigray: Atsbi, Wukro and Mekelle. According to one knowledgeable respondent, most of those migrating to towns are young people wanting to continue their studies

¹⁸ There is no standardized orthograph. Moreover in Tigrinia, Kuneba sounds like Kunewa. Kunewa is both one of the *wereda* of Zone 2 in Afar, and the town which is the capital of this *wereda*. It is located near the base of the eastern escarpment of the Ethiopian highlands, and is bordered on the west by Eastern Tigray, on the north by Dallol, and on the east by Berhale.

¹⁹ People in the community believe that migrants to Saudi are often humiliated, hence losing their dignity.

(at high school, TVET, college and university level) as well as grade 10 and above dropouts who go to find a job. There are also people moving there to engage in trading and business activities, especially if they made some savings from migration to Saudi. He added that these types of migration have increased in the past five years.

Young women talking about options for their peers all mentioned migration to towns for those educated to grade 10 and above; a few join universities, most of them look for work – labour or domestic work or jobs as waitress in cafés and restaurants. They also talked about women who moved to live in towns to trade or do business with their husband; and others who moved in towns with savings from migration to Saudi. The 18-year old poor young woman's plan was to precisely do this. Examples mentioned in the interviews also include:

- The 22-year old son of a very poor woman, grade 8 dropout, who is shuttling between Harresaw where he does daily labour in the *kebele* and neighbouring *kebele*, and Mekelle where he works as assistant driver for a relative. His mother hopes her relative will help him get a driving license.
- An 18-year old middle-wealth young woman who last year lived in Mekelle, working as a waitress in a café during the day and trying to study for an accounting diploma at the Mekelle Admas University College. She was paid 600 *Birr*/month and paid 200 *Birr*/month for her studies. However, she got discouraged after four months as she never had enough time to study and she quit for the time being. But her plan is to start again next year.

No one from the respondents knew about anyone who would have migrated to work in an industrial park, but a group of knowledgeable men guessed that some of those who migrated elsewhere in Ethiopia might be employed in factories.

In terms of outcomes, the 20-year old poor young woman knew young women who were living in Atsbi and Mekelle since a long time, involved in retail shop business with their husbands, and sending remittances through bank transfers to their parents in Harresaw. Several of the young women and men linked the fact of engaging in trade or business with living in town and considered this to be a more desirable life than life in the community. But other respondents, including young people who had some experience of urban migration, said it was just hand-to-mouth. As noted in the *Non-farming* chapter, some respondents thought that it was necessary to have some education at least grade 10, to have a chance to find a job in town.

According to several respondents, including the community police and the youth affairs *kebele* leader, migration elsewhere in Ethiopia is considered as less problematic than migration to Saudi, but is nonetheless not desirable:

“The government is less concerned by internal migration. Everyone has the right to move anywhere in Ethiopia to make a living. However, that’s not to say that the government is encouraging migration. They would prefer people to stay where they are and engage in beekeeping, poultry, land-based investment” (community police).

The government position was indeed made clear by *wereda* officials explaining that *“youth from the rural kebele should not access youth livelihood support in nearby urban kebeles; they should only access that of rural interventions, and urban youth should also access only youth livelihood support to urban youth.”* Hence, also, the idea of ‘sketch plan towns’ like the one that is planned to be developed in Harresaw, prompting a big controversy. As one *wereda* official explained:

“The sketch plan project (gradual urbanisation of specific areas in rural kebele) is also among the interventions of reduction of unemployment of rural young people in the wereda. It is aimed at expanding emerging towns in rural kebele so that young people could be involved in different small businesses such as shops, beer houses and entertainment centres such as

billiard and pool houses. Therefore, young people could benefit from doing business in their areas and migration to big towns and cities could decrease."

Perceptions of the impact of migration on the community

The (described and perceived) impact and outcomes of migration differ very much depending on whether this is about migration to Saudi, by far the most controversial and at the same time, important, in the community; or about migration to Afar or to towns. For many mainly adult respondents, migration to Afar and to towns was less problematic, but at the same time it could not compare with the returns of successful experiences of migration to Saudi. Only a few respondents thought that migration to Afar could bring more than a temporary solution to immediate problems like lack of cash and could lead to better than a hand-to-mouth life. Similarly, there were very few mentions of 'big success stories' arising from urban migration, possibly because people who moved successfully would settle in town, which would not be the case of those going to Afar or Saudi.

Impact of migration to Saudi – Examples and perceptions

Overall, there has been a shift from 2012 when many community respondents seemed to consider migration to Saudi as a rational investment. These days many, especially among adults, said things like *"the harm that international migration inflicts on the community outweighs the benefits"* (very poor landless household head); *"international migration is affecting the community in terms of both economic loss and loss of lives"* (rich international returnee, recognising the change in migration conditions); *"the community is losing his children by death, and in addition, suffering economic crisis due to the expenses they incur to send their children away"* (medium-scale crop trader).

This section reviews the impact of migration to Saudi on Harresaw, as they were described as lived experiences or perceived as happening to others, in relation to loss of lives; economic changes; and other social effects.

People dying in numbers

The most dramatic negative effect of migration to Saudi is the sheer number of those who die, and they are mostly young people. For the community police, *"the number of deaths, when we hear the news of tens or dozens dying at a time, is higher than if we were fighting a large army"*. The kebele women affairs leader said that *"20 young people's bodies came here since last year but there are many others who died in Saudi or on the way and their bodies never came here."*

There were indeed many sad stories in the interviews, of people known by others or people directly affected, like the mother whose son died on the way, having left his job as a teacher because he was frustrated by the low salary. Other examples include a man who lost both a daughter and a granddaughter whilst they were migrating to Saudi during the 2008 EC drought; a landless man in his forties, who first migrated with his wife then she migrated alone and died there leaving six children behind; a young woman whose husband never knew his daughter, who is now eight year old, as he left when she was pregnant and died on the way; a woman whose nephew, grade 9 dropout and who had never been out of Harresaw before, died on the way to Saudi; and this woman who explained

"My sister-in-law was 27. She divorced after having two children from her husband. She decided to migrate to be able to raise them. But she died on her way to Saudi. Her father died soon after, due to deep sorrow of her death. Now her children are growing up with their grandmother, alone."

Both the education supervisor for the Dera cluster and the head teacher of Harresaw school mentioned a recent study which focused on three kebele, G/ Kidan, Harresaw and Dera, and which found out that 200 people from these kebele were recently killed in Saudi in incidents related to their involvement in illegal contraband. Contraband trade of drug and alcohol is the riskiest option but also the biggest and quickest money to be made. *"Among them, there were our clever students*

whom we were proud of, trusting they could join universities with good points and be successful with education” (supervisor).

And this does not include the many others who die on the way or in Saudi for other reasons. The *kebele* women affairs’ representative talked about 20 young people’s bodies that came back over the past year, but “*there are many more who died in Saudi or on the way, but their bodies have not come back.*” When a migrant dies or ‘disappears’, as the community police put it:

“... if the migrant who dies leaves a loan behind, when the household has a working age male it has the potential to repay the loan, but when this is not the case they not only don’t have the capacity but also don’t even have the potential to do this. There are also lots of cases in which savings are consumed by the expenses of returning the body. So, when death happens, the lucky ones get the body, the others get the news, and some don’t even have the means to repatriate the body. Nothing can be more disturbing than this for the family.”

Box 23 below presents the views of a young woman whose husband migrated three times since his first journey in 2006 EC. At her personal level she wants this to stop and has even threatened to divorce, but he said last time he went that he wanted to try once more... At a broader level, she strongly argues that all these deaths are due to the government lack of action. Closing the route, or legalising migration, one of these two options, but they should do something.

Box 23. Closing the route or legalising... but doing something to stop the dying

To stop this illegal migration and dying, government should either close all doors, or legalise migration. What’s maintaining young people’s hope in Saudi is the ‘not open not closed’ situation, *one day closed, the next open*. In 2006 EC all doors were closed, the Ethiopian government called people back, the Saudi government deported people, many people returned to Harresaw and although they had nothing to do, for two years no one tried. But then in 2008 EC the news came (from brokers) that the route was open and people started migrating again, as they had the hope again, even though it’s now riskier, costlier, and for little or no benefit. So, completely closing the route would make the hope vanish. People would settle, they would work on something here.

Or, migration should be legal. Legal migration is costly, but once you have the papers at least you are safe to move freely and come and go. If migration is legal, the government can control and know how many people have gone, how many have come back etc. Whereas now, nobody knows how many are going, how many are returning, how many are dying and where. People from Harresaw are disappearing and nobody knows for sure where and how many. For instance recently, her sister’s husband died in Saudi as he was pushed from the floor of a building in which he was working. They could not pay to repatriate the body and he had to be buried there. And to an extent they were lucky because they knew he had died. But this cannot continue. It’s purely a government issue. They must resolve this migration issue, and they must pay attention to the rural youth.

We are telling the government about closing all doors. But the government does not listen. We have told several times the *wereda* officials, and also each time there is some mass migration or people die *wereda* officials come and enquire. And we tell them to put the issue to the higher government levels; it’s clear that this is not an issue that the *wereda* can solve on their own. But these *wereda* officials don’t talk to the higher levels.

Changing one’s life?

Most adult respondents and some of the young people interviewed thought that cases of successful migration, with people able to send remittance, save money, buy cars, build houses in the *kebele* centre or Dera or Atsbi, invest in renting-in land or in a business, were “*not the story of the majority of the community members*”.

There were cases of success, like a rich farmer with three children in Saudi, sending remittances that cover the household’s expenses such as clothing, holidays and other miscellaneous, and in addition saving good amounts of money. One of his sons has been in Saudi for four years and has 700,000 *Birr*

at the bank; his daughter who has been there for three years has 200,000 *Birr* at the bank; the third, another boy, migrated five months ago and has not yet started saving. The 18-year old poor young woman knew a Lemlem whose parents bought land and build a house for her in Astbi with the money she sent before being deported, and another young woman who migrated with her husband and they were able to build a house on the residential land they got before migrating with their savings. One 24-year old middle-wealth young man, who migrated in 2008 EC with money from his parents and stayed away one year, was able to repay his parents and save enough to marry (paying for the bride's gifts and arranging the ceremony), buy household goods, and start a barber shop and a drink house business. The shoe shiner who also has a *joteni* and the tailor, both presented in the *Non-farming* chapter, started their activities thanks to savings from migration.

However, these days, for most respondents the returns of migrating to Saudi are in most cases not matching expectations. In their views, let alone the catastrophic cases narrated earlier, most of the migrants return with either nothing, sometimes before even being able to repay their loan(s) (see above on *Financing migration*); others manage to repay their loan(s) but have little more and cannot show any change in their or their parents' economic situation. Many returnees in this case then end up spending the little money they have on drinking, gambling and smoking. The 18-year old poor woman who knew two successful young women also knew another young woman who became poorer because of migrating; that woman got residential land but she did not have the money to build a house, so she sold her land²⁰ and with the money migrated to Saudi, but she was deported before doing any work so she is now back with nothing and living with her mother.

Several other young women shared the view that for one who is lucky, many are deported rapidly and get back with nothing. One 41-year old poor woman, mother of the girl who is working as housemaid for a doctor in Atsbi, and with a son employed as shepherd, is convinced that migration is not a solution:

"There is death, hunger and too much suffering on the way to Saudi and people are deported from there without working and repaying their loans. Thus, they become dependent on the community after they return back here. Take my brother's experience as an example. He sold the house he got in lottery chance for 6,000 Birr two years ago, in order to migrate to Saudi. But returned having been robbed and beaten by the robbers whilst he was trying to migrate via Dessie to Saudi. These days, he is just spending his time smoking cigarettes and gambling calmly in the centre of the kebele, with an earring on one of his ears (loti) like a woman" (she said, laughing). *"There are many young people in the kebele who gave up and are involved in bad habits such as smoking, gambling and drinking alcohol activities after they return back from Saudi unsuccessfully."*

Another woman, involved in small-scale crop trading, explains that

"No one is benefiting from migration to Saudi; rather they are wasting their money and life. It is just about struggling for life and death. My husband migrated seven times to Saudi but he got no benefit and he lost his money for nothing. Each time he did not work there; he always was deported as soon as he arrived. My small crop trading has better benefit rather than his repeated migration to Saudi. At least I stay in my community and do not suffer too much. And, I get profit sometimes and I lost the other time. But, his migration is totally lost."

And there are also a few people who managed to send savings and their family bought a car or built a house for them, but then they died, before they could benefit from their assets here.

²⁰ The land would have been taken from her if she did not build a house on it. The young woman in *Box 23* explained that many young people who get residential land migrate to pay for their house: beyond getting land there is no help. That was the objective of the first trip of her husband. They managed to build their house, but since then he has continued to migrate for less and less benefit.

Conditions used to be better some years ago, as illustrated by the case of the wealthy man who wants to open a grain mill house but the *kebele* administration does not provide him land as work premises. His story is as follows:

I migrated for the first time in 1983 EC and stayed three years. I brought back 30,000 *Birr* (at the time!) which I used to marry, build a house, buy donkeys and start trading salt. I liked his stay, there was no problem and there was peace. I migrated again from 1992 EC to 1997 EC and again saved a good amount of money with which I bought a house in Atsbi. I migrated for a third time in 2007 EC but this time it was a lot more problematic. The journey was harder, I saw people being tortured on the way, I saved myself from death by paying money. I only worked eight months before being arrested and deported. The pay and working conditions were not good although I was able to send money through bank transfer (this time this system was available), and with this I bought the grinding mill.

The young woman whose husband is on his third migration since 2006 EC (*Box 23*) confirms this deterioration of the conditions:

Before 2008 EC migration could be profitable for those making it and managing their money wisely. But these days it's become very difficult, there is no more any profit. As the journey is more and more costly, it's just about going and coming and paying for that.

So over time, the remittance and savings flows have decreased, especially since 2006 EC (2013/4) when the Saudi government began to massively deport illegal migrants.

At the same time, the hope that migration can be a life changer has not completely gone away. Several respondents still characterised rich households as those able to send their children to Saudi and benefitting from remittances. And a group of women asked to identify successful businesswomen pointed the case of a widow, who “*raised her children properly after her husband passed away and was even able to send two of her children to Saudi without getting any loan, by her own money*”.

Other effects

In turn, as many young people return without enough money to become economically independent, they are not “*stable here. In their mind they do not consider staying as an option, it is evident that they will migrate in Saudi again*” (woman crop trader). In this way, something like a vicious circle seems to develop: the lack of success abroad, together with no change and even, arguably, a worsening of the local conditions, feed into the ‘migration mindset’ that many respondents highlighted. Even those who could have considered alternatives continue to migrate, like the brother of the HEW. She explained that he had “*no concrete economic reason to migrate*”; it was a sudden decision and in contradiction with what he had said about his plan, that he wanted to invest his savings from his previous migration (80,000 *Birr* at the bank) with friends and get married.

Alongside this ‘mindset’ effect, many respondents linked unsuccessful migration and the frustration arising from it to the emergence of a group of ‘drifting’ young people, Saudi returnees and grade 10 dropouts, usually seen in the *kebele* centre and spending their time drinking beer and traditional alcohol, gambling and smoking (also see *p.267*). One woman had this to say:

“Most of them are Saudi returnees; they gave up on life because they spent unsuccessful migration and sad return. They do not care for the community here. They quarrel and fight with their parents and force them to give them money to return to Saudi. They also fight each other in drink houses, and with the drink house owners because they refuse to pay for their drinks. When they are asked to pay, they say, ‘please ask H/Mariam Desalegn (the prime minister) to pay for our drink because he is responsible for our unemployment.’ They are also teaching bad habits and disrespect for those teenagers in our community”.

A group of men and a group of women, interviewed in separate FGDs on the social effects of migration, explain that these young people are 'rootless' and 'dis-adapted' when they come back; they have seen so much and lived so differently that "*life here is no longer acceptable for them*". They may have had lots of money at some stage, and when back here "*they become a common daily labourer again*", so they get frustrated... Also, the community misrepresents them, thinking they have lots of money even when that is not the case. This puts pressure on them, they get stressed, and they migrate again "*as soon as they have finished what they have in their pocket*".

As a number of respondents also highlighted, this frustration (which young men express much more vocally than young women) is also due to what the young woman quoted above called 'the government lack of attention to rural youth'.

Returnees are also said to introduce new clothing and hair styles which are frowned upon. Young women who on return are trying to wear jeans rapidly give up; and they are not seen among those drifting youth. In contrast, for young men these 'odd' styles seem to be one way of expressing their aspirations to a different life and their frustration at not succeeding. Like with the drinking, smoking and gambling, other youngsters aim to copy them. This, some respondents say, is one of the push factors for some young people - often among the younger ones. Haftom, a returnee who now says he does no longer consider migrating, explains:

"When I migrated the first time, I wanted to get rich quickly. I took this decision because I observed friends, I never knew the amount of money they might have but they were 'changed', they had lots of modern clothes and I thought 'why do we go to school and we are dirty, and they don't and they shine'. At the time this is how I was thinking of 'change'."

This was in 2005 EC, he migrated twice since then and his second journey was harrowing so, he is now one of those discouraging young people from migrating. But the big contrast between the 'modern clothes' of Saudi returnees and the clothes of most peers of their age trying to study and who never left Harresaw, does not go away.

Teachers and other education staff all agreed that migration has a negative effect on education, changing the calculations of both young people and their parents. In the views of the head teacher of Harresaw school most of those at school "*don't love school*", they want to migrate and are at school waiting for the right time for this so, "*we are just giving education for nothing*". They don't want to look at the hardship and the risks even though these are very well known. "*They see modernisation*" and they want to benefit from it. Then when they come back having been deported they get frustrated and adopt these bad habits. But he and other teachers also agree that the other reason for their bad habits is the lack of attention to young people. There are youth livelihood support programs such as the revolving fund in the *wereda* but they are not implemented in the *kebele* because, they say, of the carelessness of the *kebele* administration.

Several respondents, women especially, also drew attention to the negative effects of migration to Saudi on households' and couples' lives. Reportedly, the examples given above of the grand-mother left with her two grand-children to raise or of the daughter who will never know her father are far from isolated cases. In many other, less dramatic but still sad cases, children rarely see their father. As the young lady calling for government lack of decisive action (see [Box 23](#) above) explained

In my neighbourhood there are 50 households, with only 4 with the husband away. For the others, they live from daily labour, here or migrating to Afar. That's nothing much, hand-to-mouth. But if I compare myself to the others I don't believe I am lucky. They are the lucky ones; their husband is around or if he migrates to Afar he can come back whenever they decide it; he plays with the children etc. In my case, my children don't even know their father as he's been away all the time. Others may think I have a lot of money but that's not the case, most of the money he makes is now eaten by financing the next trip. And money is not the only thing. There are impacts on my daily life. My land is ploughed by my brother, but he

will only plough it once whilst the land would need ploughing twice or three times so, I get less than what I could get from my land. I am the one to handle everything for instance in relation to my child attending school. Nobody is helping me in all these decisions.

Other women in the FGD agreed and pointed other problematic consequences of migration to Saudi. When a husband is present, husband and wife can plan together. It is also more difficult for a mother to raise the children alone; they need their father to be 'controlled'. Also, a woman whose husband is away will continuously worry. In addition, women whose husbands are away in Saudi are vulnerable to other men's sexual harassment and attempts at taking the household's land away.

When the husband is not around, anyone can try to grab the household's land and the wife won't be able to act against these people because she doesn't have power, she is not listened to in meetings etc.

There are also consequences such as losing the migrant's PSNP share, not being eligible for land reallocation, being refused access to credit etc. which they see as unfair measures:

The male head is leaving Ethiopia because of poverty, not out of their own interest. They leave to try to do something about changing the household's life and livelihood, they should not be penalised for this.

It is also becoming increasingly common that young women migrate, leaving their children with their parents (the children's grandparents). It is a heavy burden for the grandparents, who struggle to assure the children's food, schooling, health care and other needs. The women of the FGD estimated that there are probably more than 30 such cases.

More rarely in the women's opinion (not more than 5% of the couples with a migrant), migration may lead to tensions in the couple. Either the husband loses trust in his wife; he believes (and sometimes others tell him) that she has affairs with other men in her absence etc. so that in some cases, these husbands are sending more money to their own family (parents) than to their wife. Or the husband returns but divorces from his wife and starts a new life with another woman. They knew of one case where the first wife, angry and frustrated, in turn migrated to Saudi.

The FGD with men focused more on the impact of migration on intergenerational relationships and the tensions that migration may generate, especially when a child wants to migrate and one or the two parents do not support this decision. The former *kebele* leader (who was in the position in 2012) has a son who twice attempted to migrate and twice was deported immediately. He explains that

I and my wife opposed his decision. I tried to influence him as two of my relatives died in Saudi, but he didn't listen, he was more influenced by his friends and more attentive at the changes he could see in their way of dressing etc. We lost 44,000 Birr in total. Within the household, there were tensions as we lost so much money because of him. With that money, he could have done a lot of things locally. It's now better, he has agreed to listen to my advice and he's now working here, getting on the beekeeping association etc.

Another man highlighted that sometimes a child's decision to migrate also divides parents, often with the father supportive and the mother not, so this creates tensions within the couple and the household. Yet another man explained that, like for wife and husband, parents with a son or a daughter away always worry:

They don't have a stable life; their life is full of stress about what happens to the migrant; they worry if he/she doesn't call, that he/she may have died etc. Those who have their children with them are much luckier. Those with their children away are like blind people, they don't see what is happening to their child. Moreover, they miss the help that this young man/woman could have given to the household.

Government involvement in migration for work

Overall, as highlighted in several sections above, the government role in relation to migration for work abroad was perceived rather negatively. In summary:

- Apart from the women affairs' *kebele* leader, several respondents thought that the government is lukewarm in its campaign against migration, and undecisive in its action against the brokers ('route not open not closed');
- The policy on legal migration abroad was seen as unpractical: legal migration is too costly, the conditions to be eligible are unattainable for most, it would target only the rich segment of society;
- Not enough is done to create contextually meaningful alternatives;
- Promises made in the repatriation programmes were not implemented.

None of the community respondents commented specifically on the government position on migration elsewhere in Ethiopia which the community police explained, and which was made even more explicit by *wereda* officials (see above), presumably because this is a less pressing issue in people's mind than migration to Saudi. But as summed up by one returnee who has been working as daily labourer since he returned and explained that when he does not have a job his children are going hungry,

"(For many in Harresaw) there are no options other than migrating. The only other option would be stealing, which is illegal and culturally unacceptable. When it is like that, government should not stop people. In fact, it would be in the interest of both the people and the government to encourage and support mobility."

Female migration for marriage

Women do migrate for marriage, but this is so much more common and less problematic than other forms of migration that it was rarely mentioned in interviews. It is very common for women to marry in neighbouring communities and migrate to live there. Some women migrate to Dera and Atsbi for marriage that is, to marry someone from there. More commonly, couples of people from Harresaw migrate together to Atsbi, Wukro or Mekelle after they married in the community.

Reportedly, there is a growing trend of marriage happening between young women and young men who have known each other while on migration in Afar or Saudi. See in the *Migration to Afar* section for an example. Another example is the daughter of a rich farmer (living in the centre of the *kebele*), who married a young man who was in Saudi too. They had known each other since childhood but strengthened their relationship whilst in Saudi. The woman was happy to let them marry as she thought this would make them stay in the community and the young man appeared to have a good attitude to work. She even went to the extent of cheating the *kebele* administration to get an ID for her daughter to be able to marry although she was under-18. But this did not work, her daughter convinced her husband to migrate again even though both couples of parents had tried to convince them to stay and promised to give them some land to farm.

Child migration

Although none of the respondents talked about 'children', several mentioned young people who migrate to Saudi at a very young age. One young man stated that young men migrating to Saudi are generally 18 and older, and younger ones migrate to Afar instead, but another reckoned that there are boys of 15 who migrate to Saudi. In the same way, one of the young women said younger young women are rather going to towns and Kunewa seasonally, but another explained that these days, even young girls aged 16 or 17 are migrating to Saudi unlike in the past. A group of knowledgeable women said there are boys and girls as young as 15 or 16 who migrate to Saudi.

One woman farmer, middle-wealth and married but leading the household as her husband is ill, had a 17-year old daughter who migrated to Saudi when she was 16; she returned and is now married²¹ and trying to run a billiard business (but she is not very successful as her parents do not want her to allow gambling). The daughter of the rich farmer mentioned above must also have been very young when she migrated as she also married on return and before she was 18.

As for migration to Afar or to towns, young women mentioned that there are young girls of 14 or 15, usually poor, who move to Dera or Atsbi to be employed as housemaids in civil servants' households; and whilst most of the time those migrating to town like Wukro and Mekelle to work as waitress are 18-year old, there are a few who migrate when they are 16 or 17 to take such jobs. The group of knowledgeable women said some 14 or 15-year old boys and girls are migrating for work.

In-migrants

Very few respondents mentioned in-migrants. One said the only in-migrants are the government employees assigned to Harresaw and coming from other areas. Another explained that they were young people coming to do daily labour ten years ago or more, but this had completely stopped now that local production is so poor. Instead, she said, "*migration of community members is continuously increasing due to drought and lack of local employment.*" A group of knowledgeable women laughed at the question, saying:

"What? Someone to migrate into this community? Who is the cursed one who should do that? Let alone for newcomers this place is hell for us. If I were young at this time, I would migrate to other areas. I would never stay in this place with no work and no income."

Economic and political inequality

Economic inequality

Wealth statuses in the community

Of note from other chapters

A number of points related to wealth and inequality in Harresaw arise from the other chapters in this report, each looking at the community from a specific perspective.

First, as a few respondents noted, at the community-wide level one major form of inequality in Harresaw is those **with tenure rights over farmland** and those **without**, who are mainly young.

Second, for those with farmland, having **irrigable land** or not became a further differentiating factor, in particular with the construction of the dam, gradually taking more importance as agricultural extension activities increasingly focused on irrigation - until two-three years ago when the irrigation capacity of the dam began to decline then stopped. This factor was therefore no longer at play by the time of the fieldwork in early 2018, although households which used to be able to irrigate some of their land might be better able to weather the drought as they might start from a wealthier position. As noted earlier (see [p.13](#)) it is not clear whether and how fast the irrigation potential of the dam might return in case of better rain patterns, and whether the *wereda* drive to using alternative water sources is realistic and if so, what proportion of the community might benefit.

Third, we also noted earlier a pronounced **spatial pattern** in terms of **access to key infrastructure** (electricity, roads, water) between the different parts of the *kebele* (see *Spatial patterns* section above). These differences shape the livelihood options available, very different in a remote hamlet of Harresaw *kushet* and in the *kebele* centre. There does not seem to be any plan to bridge the

²¹ The woman first said her daughter was 18 and admitted later on to her being only 17.

infrastructure gap between areas of the *kebele*, other than the establishment of the sketch plan town and continuing some (low quality according to *werada* officials) internal road construction.

Another discussion is about the **role of Diversification** in relation to wealth statuses in the community. The data on *Farming* and *Non-farming* suggest that diversification within the farming sector towards products other than grain crop (eucalyptus, livestock) and in the non-farm sector (including trade of agricultural products and other businesses but also daily labour, petty trade etc.) is driven by the financial ability to do so for some households, by necessity for others (e.g. landlessness). Most often when it is by necessity this means engaging in hand-to-mouth activities, in contrast with the former category for which diversification is an investment. This is picked up in this chapter in the *Changes in economic inequality* section below.

The section on *Perspectives on justice, nepotism and corruption* highlights a perception that **rich** people are often, or do get, **better connected**; and they are able to use these connections and their wealth, sometimes through bribing, to get access to benefits that have the potential to further accrue their wealth (see for instance, how rich people get access to residential plots in the centre of the *kebele* as a case in point, see *p.229*).

The *Migration* chapter prompts the question of how much of the **current overall wealth and wealth differences** arise from **migration** to Saudi - the apparently exclusive form of migration abroad in Harresaw at the time of the 2018 fieldwork. Several respondents highlighted that a) those who became really rich thanks to migration abroad moved elsewhere and b) a lot of the houses in the *kebele* centre are built with migration money; suggesting there was a time when migration to Saudi could be a source of wealth, which was the sense we had in 2012 (WIDE3 fieldwork). In 2018, a few interviews reveal there are still individuals amassing quite substantial savings (see e.g. *p.114*). But there was a sense that these cases are few. More generally, at best, someone reasonably successful could get enough capital to start something relatively small like a small shop, a tailor business or a barber shop; many were said to waste whatever small savings they made; and for others, their migration experience led them or their household to indebtedness. Several respondents also highlighted that the community is losing its most productive elements when migrants die; and a range of negative social effects which ultimately are likely to impact on the economic life as well.

So, in the current context, the potential of migration abroad (to Saudi) to contribute to local economic growth at the community level appears to have substantially declined and it could even be a drain; and for individual households and individuals, it is idiosyncratic – a gamble, as suggested by many of the respondents. Whether this can return to a situation in which migration to Saudi/other Gulf countries has a greater/good potential to support local economic development depends on the extent to which legal migration might become a realistic option for residents from Harresaw. Looking at the past few years, the wise and respected man nicknamed ‘Kofi Annan’ commented that

“Making it (migration) legal would not change anything, people would continue to go the illegal route because the legal way is expensive (passport, visa) and there are a lot of procedures with immigration etc. So it’s a headache. In addition, the destination countries have prerequisites that wouldn’t be possible to fulfil for the people of Harresaw. So, legal migration would target only the rich part of the society” (‘Kofi Annan’).

Do richer people migrate more? Like the question on the importance of migration in the local economy it is difficult to answer. Several respondents said it is the case, adding that richer households can send migrants to Saudi whereas for poorer households, migrating to Afar is the option; and some respondents still highlight the (potential) benefit of having a migrant abroad in terms of further increasing one’s wealth. However, as others also highlight, it may be ‘easier’ for richer households/ individuals because they can migrate/send a migrant abroad with their own money; but poorer households borrow to do so (as seen in the *Financing migration* section, ‘loan access’ forms of land transactions developed in the past few years at least in part prompted by a migration-related demand for loans).

In the rest of this section, most of the information comes from forty or so respondents with a range of very diverse profiles²², who were specifically asked to comment on wealth statuses, inequality and relationships between rich and poor people in the community – since 2010; as well as twelve interviews of young men and women of different age groups and wealth statuses²³, who were asked to comment on economic change over the past three years, and differences between rich and poor people/households. Whenever relevant the information volunteered by respondents interviewed on other topics is also presented here.

Change in the overall economy

Among the forty respondents, a few offered an opinion on the direction of change in the **overall context**. Three thought that the economy in Harresaw had declined since 2010 (including the successful young businessman); another (a rich farmer) said it improved until the 2007 EC (2015/16) drought but since had been strongly set back. Three men (one relatively well-off, none of the three poor) thought that there was little change or it was sluggish. One rich farmer thought the life of the community had improved since 2010: *“people are migrating to become wealthy and not to search food as previously”*. (Note that data on the effects of drought contradict this statement, with many respondents highlighting that migration of all types had gone up during and because of the drought and the lack of other means to assure the basics for one’s household).

As for young people (see table below), just two of the twelve thought the community was better off than three years ago: one 18-19 poor young man and one 20-24 poor young woman, who both related this to the fact that more people are engaged in non-farm income generating activities²⁴. The 18-19 middle-wealth young woman thought the economy improved a little but it is not significant. Two young men (middle wealth 20-24 and 25-30) and one young woman (middle wealth 25-30) said at some point in the interview that there was no change, the community is not richer, but at another point, that it changed a little, though *“not as expected”*, it is *“slow”*; all three linked the small/slow change to the fact that more people are involved in non-farm activities.

The 20-24 and 25-30 poor young men and the 18-19 poor young woman said the economy did not change at all; the 20-24 poor young man commented that on one hand, irrigation stopped, on the other hand more people are involved in non-farm activities. Three young people, the 18-19 poor young man, the 20-24 middle-wealth and the 25-30 poor young women, thought the economy worsened; although the poor 25-30 young woman also noted that more young women are involved in income generating activities including daily labour, and there are a few people getting richer thanks to business activities.

Drought was the factor mentioned by all young people to explain the lack of (more) change or worsening whereas almost all emphasised the positive role of non-farm activities (more people involved and/or those involved getting richer).

Young woman poor 18	No change	Drought
Young woman poor 20-24	Better	Non-farm IGA
Yong woman poor 25-30	Poorer	But more young women involved in daily labour, a few people richer thanks to non-farm
Young woman middle 18	A little bit better	But not significant
Young woman middle 20-24	Poorer	Especially for farmers

²² These include richer and poorer, older and younger farmers and non-farmers, as well as people residing in rural areas and in the centre of the *kebele* ; in total 11 women and 29 men ; only one civil servant; six (all men) with responsibilities ranging from social court leader to DT leader, militia, leader of the RUSACCO etc.

²³ Two (one poor, one middle wealth/better off) young women were interviewed, in three age groups: 18-19, 20-24 and 25-30 year-old; the same for young men. People said no young man or woman could be rich.

²⁴ Note that for most respondents in Harresaw, ‘non-farm’ include activities such as poultry and fattening.

Yong woman middle 25-30	Not richer/a little bit better	More young women involved in daily labour & other non-farm activities
Young man poor 18	Richer	Non-farm IGA
Young man poor 20-24	No change	Irrigations stopped but more fattening & poultry
Yong man poor 25-30	No change	Drought
Young man middle 18	Worsening	Drought
Young man middle 20-24	No change/ change but not as expected	More involved in non-farm activities
Yong man middle 25-30	No change/slow	More involved in non-farm activities

From both groups of respondents, overall there is a sense of decline or stagnation due to drought, although many mentioned the positive effect of non-farm activities.

Very rich and rich

Those respondents who talked about **very rich people/households** said they are very few; or even none – some added that this is because anyone who became very rich moved elsewhere (Atsbi, Wukro or even Mekelle). A man and a woman interviewed as ‘very rich’ (to ask them about support to poor people) did not seem to be richer than other people said to be (simply) rich. The man, on whom more information is available, is from a wealthy landowning family under the Emperor, but he did not inherit from his parents, whose land was redistributed during the ‘land to the tiller’ revolution. He has two *timad* of his own since 1983 EC and became wealthy ‘by his own efforts’ and through renting-in and sharecropping-in land. The household has two oxen, two mules, three donkeys and goats. He has four married daughters and they all help each other. One of his daughters migrated and stayed for four years in Saudi and she used to send money. She is now back.

Characteristics of the very rich, according to this man, are that they have “a large farmland, two oxen, and other livestock”. For the supposedly very rich woman “there are no very rich people in the community, but rich people are characterised by having farm land, livestock such as oxen and sheep as well as having a child in Saudi who sends remittance and supports the household’s livelihood. People who own a pair of oxen are considered as rich even though there is problem in accessing fodder for the oxen. Also, people who own farmland are considered as rich, even though landholdings are very small and infertile in most cases”.

As explained in the section below on **Changes in economic inequality**, most people indeed thought that differences between wealth statuses ‘flattened’. However, some respondents thought that there are “a few rich people who live differently from the rest of the community; they eat differently, dress differently, and have modern houses and social connection with the rest of the community. Some rich people are able to get anything they want because they have good connections. For instance, the *kebele* give them loans easily comparing to others because they are trusted to repay it back” (a very poor divorcee, see **Box 25**).

Rich people’s characteristics as mentioned in interviews include:

- Large farmland, two oxen and other livestock
- More than 2 *timad* farmland, two oxen, more than 10 sheep, donkeys and beehives
- Large farmland, more than 2 cattle, sheep and goats, pack animals and a house in town
- Many livestock heads
- Better production because they can afford better preparing their land (tilling repeatedly and on time as they can get labour; using modern inputs)
- Hence have food for the household throughout the year
- Money from children in Saudi, so they do not have to sell their household production for other household expenses
- Large land in urban in towns (Dera, Atsbi) or in the *kebele* centre, that they bought
- Diversify and get richer thanks to trade and businesses

- Have educated, grown-up children with government or non-government jobs, hence fewer household members and children can support economically

A group of knowledgeable respondents talking about the community trajectory since 2010, identified economically successful farmers and businesspeople as follows.

Box 24. Successful farmers and businesspeople in Harresaw

The two richest **successful male farmers** are G/Zihar Wubet and Haleka Kahsay Tesfay. They are farmers and traders. In addition to their own land, they rent in and share crop in land for farming. They have houses in towns. They have more livestock than other community members. They were working and serving as member of *kebele* council and *kebele* leadership.

The two most **successful female farmers** are Hadash Kasa and Tekien Nireayo. Their livelihood depends on agriculture and animal production. They raised their children up to seeing them married and supporting their own household. They are members of the *kebele* council and party. They are successful women who won their life by their self-support.

The **successful traders/businessmen** include G/Zihar Hagos Dane, G/Yohaness Gebre and Hagos Tikue. These people work on various trading activities and farming by renting in land. For example, G/Zihar Hagos trades donkeys and shoats, G/Yohaness Gebre trades grain, distributes beer and has Billiard/ carambola and Hagos Tikue has bakery which is the only one in the *kebele*, and he owns a big shop and snack bar. This young person was a shoe shiner in 2004 EC and he was the first to start a shoe shiner business in the *kebele*.

The **successful traders/businesswomen** are Medhin Abadi and Mitsilal G/Silasie. Mainly their livelihood depends on selling food and drinks and they also have their own farming. They do not have any other elite position in the community. For example, Mitsilal, raised her 3 children alone properly after her husband passed away. She was even able to send two children to Saudi Arabia without getting any loan (by her own money). Medhin also started with little capital (small money) and now she bought house in the *kebele* centre, owns animals and saves money in a bank.

As the profiles in **Box 24** suggest, the distinction between farmers and traders/businesspeople is not watertight: most rich people still combine farming and non-farming activities. However, the balance between activities in their portfolio may differ significantly. The differences between portfolios seemed to have widened in 2018 compared to 2012. Two of the respondents interviewed individually illustrate this best: both the successful young businessman described in **Box 16** and the man from a historically influential family described in **Box 9** are better-off, in Harresaw's standards – but in very different ways, and with very different lifestyles.

The **origin and or important factors** explaining the wealth of rich people were mentioned as having one's own land, family background, individual effort/hard work, health status and also luck:

"I think that some are rich and others poor due to their luck. People can improve their livelihood by working hard and exerting extra efforts but sometimes even when two persons work equally, they do not get equal production. So, I believe that luck is what matters" (rich farmer, wealthy parents but he did not inherit their land; got two timad in 1983 EC).

"... (lack of) luck is also an essential reason for someone to be destitute or very people. For instance, there are poor people who engage in trading and they are working well. Others are also always trying trading this and that, but they cannot be successful" (destitute woman, see **Box 26** below – divorced, living of charity and petty trade in room rented 50 Birr/month in *kebele* centre, with children from different men, no official husband).

What rich people/households can do, which others cannot do or do with greater difficulty, was said to include:

- Get better nutritional food (meat, milk and milk products, vegetables and *teff*); own TV and modern household equipment and furniture; dress better, organise good feasts

“Rich people live in well- constructed corrugated iron roof houses while poor people are not able to build such kind of house. In addition, rich households have a separate house for their cattle and wide compounds. Rich households also have enough food for their household and they can buy vegetables and edible oil so that they have a balanced diet comparing to the diet of poor households. In addition, they wear modern and expensive clothes and they celebrate and prepare good feasts for holidays by slaughtering sheep or goats.” (rich widow in her 50s, interviewed as very rich; with two sons government employees and well-married daughters, her own land and support from her siblings whom she supports in exchange);

“Rich people have many clothes to change every time, but poor people have only one clothes and they wear it washing it now and then” (destitute woman, see [Box 26](#))

- More easily adopt modern technologies and benefit from it ('early adopters')
- Diversify in other income-generating activities
- Send a migrant to Saudi without needing to borrow or it is easier for them to get a loan
- More easily cope with shocks by selling assets/livestock.

For young people from rich households, they were said to be able to more easily

- Complete/go further in their education – Access to TVET and higher education, especially, was said to be economically challenging except for those from a rich background (with some exceptions); as a result:

“there are people from Harresaw who are lawyers, doctors and even a pilot. However, my students believe that these people reach where they are because they were from rich families who could support them” (head teacher of Harresaw school).

- Even if unemployment and landlessness affect all young people, get capital from their family to start their own business (also said for/by young women)
- Hence, establish an independent livelihood and household more easily (mostly said for/by young men)
- Marry more easily/to wealthier young men/to men with land (said for/by young women)
- Migrate internationally whereas young men/women from poorer households migrate to Afar or have to borrow to migrate to Saudi.

Middle-wealth

Although several respondents noted that most households in Harresaw were now 'middle wealth', there was no specific characterisation of them.

Poor, very poor and destitute

Not all respondents differentiated between poor, very poor and destitute. For instance, *“the poor, very poor and destitute have few or no livestock, and a very small size of land or nothing at all”*, said one very poor man.

In so far as people distinguished, the **characteristics of poor people/households** were said to include:

- Small and infertile land, no oxen, yet depending on farming so cannot improve their livelihood due to their small production
- Or landless (many), no alternative than depending on government support including as PSNP beneficiaries

- No assets such as cattle, sheep and chicken, or a few chicken or sheep
- No child in Saudi who could support the household
- Poor wives, young men and women, and boys and girls in poor households involve in daily labour to support the household (50-80 Birr/day for a woman)
- No money to engage in additional income-generating activities
- Old, cannot work actively to try and escape poverty
- They get by, through engaging in different activities including: agricultural daily labour; chicken production, egg sale, fattening; for women, *tella* and *araki* sale, hair braiding, preparing and selling *kolo* on market days, migration to Kunewa (Afar) or Atsbi for labour and domestic work, petty trade
- But they easily get on a downward spiral as follows:

“If a person lacks oxen and manpower, he is forced to rent-out or sharecrop-out his land and take loan to buy food during drought, then he spends his time repaying his loan. So, he becomes poorer and depending on government support” (very poor woman, see p.171 above).

What **poor people/households cannot do** because of their poverty was said to include:

- Involve in mehaber because not having the money for the contribution and to prepare feast
- Migrate to Saudi, except in getting severely indebted and/or renting-out one’s land
- Continue to higher education

“She got passing points for university and she was assigned to a university which is far from Addis Ababa. But, her mother is poor and she made her stay in the community and abandon university because she could not afford transportation and pocket money for her daughter” (young woman telling the story of a friend of hers).

For an 18-year old poor young woman, being poor meant being more exposed to school dropout but also, not having a mobile phone and having none in the household, not being able to wear nice and fashionable clothes for the Ashenda festival, and no chance to marry well:

“Who could propose me for marriage? No one currently! Because I am from a poor household, why would a man want to marry me? He will not get any dowry from my parents. Even, my parents have no economic capacity to prepare the wedding feast. Men look after those girls from rich households for marriage. There is no one who looks after us, and proposes us, girls from poor households, for marriage. Sometimes, I spend my day crying observing my friends who are from better off households getting married.”

Several respondents highlighted that poor people tend to be discriminated by *kebele* officials “because they do not have anyone related to them in the *kebele*”. This is one aspect in a wider perception that the current *kebele* administration was marred by poor governance (see p.91 above).

People who tried to **differentiate the very poor and destitute from the poor** had this to say

“poor people at least have farmland even if it is small; destitute have no land at all, they always face problems to afford their food” (destitute woman, see Box 26)

“Very poor people on the other hand do not have any livestock and their farm land is small and infertile. They rent out or sharecrop their land to get a small share of production because they do not have oxen. Therefore, they are dependent on government food aid. Destitute people are those who are landless and have no livestock even a chicken” (very poor woman).

This woman, for instance, is very poor and also especially vulnerable due to a skin disease (albinism).

Box 25. A very poor woman in Harresaw

She is 60, with two grown-up children from her first marriage who have their independent life and don't seem to be in touch (the son joined the army, the daughter is married) and two other children she had from a man who is officially married elsewhere, after her return to Harresaw following her divorce: a 16 year-old daughter who dropped out from school at grade five, and a 22 year-old son who dropped out at the end of grade eight as he had to support the household. He tried to migrate but was deported immediately. He is now working as daily labourer locally and in neighbouring *kebele* and at times as assistant driver in Mekelle. She hopes her relative in Mekelle who is employing him, will help him to get a driving license.

She used to live in Asmara with her husband, sold everything she had to come back with her first two children, and used that money to resettle. She never was able to improve her livelihood and is now very poor. She has one timad of infertile land but most often no labour at home as her son comes and goes. Her skin disease also affects her, and she is stigmatised by others in the community. She lost her only cow during the Millennium drought and never recovered from that. She is trying to keep sheep, but they die easily due to diseases and drought. She has sisters, but they do not help her; she only gets support from a relative who ploughs her land.

She is a paying member of the CBHI although at the time of the fieldwork, she had not renewed her membership because she was waiting a refund from the *wereda* for medicines she had to buy from a private pharmacy last year, and with that cash she could pay but not otherwise. The refund process was taking very long. She did not know about the possibility of being exempted from paying. Not knowing the selection criteria, she nonetheless thinks it is not fair that she is not included as a non-paying member as she is among the poorest in the *kebele*.

She also did not know a lot about the CCC, and she is not included as a beneficiary either. In the past, *“people who are very poor used to stand in front of people during the PSNP and other food aid payment and ask for support. People contributed 5 or 10 Birr depending on their economic capacity.”* But this has stopped.

She gets the PSNP support.

A few respondents suggested that the **difference between very poor and destitute** is that whilst very poor people have no asset, destitute face problems to get food. Reportedly, there was nobody from the community who had no shelter – hence, a rich farmer's wife from Harresaw living mostly in Dera made a difference with the beggars who come from the nearest towns and visit the community when there is a big holiday at one of the churches of Harresaw. In Harresaw there are no beggars, but *“there are people who have a very difficult life economically because they cannot be involved in labour work due to illness and other disabilities”* (group of knowledgeable women).

Men tended to identify as destitute people officially categorised as such – like a man living with HIV/AIDS and who, because of his HIV/AIDS status, benefitted from a range of government-related support (see [Box 29](#) below). In contrast, the woman identified and interviewed as destitute escapes any official classification: she is a female-headed household but as seen elsewhere in this report, there are relatively successful households headed by women (see for instance [p.120](#) and [p.173](#)). Her case is different; she belongs to a category of destitute locally recognised by other women as

“Those women-headed households with no land, cattle, sheep and hens, who are not engaged in non- farming activities as such and are dependent on the government food aid... Many of these women have sexual relations to a man who has two or three wives, and they give birth to children from them. But, these men only marry one wife out of the several women, and they provide support to their children of that woman only. They do not support their second and third wives and their children from them. This leads to an increase in the number of destitute households. These woman have children but their ‘husbands’ do not support them economically” (rich widow, see [p.173](#)).

The profile of one of these women is outlined in the box below. In contrast with the male PLWHA above, she gets little support by government and lives mostly of charity from community members.

Box 26. Destitute woman in Harresaw

She was born in Harresaw in a rural area of the *kebele*, grew up there and got married by her parents' choice. But, she divorced rapidly because she did not like the man. She never went to school and never migrated out of the community. She moved to the *kebele* centre in 2000 EC after she divorced. She started to have sexual relations with many men at the same time, and gave birth to three children from different men, out of wedlock. Her children are very young. One of them, a daughter, died very recently as she could not afford to bring her at the health centre; she died at the holy water. She currently has a relation with a man who has another legal wife and she is pregnant from him so that she was recently transferred from the PSNP PWs to direct support.

She knows about the CBHI though only since this year when she went to the health post for her ANC. The HEW told her about it and the benefits. She wanted to be a member but cannot afford. She is not included in the non-paying members. She does not know why. She knows some households who are included, and not all of them are poorer than her. Thus, she thinks that she should have been included if the selection process had been fair. She does not know whether there is an appeal committee or not and she did not appeal to anyone in the *kebele*. She does not plan to appeal in the future because she thinks her appeal will bring no change. She did not use health services but she lost her daughter because she could not pay for these.

She lives in a rented house, paying 50 *Birr* per month. She does not have a bed and mattress but has an old torn blanket. She gets food mostly by herself but some neighbours also provide her food to support her and her children. She also pays 10 *Birr* per month to access clean water from the pipe like other community members. Men who have sexual relation with her buy her and her children clothes and shoes, and sometimes some groceries for her to feed the children.

She is involved in petty trade every market day on the way to the market in Dera, making 100-200 *Birr* every week, but she immediately spends it on food for her household (she is landless). In addition, she works for a rich household who own a grinding mill in the *kebele* centre: she works at the mill and at the household's home, and she gets food and other goods in return. She is healthy, her main problems are to pay the house rent and water fee. However, her landlady does not force her to pay every month. Currently, her house rent is not paid for three months and the owner does not ask her because she knows that she cannot afford it. Also, the water committee leader who is her neighbour does not force her to pay every month. She only pays whenever she gets money.

Her parents are still alive, and they are better off; they have an ox, a cow and eight sheep. But, they do not support her because she divorced from the husband they had married her to. She was already destitute with him because he was an unreliable man who does not like to work. He also does not have any asset. Her parents should support her, but they neglect her. In addition, she has poor relations with the relatives of the men who have sexual relations with her. However, she has good relations with neighbours and other community members including rich households. Thus, she gets every kind of support from community members: food, loans, advice, meals as well as material support, specially from her neighbours and rich households. The most important are the support from the household with the mill, her landlady and the water committee leader.

She belongs to none of community organizations and associations due to her poverty. She does not belong to an *iddir*, an *equub* or a *mehaber*. She does not have other community networks in the *kebele*. She sometimes feels excluded from her neighbours who have *mehaber* associations and who buy and wear new clothes, but she cannot do that because she cannot afford it. Among destitute they share the food they have and spend time eating even small amounts of food. For instance, she lost her daughter recently so that community members including those who are destitute like her supported her with firewood, charcoal and food for the mourning week.

In the past she experienced violence by men for she had sexual relations with many men. E.g., a young man beat her because she asked him to give her money. But, she did not accuse him

because she thought she would need money for this. However, currently there is no such thing because there is a policeman and her neighbours protect her from such violence.

She hopes that she will escape from destitution if she remains healthy and if she could actively involve in her petty trade, by getting a loan from anyone. But, she needs financial support from somewhere to upgrade and expand her petty trade. She does not think her children will remain destitute because she will send them to school and they will be educated and have their independent livelihood through employed job.

The wife in the household with the grain mill explained why she is supporting her as follows:

“She is a very kind person who is sociable with everyone in the neighbourhood. I give her a loan whenever she wants money for her trade and other purposes. Also, I give her flour, tahini, charcoal and other goods whenever she lacks money to buy them. I give her milk and yogurt for her children because they are kids. These problems of food and money are common for other destitute women in the community. However, she is different in that she never complains about her problems. She also is a great support to me, for instance at the grinding mill and in milking our cows.

I hide this support from my husband because he is a greedy rich man who does not want to support poor people. I also do not support some other destitute women like her because they spend their time gossiping and not trying to work. This lady is different, she spends her time working and supporting other people through labour work. She is also grateful and thankful for the support she gets. There are two other destitute women like her, who also support me in the grinding mill, and I provide them additional flour as payment for the work.”

See more on government and non-government support to poor and vulnerable people in the [Social protection](#) chapter.

There is no clear trend emerging from the interviews as to **whether and how things changed for poor people** since 2010. Among those who commented on this, thirteen (13) out of twenty-nine thought that poor people had become poorer or there were more of them. However, among those who thought otherwise nine (9) thought that poor people were a bit better off or there were fewer of them. Seven thought that things had stayed the same.

Those thinking that the situation of poor people worsened put this down to the drought hence reduced daily labour opportunities, and for poor who have land (often small and infertile), an even smaller production than usual hence the need to heavily borrow or rent-out one’s land to meet their household’s basic needs; and the lack of capital to start any other income-generating activity (unlike richer people). Those who thought poor people are a little better off than in 2010 or there are fewer of them attributed this to the government support (PSNP, food aid) and the fact that many are engaged in some small non-farm activity. For those who thought things stayed the same, these factors were offsetting one another hence resulting in no change.

The sense of a **trend** is a bit clearer **with regard to very poor and destitute**. Among those commenting specifically on whether/how things had changed for them since 2010, most respondents (11 out of 18) thought that their situation improved or they are fewer (one respondent even said there is none), because of government support and, one woman added, thanks to support from relatives; one man highlighted that they have no land and no livestock that can be affected by drought. Others (6) recognised the presence and usefulness of government support, but even so in their view there is no change in the livelihoods of the very poor and destitute. One respondent thought their situation worsened due to the much fewer opportunities of daily labour in Harresaw.

Changes in economic inequality

Forty respondents with the range of profiles outlined above (see [footnote 22](#)) commented on whether, how and why **economic inequality** had changed **since 2010**.

For a relatively small majority (23 out of 40), economic inequality had **decreased**, due to: a) rich households being more strongly affected than others by the recurrent drought since 2007 EC (lower production but especially, large livestock losses); b) poor and very poor people getting government support and/or working harder, engaging more in daily labour or income-generating activities such as poultry, fattening, small trade etc., hence at least affording their household's food. For some, government support seemed to be the determining factor in 'protecting' the poor; others stressed mostly or only their involvement in income-generating activities. Several respondents commented that every household these days has at least some chicken or sheep; one man (living mainly from daily labour as a bricklayer and roof covering in Afar, and who over the past one year earned 40,000 Birr in that way) said that *"there are very few very poor households with nothing to sell/exchange"*; a young priest (in his 30s) said that these days *"unlike in the past when poor people worked as slaves of the rich to get food"*, they are paid for their labour.

However, for the remaining 16 respondents (out 40) inequality had either remained **the same** (for nine of them) or **increased** (for eight of them). Those who said it stayed the same were all men, who did not give much explanation. For most of those who said inequality had increased, this arose from the ability of richer individuals/households to diversify (including, for some respondents, the ability to send migrants abroad 'easily', and getting wealthier thanks to this). Some added that poor people do not have the capital to diversify (unlike richer ones) and as they continue to depend on their land or labour only, they are more affected by the drought (even lower production, hence need to borrow for food; and reduced opportunities of local daily labour); two of the respondents (both male, a poor 14-15 year old boy employed by the successful young businessman, and the leader of the RUSACCO, in his late 50s) said that poor people *"do not work as much as rich people"*.

Of the eight respondents who thought inequality had increased, four were women and four were men. So, proportionally, more of the women (4 out of 11) thought that inequality increased than men (4 out of 29). These eight respondents were very diverse, ranging from the well-off widow already mentioned (see p.173) to the destitute younger woman presented in [Box 26](#), and the young boy also mentioned above, coming from a very poor household and employed by the successful young businessman.

Among the forty, eight individuals were better-off: two women (the quite well-off woman head of household mentioned above; and another rich woman farmer) and six men (the well-known successful young man with a bakery and the largest snack bar and largest shop of the *kebele* centre; a comparatively large crop trader in his mid-30s with a beer distribution and billiard businesses; and three rich farmers with houses in town). Among these eight, only one woman thought inequality had increased; four of the men thought it had remained the same; one woman and two men thought it had decreased, two of these three were farmers who highlighted the government support to poor people whereas richer people were more affected by the drought; the third, the man in his mid-30s, did not really explain but said that the overall context was one of small improvement for all.

Ten of those forty respondents gave an opinion on trends in the number of people in different wealth categories – which gives another perspective on inequality and how it evolved. Most of them thought that these days there were **fewer, very few or even no very poor/destitute people** (because *"most in the community now participate in various income-generating activities"*, current shoe shiner); only the irrigation committee leader thought that the number of poor people had risen because irrigation activities had stopped. However, a number of them added, there are also **very few (one said no) very rich households**.

The **young men and women** interviewed on young people's experience were invited to comment on economic change and some of them offered views on inequality. For two (of the six) young women both in the late 20s, it had increased; for the somewhat better-off one, this was due to richer households' ability to diversify, as explained above; however, in addition to the drought and lack of capital of poor people, the poorer young woman also highlighted the widespread landlessness and

unemployment of the community's young people. Among the young men, only one commented that economic inequality had not changed.

Relations between rich and poor

Considering relations between rich and poor, the same panel of respondents were asked about the trend in whether and how rich households supported poor households. A few also commented on broader social relations between these groups.

The overwhelming consensus was that **support from rich households to poor households** decreased in the past few years (12 respondents); or that there was no such support at all (12 respondents), except for one's relatives (2 out of these 12). Just one woman thought that there was no change and rich households continued as in the past to support poor households *"who have good conduct and approach as well as if they support them back in providing labour"* (destitute woman getting support from rich household and others, see [Box 26](#) above).

For those holding that view the single most-often mentioned reason for declining support is drought; this in turn means that every household finds it harder to afford their own living costs, and/or focuses more exclusively on maintaining (some said improving) their own livelihood. There was a sense of greater individualism mixed with the effects of the drought in several of these comments as well. Only one woman, a rich farmer's wife mostly living in their house in Dera, gave as main reason the fact that poor people are engaged in daily labour and get government support so *"they do not beg rich people for food"*. Among those who said there is no such support at all, two respondents (men) said it never was a tradition that rich people supported poor ones; they always expected labour in return. Others talked about such support in the past but that it had totally stopped:

- *"Rich households in the community used to support the poor particularly by providing in cash loan, letting the poor households herd their livestock and use the milk and manure for themselves, and also getting some livestock from the newly born ones while herding. But this has been stopped"* (bricklayer, see [p.178](#), neither rich nor poor)
- *"At this time, rich people do not support poor households. He heard that there was a support from rich to poor households among the community previously. But now the situation is changed"* (tailor who also has a barber shop, both opened with money from Saudi migration, neither rich nor poor).

Two women, one rich and the other very poor, pointed to poor people being **envious** of the rich – which was somewhat prompted by the questions they were asked. However, both spontaneously added that there is also some **exploitation** of poor people by the rich – revolving around the weak bargaining position of poor people offering their labour or renting-out their land, or the necessity for them (and others) to purchase commodities:

- *"Some poor people are lazy and do not engage in hard work, but they talk and gossip on rich people, because they envy them. On the other hand, some rich people are become rich unfairly by manipulating poor people's labour and being involved in business activities and selling goods at an unfair price"* (rich widow, see [p.173](#))
- *"... some rich people are unfairly rich because they rent in farm lands from poor people unfairly"* (very poor woman, see [Box 25](#)).

One rich man thought that community members were generally envious of each other and in his view, *"this is why there is no change in livelihoods."*

In spite of these rather grim views, a fair number of respondents talked about personal experiences of giving or getting support (in addition to the case of the destitute woman presented in [Box 26](#) above). See [Box 28](#) in the [Social protection](#) chapter below.

On this discrepancy between the narrative of less or even no rich-to-poor support generally and people's own experiences, the Research Officers explained that when they talk in general people probably think that 'support' must be something continuous and systematic; whereas in reality, a lot of the support provided is occasional, it may not always be arising from a rich-to-poor relationship, and/or there may be some element of expected reciprocity.

In some instances, this expectation of reciprocity may be quite loose. However, the data also suggest that the two women pointing to the existence of some exploitative practices may have a point. A case in point seems to be some of the informal transactions related to farmland rented-out or to the sale of residential plots. The number of these transactions appeared to be on the rise, as noted in the *Land use and urbanisation* chapter (see p.226 and p.229); and this seemed often to be motivated by the necessity of urgently resolving a stringent cash constraint faced by the person renting-out or selling, or the urge to finance a migration journey (see p.157). The data we have does not allow to conclude that these practices generally are exploitative, but it is clear that as they are informal, they are open to the possibility of terms of agreement unfavourable to the demand side party, whose bargaining power is weaker.

Some other cases of support from rich to poor may also be open to abuse – such as in the case of the rich woman informally employing the destitute woman in her grain mill as well as to milk the cows and various other domestic tasks, against some flour, milk, charcoal and loans but not doing anything to help when the destitute woman's daughter was sick (and died) (see p.176).

Political inequality

Elites

People identified as elite include *kebele* council and *kebele* cabinet members (see p.42, p.40 and p.41 on the *kebele* council, *kebele* cabinet and *kebele* leader respectively); development team leaders, women leaders (the Women Association chairperson, see p.47, and the women affairs' *kebele* cabinet member); *iddir* and *meskel* association leaders (see p.71 and p.72 on these organisations), elders (see p.68 on the elders' committee) and religious leaders; and successful farmers and businesspeople (men and women) (see Box 24).

People identified other elite, including for instance two veterans (ex-fighters, one Corporal, the other Lieutenant), whose "*main tasks are motivating people to work, reconciliation at time of conflict, and keeping peace and security in the community. They also served the community as ex-fighters and former kebele leaders*" (group of knowledgeable men); and two 'political activists' whose role seems to be facilitating discussions on 'political issues' (see p.56 for more).

There is **overlap** between these groups of elites, and they are said to closely work with one another. For instance:

- Among the many *iddir* and *meskel* association leaders, those well-known also serve as religious leaders and community elders; and one is the household head from a historically influential family.
- The men identified as known community elders "*hold elite positions as model farmers, religious leaders and intellectual persons*"; one of the three is also identified as successful male farmer.
- The religious leaders also serve as community elders.
- The successful farmers, men and women, are also members of the *kebele* council and for the men, *kebele* leaders. This is not the case for the successful businesspeople.
- Of the two veterans former *kebele* leaders, one is the current social court leader who was the *kebele* leader in 2012 (WIDE3 fieldwork); the other is also one of the two men identified as 'political activists'. The three men are also *kebele* council members, and the 'political activists' also serve as militia.

Turning to **influential individuals**, a number of women were shy to identify influential people but those who did gave the following profiles:

- 1) Lemlem G/her - Poor, relatively young woman head of household, development army group leader, no education – People trust and listen to her when she tells them to implement government interventions.
- 2) Asefu Atsebiha (wife of 'Kofi Anan') – Medium wealth, married, used to be development army group leader until three years ago and stopped for ill-health; she can read and write and “*is modern because she has exposure to big cities including Addis Ababa*” – She is “*heard and respected*”.
- 3) Kidan Hailu (mentioned twice) – Elderly, middle-wealth, head of household, running a *tella/araki*/beer drink house (see *Box 18*); she can read and write, is modern and has exposure to big cities, lived in Asmara in the past; she used to be very active in mobilising people for government interventions but stopped due to old age; she is the aunt of the former *kebele* leader now leader of the social court – Other community members respect very much what she says (and she has strong opinion on the weaknesses of the current government, see *p.38*).
- 4) Mulu – Widow in her 50s, farmer, head of household, among the better-off (see *p.173*); she can read and write; she used to be WA leader; she is a wise mediator in conflicts – She is respected by members of the community including men.
- 5) Miliete Bezabih – Rich woman farmer head of household, *kebele* finance leader; she used to be Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) (see her opinion on the long term effectiveness of government messaging in relation to birth delivery in *Box 11*) – She has become influential especially in the past five years and is particularly active in relation to the CBHI.
- 6) Gidena Hailu (mentioned twice) – Married, from a poor farming household, she has some education; current WA leader, “*responsible for convincing women to implement government programmes*”, actively involved in *kebele* affairs and close to *kebele* leader (see *p.231* on how this closeness allegedly prevented her from helping a woman with a land case asking for her support) – Community members, especially women, listen to what she says and are easily convinced and trust the information she provides.
- 7) Birhan Abadi – From a rich household, current women league head – People respect her and listen to her as she is actively involved in different government programmes. (It is worth noting that she is established as second wife of a man after her divorce).
- 8) Abrehet Dade – Better-off, married; she can read and write; ex-WA leader and now supporting the HEW especially in relation to the FAFA distribution activity to stop malnutrition of mothers and women; she is the wife of the *kebele* propaganda leader who is also the *kebele* PSNP coordinator – She is trusted and respected as she is sociable and was actively involved in many programmes and used to be in *kebele* leadership positions.

These profiles suggest that influence as understood by these women comes from a mix of factors: being ‘modern’ is one of them; an influential woman can be married or head of household; wealth as such may be less important than being seen as having achieved something (like the elderly woman running her *tella* business), and having served or currently serving one’s community.

Men asked to identify influential individuals interpreted the question very differently (perhaps due to differences in how this came in the conversations with the female Research Officer for the women and for the male Research Officer for the men). They thought of people who had a (negative) community-wide influence about issues such as the location of the sketch plan town (see *Box 1*), or the refusal to distribute food aid as long as every household had not taken fertilizer (see

p.82); or they linked this to issues of bias and partiality in decision-making about access to credit or land cases (see the *Perspectives on justice, nepotism and corruption* section for more on this).

Economically successful individuals do not always emerge as influential. Among the successful businessmen identified as such, one was also mentioned as a locally-recognised 'model non-farmer' whose influence as a category was said to be increasing; but the honey production investors do not seem to have any particular influence in the community - their investment is at an early stage and their influence may grow in future.

Middle-level people with potential influence

A number of people were interviewed as individuals potentially influential. For some of them, more information is found elsewhere in this report. In this section we focus on the elements related to their possible influence or lack thereof.

There is a multiservice cooperative, a RUSACCO and an irrigation users' association in Harresaw. Their leaders are well-established men (see p.49) with other positions:

- The **irrigation users' association leader** (45-year old) is reserve member of the *kebele* land justice, and member of the *kebele* council and the ruling party.
- The **multiservice cooperative leader** (60-year old) is former *kebele* leader, leader of the union to which the cooperative belongs, religious leader, ruling party member, member of the *kebele* council, and member of the irrigation association management. He has many relatives in official positions.
- The **RUSACCO leader** (51-year old) is a member of the *wereda* council, the ruling party, the disabled veterans' association and the farmers' association.

The multiservice cooperative leader may continue to be influential in his capacity of former *kebele* leader. Among the respondents, none of them spontaneously mentioned anyone of them as a person they would go for advice, support or anything of the like. This is the case even for the RUSACCO leader who is also *wereda* councillor, vindicating the comment made by *wereda* officials about the weakness of *wereda* councillors in representing their constituencies.

The **young man leader of a stone quarrying and selling cooperative** (one of the two which started producing hence providing an income to members, among the 12 youth groups said to have been organized in the *kebele*) does not appear to have any more influence than any other young man, except vis-à-vis of the cooperative members. He is also the one who deals with the contractor who at the moment is buying their production.

The **militia leader** (see p.45) did not seem to have influence beyond that linked to his role. He is also quite young and new in the job.

The **development team leaders** (see p.43) are important for their members, including because of the role of development team leaderships in selecting people for various intervention-related 'benefits'. There is no reason for them to be influential more widely although in the cases of the two women interviewed in other capacities and who turned out to be development army groups, they seemed to be above the average DT leader. One was also leader of a *mehaber* and *equub* with the same membership as the development army group; the other is a still young woman, poor and head of household, who was mentioned by one other woman as influential (see above).

The **community police**, not from Harresaw but who lives there since three years, is a well-known figure, firstly due to his job too. However, he also appears as a member of the CCC management committee and he says he played an important role in implementing in Harresaw the *wereda* instructions to the effect that *kebele* can no longer raise resources for their budget by taking in-kind deductions from food aid transfers. He is not a *kebele* cabinet member, but he links up closely with the cabinet through his links with the *kebele* security and administration leader.

The **NGO worker**, representative of the SURE NGO (see [p.121](#)), is not from Harresaw and he lives in Atsbi. His contacts with the community go through the HEW and the DAs. He does not seem to have any influence in Harresaw.

The **social court leader, leader of the LAC and leader of the land justice committee** are important because of the importance of the structures that they lead. As described elsewhere in this report, there seems to be a generally negative perception about the way the LAC and land justice committee perform (see [p.235](#)). Less is known about perceptions of the performance of the social court – although it was said to be the best performing structure by the *kebele* manager who meanwhile pointed to big issues with the LAC and land justice committee.

With regard to the leaders of these structures as individuals, the member of the *kebele* LAC interviewed was not the leader; he is a member of the *kebele* council, militia and ruling party but he did not seem to be otherwise influential. The leader of the land justice committee was very recently appointed (August 2017) to replace someone removed due to his controversial handling of land issues. He too is a member of the ruling party and a militia, and he works as a forest guard. He too did not seem to be influential other than in his capacity of land justice leader, and it was too soon to know whether he would make the committee work with less perceived partiality.

In contrast, the social court leader is influential as an individual: he is the former *kebele* leader (he was in post in 2012 at the time of the WIDE3 fieldwork), an ex-fighter with a position of Lieutenant, and as seen in the previous section, he was mentioned as an elite and a ‘political activist’ in roles involving outreach, influence, and mediation skills (see [p.180](#)). However, he is also involved in some controversies in the *kebele*. On one hand, many respondents stressed the way the *kebele* administration was much better run when he was the *kebele* leader, contrasting it with the performance of the current administration; on the other, in informal discussions Research Officers heard people saying that he was involved in a corruption case before he resigned from the *kebele* leadership position. He was also accused of partiality towards his (Lima’t) *kushet* in handling the case of the damages seemingly intentionally done to the pipes running water on Lima’t land whereas people from Lima’t do not have access to the water points that this scheme is serving (see [p.21](#)).

Access to important people

When they have a problem or want an advice, those who have a **position in an official/government structure** explained that when the issue is professional they generally go to individuals/offices directly related to their job. For instance, the social court leader goes to community elders if the case is simple and otherwise, to lawyers and judges at the *wereda* level. The multiservice cooperative, RUSACCO and irrigation users’ association leaders first try to resolve the issue with their management committee, then also go to the *kebele* level first (leader, or DA office for the RUSACCO and irrigation users’ association leaders), then the relevant *wereda* offices. The policeman, militia leader, LAC member and land justice committee leader said similar things. The young man leader of the youth association quarrying and selling stones first calls on the association members then he may go to the *kebele* leaders.

For the **leaders of community organisations** such as *Meskel* association, *iddir*, *equub*, and *mehaber*, the elders’ committee and the church, those interviewed said they go to colleagues or peers first (e.g. other elders, other *Meskel* association leaders) and in the case of the priest, this may include priests from other *kebele*, whereas the elder also liaises with the social court and the land administration and justice committees. They go to the *kebele* and in some cases the *wereda* administration when the case is beyond what this first level support can handle – for instance, when the church was stolen money (priest, see [p.25](#)) or when an *iddir* member was killed by others for money (see [p.69](#)). As is described elsewhere, the leaders of these organisations all have some form of relation with the *kebele* administration with regard to passing government messages to their members (see [p.80](#)).

This is markedly different from whom **community members** contact when they have a problem or want advice related to a more personal situation. For those involved in a non-farm activity and in relation to that, among the **women** - a small trader (see *Box 15*), an own produce seller, the owner of the second largest snack bar in the *kebele* centre (see *Box 17*), the elderly influential lady running the *tella/araki*/beer drink house also in the *kebele* centre (see *Box 18*), a young woman with a recently opened 'modern' hair braiding salon, and the destitute woman involved in petty trade (see *Box 26*) – only the small trader said she contacts the WA leader or the *kebele* leader. All the others said they talk to family members and relatives (their spouse, a brother or sister, her parents for the young woman, her nephew who is the former *kebele* leader for the elderly lady), or neighbours for the destitute woman.

The young woman doing hair braiding said she knew that *wereda* and *kebele* officials would do nothing for her. The destitute woman/petty trader said

"I do not ask anybody in the wereda and kebele for advice. I consult with God when I face problems and need support (laughing) because I know I have nobody in the kebele and wereda who could support me because I am very poor. I also consult and seek advice from my female neighbours whenever I face a problem."

For men with a non-farm activity, one common point with women is that they do not go to officials except when it is for a specific process or request, like the young man with the bakery to get his license or the bricklayer seeking to form a professional association with others in the *kebele* engaged in the same activity (this was turned down by *kebele* officials, see *p.129*). The shoe shiner and the blacksmith also talk to their spouse or a close family member. The young boy employed by the successful young businessman talks to his mother. An agricultural daily labourer first talk to his employer, and he may call on elders when he has an issue with that person. A small crop trader also talks to friends or elders, depending on the nature of the problem.

It is a bit different for those with a larger-scale activity and/or an activity requiring specialised skills. They go to friends or business partners outside of the *kebele*, who have the same professional activity: the baker goes to a friend baker in Atsbi, the tailor to a friend tailor in Dera; the relatively bigger crop trader goes to traders with whom he makes business, including large traders of Mekelle.

Appeals, petitions and complaints are covered elsewhere (see the *Appeals, petitions and complaints* section). The general sense arising from the data is that in many of the cases described in that section, the main issue may not have been that community members would not manage to contact the people they think might be relevant to their case at least as long as these are at *kebele* level (although there were respondents saying that *kebele* officials are hard to find at their office). More fundamentally, the issue was that once the contact is established, this does not lead anywhere – and going up to *wereda* level generally also did not help in the cases narrated there; except for well-connected people. Hence, for the others, a sense of 'therefore, what's the point' is developing – as illustrated in the case of the woman destitute and petty trader mentioned above.

Inclusion in government public services & interventions

Kebele officials explained that with regard to access to services like health and education, there is no difference between **residents** of this *kebele* and neighbouring *kebele*. Many residents of Harresaw have children in a school in Ruba Feleg *kebele*; residents from Gebre Kidan *kebele* may have children in Harresaw school; and residents from many *kebele* use the health centre located at the moment in Harresaw (in the process of being transferred to Dera municipality). Residents of Harresaw and many other *kebele* also use education (grade 9-10 school), veterinary, market, MFI and bank services in Dera. In all these processes there are no additional requirements for non-residents. This is supported by evidence from many community respondents.

However, there are services/interventions for which anyone resident in Harresaw needs a ***kebele* ID card**. This includes banking and credit services, as well as eligibility for land reallocation/allocation

on an individual or group basis. As explained earlier in this report, there is a bit of a grey zone about the requirements associated with getting an ID in practice, linked to what is considered as sufficient evidence of being a 'resident' of the *kebele* – involving payment of membership fees to 'key' associations and participation to the community voluntary labour (see [p.90](#)).

In principle, nobody is excluded from services because of individual characteristics like wealth status, age, gender. In relation to **wealth**, the experiences of poor and destitute men and women suggest that nonetheless their poverty may prevent them from effectively accessing some services, if they are not covered by one of the interventions aimed to avoid this when these exist.

- **Education** – Many respondents, including all the young men and women, highlighted that children/young people from poor households generally go less far at school. For instance, the children of the very poor woman (see [Box 25](#)) have dropped out; her son at the end of grade eight because he had to work and support the household (he is working as daily labourer and assistant driver in Mekelle). Also see above the case of the young woman who was accepted at university but could not proceed (see [p.174](#)). There are exceptional cases – like this very poor woman farmer head of household who has a son in his second year at Woldia university and the second is a grade 10 student. In her case, she has a rich relative who supports her son, as well as her ex-husband.
- **Health services** – See the [Social protection](#) chapter for a discussion of the potential of the CBHI to ensure access to health care to all in Harresaw; veterans and their families are covered by a separate scheme. However, not everyone is covered and there are dramatic cases such as the destitute woman whose daughter died at the holy water because she could not afford taking her to the health centre – and she is not included in the non-paying CBHI members (see [Box 26](#)).
- **Agriculture extension** – The experience of the very poor woman, with one timad of infertile land and no labour at home, illustrates well the issue. She says that she gets the same advice about using fertiliser and improved seeds, repeatedly and timely ploughing and sowing in line as the other farmers. But she lacks money and manpower so she cannot apply them all. Presumably under the same pressure as others, she added that she sometimes used the PSNP cash payment to buy fertiliser and improved seeds.

Poorer people benefit less from some of the **infrastructure development** seen in the *kebele* in the past few years/decade. For instance, in spite of the fact that transport to Atsbi and beyond is more readily available, they continue to walk more than others – as explained half-jokingly by a young woman in her early twenties and living in Ekunta *got*:

"I am not involved in any sport. But no sport is needed - as transport within the kebele is not available, community members walk long distance to access different services such as shops and kebele meetings to the centre of kebele and to Dera for education and market services."

Poor people also do not have **mobile phones**. As for access to **drinking water**, several respondents commenting on the poor state-of-affairs in the *kebele* noted that there is basically no difference between poor and rich people; all face poor access. This is true up to a point, as there are water users' fees to pay. Some very poor people may be exempted (see the case of the destitute woman) but it does not seem that any formal system is in place.

Other factors underlying some cases of ex/inclusion emerge from the interviews as including:

- **Spatial patterns** of infrastructure development – See [Spatial patterns](#) section.
- **Quotas** – See [Targets and quotas](#) section.
- **Age** – Young and old people were said to benefit less than other community members, for the young people because interventions to support them are very limited, and for the older

people because they cannot work to implement government interventions to try to improve their livelihood and therefore are dependent on government assistance like PSNP.

- **Gender** – A number of women highlighted that women were at a disadvantage with regard to access to government interventions due to “*lesser exposure and oppression by the men*”. This woman (poor, head of household, 1-5 network leader and water users’ committee leader) elaborated as follows:

“For instance, there are young men who are organized into groups to be involved in beekeeping, stone mining or eucalyptus production. The government has provided them land. However, in every group, there are only few young women. Most of them are young men. There are also women members in the land judge and administration committees. But, they are few in number and they have less power of decision and they can do nothing for women; they are in the position just for nothing and without any power due to the oppression by men members as well as by the kebele administration.”

- **One’s connections** – See in particular, the sections on *Lack of justice, partiality, bias* and *Corruption* above. This quote from the same woman illustrates a widespread perception:

People related with the kebele officials in any case benefit most from kebele services and programmes. For instance, they get their ID card rapidly and are selected for training and other benefits. Poor people are not supported by the kebele officials; they are always discriminated and underestimated by them because they do not have anyone related to them in the kebele. For instance, there are some poor women who have a case at the land administration committee but they cannot get their land timely because they are not related to any kebele official and they are poor economically and cannot afford to bribe the LAC members.

Social protection

Vulnerability in Harresaw – An overview

Types of vulnerability

In Harresaw, the clearest forms of risks of vulnerability that could affect any household/individual are health problems including shocks; livelihood problems including shocks; and food insecurity. As many respondents noted (see [p.173](#)), poverty compounds vulnerability as poor households, have a lower asset base hence a lower ability to respond to problems and overcome shocks.

Harresaw has been recognised as a chronically food insecure *kebele* in a chronically food insecure *wereda* since the onset of the government Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). An annually variable but generally high number of households are beneficiaries of the PSNP. In principle this is complemented by emergency food aid in more severe drought periods when the contingency measures of the PSNP are not sufficient.

In rural settings like Harresaw, crop and livestock insurance are another form of interventions potentially relevant to a large number of residents – especially so, considering that food insecurity is largely prompted by livelihood-related problems and/or shocks but also relevant for successful farmers, considering their greater exposure to agricultural/weather-related risks.

In addition, since 2012 (WIDE3 fieldwork) the Government of Ethiopia has also begun to rapidly rollout a national programme of Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) aimed to ensure that anyone not formally employed has access to a package of health care services going beyond those which were already supposed to be provided free of charge in earlier years (mainly maternal and child health care). The CBHI is supposed to be rolled out on a voluntary basis at all levels (i.e. each

wereda then each *kebele* deciding to be included or not; and households deciding to annually subscribe or not). However, the government goal is clearly to achieve as high a membership as possible, so that everyone is protected against ‘catastrophic health expenditures’.

These interventions, the PSNP and EFA, crop/livestock insurances, and the CBHI do therefore potentially concern many community members in Harresaw; this chapter covers the way they are implemented and their outcomes in the *kebele*.

Meanwhile, there are also categories of households and people structurally vulnerable (as opposed to vulnerable due to a problem/crisis/shock). One may argue that this includes poor, very poor and destitute people; there are also other categories, described below, whose vulnerability goes beyond wealth status. In principle, a comprehensive social protection system would ensure that people belonging to these categories are supported in ways additional to the ‘generic’ social protection interventions just mentioned, that would address their specific additional vulnerabilities. This chapter will also review whether such interventions exist in Harresaw and how they are working.

The chapter will consider both the informal social protection system in Harresaw, and the government interventions. It is structured as follows. It first briefly describes the categories of vulnerable households/people in Harresaw. It follows with a description of the informal social protection system in the community, including forms of informal support between individuals and provided by community organisations. It then outlines the formal social protection government interventions present in Harresaw. Finally, it covers any other formal social protection interventions found in the community.

Categories of vulnerable households/individuals

A very large proportion of households in Harresaw are at risk of food insecurity as soon as the weather is poor, which it has been for the past few years. And all are at risk of catastrophic health expenditure. The section on *Economic and political inequality* above outlines who is considered to be poor, very poor and destitute (as well as rich) and documents how economic inequality is experienced in Harresaw. Besides them, according to a group of knowledgeable women the vulnerable categories in Harresaw are disabled children and adults, old people needing support, female-headed households, child-headed households and orphans, and People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The box below summarises the information they gave on these groups and the support they receive.

Box 27. Vulnerable households/individuals in Harresaw

Disabled adults and children - There are more than 15 people who have hearing, sight, walking problems or another strong disability with e.g. one of their hands. They are unable to be involved in work because of the disability.

Mentally ill people - The respondents were able to identify only one child who has an autism problem. He lives with his family members at home.

Old people needing support - There are many old people who cannot work and need support. They get supported mainly by their family members and they get food aid from the government (15 kgs grain every two-three months).

Orphans - There are around 15 orphan children who face economic problems. They are supported by relatives (grandparents, parents’ siblings). There are more orphans overall but these fifteen are particularly vulnerable. They also are full-orphans. Some respondents said that the government is good at supporting orphans including those who are half-orphaned. They get food aid and there are also others supported in cash to be involved in sheep fattening activities by the government.

Women heading households – In Harresaw there are more female-headed households than male-headed households, as men died in wars and are more exposed to death because of migration to Saudi. That is why some men in the community have more than one wife and get children from two

or three women. The government does not provide special support for female-headed households but they get food aid as other vulnerable people.

Children heading households - Some respondents mentioned two brothers who are orphans and support each other in Lima't *kushet* and they are considered as a child-headed household. The successful young businessman and his brothers also lost their parents very early and they were considered as child-headed household; they grew up supporting each other as brothers.

PLWHAs - There might be around 25 PLWHAs officially known; they get support from their parents, family members as well as the government. The government treats them first in every support coming to the community, and they get additional support not available to all.

Wereda officials said **prostitution** is not an issue of concern in Atsbi-Womberta *wereda*. In Harresaw, the concept has a different meaning. A young woman who has sexual intercourse before marriage is considered as a prostitute. Meanwhile, older women, often divorcees, who have sexual relations with men married elsewhere and children from several men, are considered as a particularly vulnerable group living in destitution.

Migration to Saudi also introduces new forms of vulnerability. In its programming the government identifies migrant returnees as needing attention; but no attention appears to be given to the fact those 'left behind' when a migrant is away may face additional vulnerability.

Informal social protection system

By and large the informal social protection system in Harresaw does not clearly distinguish between poverty and vulnerability; it is shaped around a broader way of thinking of people in need of help. There are two main forms of social protection assistance extended to those people: i) support by other individuals/households on a bilateral basis and ii) support by community organisations. In 2018, support between people/households on an individual basis appeared to be more important than support provided by community organisations. Informal social protection also seemed to be geared to provide assistance on an occasional, idiosyncratic basis more than a system organized to provide continuous assistance to the vulnerable.

Support between individuals/households

In Harresaw, as explained earlier (see section *Relations between rich and poor* above), there is a sense that generally, support **from rich to poor people** has declined compared to the past and is continuing to decline. Some respondents (men) said there was never a tradition of rich people supporting poor people, the rich were always expecting something in return. Two women pointed to exploitative practices. Drought and the associated greater hardships for everyone is one explanation that was frequently evoked for these trends, but a number of respondents also suggested a sense of greater individualism. Hence, a group of knowledgeable women commented:

"In the past, poor people used to eat and drink at rich people's home; they got food and milk for free in rich people's house. However, currently, there is no one who provides support even though he/she has excess resources of food and other things. This is because currently, people have better awareness of business so they want to sell the excess resources they have and get money, instead of providing support for poor people."

Other chapters in this report also indicates a shift towards commercialization of resources which in the past used to be given for free, be it straw or even cactus leaves as fodder for livestock, or milk (see *Farming* chapter, *p.103* and *p.103*).

The examples given in *Box 28* below and others across interviews show that nonetheless, there still is a dense network of assistance provided to households/individuals in need by others who, at the time support is needed, are willing and judge that they are in a position to do so.

Box 28. Examples of support between individuals/households

Small female trader – got a 100kg loan in-kind for her trade from a neighbour; in turn, shared food and coffee with poor neighbours.

Own produce seller – was supported by a sister with 25 kg barley.

Woman with second largest snack bar in kebele centre - got a 1,000 *Birr* loan from her sister who has a restaurant in Atsbi to pay the big amount of tax she was asked to pay for the first time, and help from her brother, financially and in advice, when she sold her house in the *kebele* centre to repay a large outstanding loan left by her husband who migrated to Saudi and has 'disappeared'. She needed 57,000 *Birr*; she sold the house 60,000 *Birr*; her brother helped her in cash to cover household expenditure as she had almost nothing left.

Young woman who opened a 'modern' hair braiding salon – was helped by her sister living in Wukro who paid the 3,800 *Birr* fees for her short-term training course.

Elderly lady selling tella, araki and beer in the kebele centre – helped a niece, raising her to grade 10 and police training and is now still helping other nieces in food. Got help in cash from her customers (100 to 200 *Birr* each) when she was stolen 6,000 *Birr* in the drink house.

Poor woman 1-5 network leader – was helped by her daughter's teachers when her daughter had an eye problem. She is CBHI member so she got free treatment in Wukro but with the 600 *Birr* they gave her she could go to Mekelle to get her daughter cured. She also borrowed 5,000 *Birr* with no interest from a relative last year, to buy food for her household. She sold *tella* and coffee to repay.

25-year old widow with an 8-year old daughter, landless and whose husband died on migration, running a small drink house (beer and soft drinks) in the *kebele* centre, got support from her siblings to build the house in which she is running her business.

Middle-wealth woman farmer head of household who used to be a model farmer - provided food for neighbours who are very poor but she did not support them permanently. She also provides milk for poor neighbours who have children as well as sick household members.

Priest – got support in cash from members of the church when his straw was burned.

Successful young businessman – got credit in-kind from suppliers; gave loans to would-be migrants, some not repaid; is supporting a very poor boy from a very poor background (see [Box 12](#)), by employing him against a small monthly salary, food and shelter, and allowing him to go to school; gave his shoe shining equipment and trade to his friend when he started his shop.

Shoe shiner – got 2,000 *Birr* help from a rich relative after he was stolen 6,000 *Birr* travelling to Mekelle to buy inputs for his business. This allowed him to continue his activity.

Daily worker – with friends, helped another friend whose hand was broken to get treatment.

Middle wealth farmer, veteran – helped a neighbour household whose head has been in jail for two years in Saudi, to till their land as the children are too small.

Poor farmer who used to work as a guard for the school, got sick and had to stop – was helped by friends to build a house on the residential land he received last year whilst he was sick; and the school gave him 500 *Birr* when he stopped working, to help him afford treatment.

Multiservice cooperative leader – Got 3,000 *Birr* from relatives to pay the fine and medical expenses after his son fought and broke someone's teeth.

The social relations underlying these cases include **rich-to-poor, kin/relatives, friendship** and **neighbourly relations**. It is impossible to establish a general pattern. For instance, some of the support is among relatives but a) support from friends and neighbours is present as well and b) it is not always the case that relatives provide support (more on this below in this section).

Also, and in contrast with the narrative of lesser/no rich-to-poor support, some richer people seemed to be quite generous, like the successful young businessman who gave his friend his shoe shining equipment and trade after several years when they worked together and the wife in the rich household owning a grain mill house in the *kebele* centre and supporting the destitute woman (see

p.177 – although as also noted earlier, the woman she helps is also giving her labour). But some rather poor households provide occasional help to poorer than them, as this woman explains:

“My household did not need any support last year because my husband was involved in any kind of daily labour to solve the household’s financial problem. Even, last year I provided food support during holidays for my neighbour, who is also my relative. We share food together during holidays because she is unable to prepare holiday foods in her home. For instance, we tell her not to buy any meat because we know this would be very difficult for her, but we invite her when we eat meat for the holiday” Wife of a poor farmer, 1.25 timad, lost all chicken bought on loan, husband migrated several times to Saudi and Afar but is now sick.

The group of knowledgeable women mentioned above suggested that what may also have changed compared to the past is the ‘size’ of the support:

“In the past it was easy to borrow big amount of money from neighbours, relatives or other rich money lenders without interest and solve financial problems. However these days, no one is willing to do so because of the expensiveness of living and lack of excess money to lend to others”. Some in the group thought that *“people started to live individually and rather focus on their own economic problem”*. Others noted that *“people can still borrow small amounts of money like 20, 50 or up to 100 Birr from their neighbours, relatives or intimate friends to solve their problem for the time being.”*

Whether it is true that in the past, it was possible to get more substantial support on a disinterested basis, is hard to say. Where these women seem to be right is that many cases of support in the data tended to be relatively small-scale. In particular, the practices of **small loans in food or cash**, to be repaid if and when the person receiving the loan gets the money, or of **sharing food for holidays** with poorer neighbours unable to have a feast, appear to still be quite common. That is the case too for work exchange, as seen in the *Farming* chapter (see p.97). In some of these cases, those providing the support in one direction do not necessarily expect that they will get the return immediately or indeed any time soon.

However, support between **relatives** could be **larger-scale**. See for instance, the 5,000 *Birr* given by the man from a historically influential family; the young woman whose sister paid the 3,800 *Birr* fees for her hairdressing short training course; the 5,000 *Birr* borrowed for food by the poor 1-5 network leader woman. In some cases, fairly large loans are given by relatives to finance a migration journey and they may not be demanded back if the journey turns to be unsuccessful. One young man said he had to borrow 10,000 *Birr* from each, his sister and his father as he was abducted twice on the way, then he was immediately deported; they will not demand him to repay. However in contrast, are the cases of the better-off parents of the destitute woman not helping her (see *Box 26*), and of the household who rented-in land from the wife’s sister who wanted to migrate, then died, and who will not let the land go back to the sister’s husband as they say that she did not repay her loan before dying (the husband says she did) (see p.157).

Support from **neighbours** also seemed to continue to be important, taking the form of sharing food, small loans or gifts of food or other items, and also advice and protection, as explained by the destitute woman talking about violence from the men with whom she had sexual relations.

Across interviews there were also several cases of support between **business partners**, usually in the form of in-kind credit and ranging from very small to quite large. This is arguably different because it is presumably in the interest of the provider to extend support. But in some of the cases there seemed to also be an altruistic element. The destitute woman who is doing some petty trade every market day and mostly gets her goods from the same woman trader explained that this woman waits for the next week, when she does not manage to sell enough in one day to both take the next lot of goods and make a little money for herself. The trader from Atsbi who helped the successful young businessman to start his shop did this partly also to strengthen his advocacy against the young

man's plan to migrate. For the comparatively larger crop trader (see [p.126](#)), he presented this as a two-way relation depending on each partner's cash float; the sums involved could be quite large (30,000 *Birr* for the last time he borrowed 'in kind' from his Mekelle partner).

Other forms of support were mentioned, some of these 'in kind' or partly so. For instance, the successful young businessman employing the young boy presented this as a support. Other cases include the very poor woman who hopes that her relative in Mekelle, for whom her son is working as assistant driver, might assist him to get driving license (see [Box 25](#)), the young widow whose siblings built the house in which she is running her business (in [Box 28](#)), and the poor woman whose son studies at Woldia university with the help of a rich relative.

With regard to support to people belonging to specific **vulnerable categories** identified above (see [Box 27](#)), for most of these categories support may be extended as part of the network of assistance just described. Relatives are said to be particularly important for elderly people and older households (also see below), and for orphans. They also are the only support for disabled and mentally ill people:

"Family people support vulnerable people in their household in treating them well, feeding them as well as helping them to do personal activities such as washing their body and putting on their clothes (for the autistic child or very old people for instance)" (group of knowledgeable women).

No one mentioned what happens when for instance a very old person does not have anyone who can provide this kind of support.

Support by grown-up children

The same group of knowledgeable women were of the view that *"the main support in the community is from grown-up children"* – in keeping with the usual trajectory of children raised by parents, then leaving the parental household, establishing their independent livelihood and household and in turn, being able to help their elderly parents. However, the data suggest that there are a number of factors making this trajectory evolve, most notably the difficulties faced by most young people to establish an independent livelihood (see [Young people's economic and other experiences](#) chapter below) and the socioeconomic effects of migration to Saudi. So, whilst there were examples of grown-up children supporting their old parents, there were also a) much fewer mentions of migration as a 'best option' to do so than in 2012; b) a few mentions of children not supporting their parent(s); and c) many mentions of parents needing to support the households established by their children in various ways.

As seen in the [Migration](#) chapter, there was a sense, especially among adult respondents and also among spouses with repeat migrants, that the risks of **migration to Saudi** have become much greater and the possible benefits smaller. Not all have abandoned this image of the successful migrant able to help her/himself and his family, as illustrated by this young woman who thinks that parents who have male children are lucky because their sons can migrate to Saudi and change their life whereas her household is unlucky because there is no older son who can do so – and she is therefore planning to migrate herself (18 year-old poor young woman). And as seen in the [Economic inequality](#) section above, having the ability of sending a migrant abroad to further build one's wealth is still seen as one characteristics of rich households.

But this narrative is counterbalanced by the reality of the 'drifting' young returnees (mainly young men) after an unsuccessful journey, unable to settle, and definitely unable to help their parents; and of parental households losing a lot of money or strongly indebted whereas sometimes they tried to oppose the decision of the youngster to migrate – See for instance the former *kebele* leader now social court leader, whose household lost 44,000 *Birr* in two unsuccessful migration attempts by their son who therefore, is still dependent on them (see [p.166](#)). A group of men also put in the

balance the anxiety that all parents with children migrants are feeling all the time and how they 'cannot have a stable life' (see [p.166](#)).

The cases of **children not helping parents** appear to be isolated. In one case, the oldest son of the very poor divorcee, from her first marriage and who joined the army, does not help his mother, neither does her married daughter from the same marriage (see [Box 25](#)). The woman head of a quite rich household and considered as influential and a 'wise mediator' was financially supported by her two sons who have government jobs so that her situation improved a lot since 2000 EC; but she also has a daughter who is in Saudi but she never sent remittances as she is married to a man from Raya and has maintained very little link with her family in the community.

So, whereas these cases do not make a trend, there may be an emerging trend in relation to **young households** needing more **support** and/or for longer, **from their parents**. Sometimes this is related to migration to Saudi but not always.

In relation to **migration**, a group of women highlighted the emergence of a new category of vulnerable households, in the increasingly frequent cases when a mother or both spouses with young children migrate(s), leaving the children with their grand-parents. One of them who was in this situation highlighted that grand-parents find it a struggle to assure the children's food, schooling, health care and other needs, especially when the migrant is not, or not yet, able to send remittances or if anything bad happens to her/him. The women believed that there are probably more than 30 such cases in Harresaw.

Even when one of the spouses remains behind she (most often) or he (more rarely) may have no or very little means of subsistence, and it also befalls on parents or in-laws to help even if they struggle themselves to meet their needs. As this young woman explains:

"Life with my in-laws is ok, so far so good, but it is not comfortable. We should be independent. It is a necessary evil for me to stay with them, but it is a sad situation. They don't manifest any bad feelings, but I feel them inside. They are not capable of supporting anyone else than themselves and they do it just because it is a moral responsibility for them. But they could throw us out anytime. The time my husband sent 1,000 Birr, this went for the household, I could not use it separately as I am living with and from them" (landless married young woman with a small child).

In another case, a man whose son and young wife are both landless and his son is in Saudi explains that his son's wife and their two-year child are living by themselves. His own household supports her a bit by giving them grain.

There were many other cases of parents/in-laws supported the younger households, unrelated to migration. For instance:

- The young woman running the second largest snack bar of Harresaw explained that as newly-wed, she and her husband, both landless, got a lot of support from both her parents and her in-laws, in cash and in crops as their business was strongly down during the drought (at the time they were trading in beer redistribution and had a shop).
- A 20-year old poor young woman married, with a 4-year old and a 2-year old son, landless as well as her husband, has an ox given by her parents; her parents and in-laws contribute a lot in helping them to raise their children. Her mother-in-law who lives nearby gives them food and goods and buys clothes for the children and both parental households help in grain.
- A small/middle size crop trader said he got the donkey to transport the crops he sells in Dera and Atsbi from his parents. In exchange he helps them by selling and buying items for them on the market as they are too old to go to the market themselves.

- The tailor who also has a barber shop got half a timad of land from his in-laws to grow his household's food, and in exchange he supports them with labour in his spare time.
- The 35-year old militia leader was given a small piece of land to farm, and they help him with grain; in exchange he helps them with labour. He expects they will keep helping each other until he gets his own farmland.

In some of these cases the support extended by the parents is 'compensated' by support from the younger household, but it nonetheless is striking that a 35-year old man is still not in a position to have an independent livelihood (case of the militia leader).

Community organisations

Membership-based community organisations in Harresaw include the Church, *iddirs*, *equubs*, *mehabers* and *Meskel* associations.

With regard to the **Church**, as noted by the young priest of St Rufael, "*it should provide support for deprived people and involve in development projects ideally but no work has been done so far practically because the church itself is poor and needs support from community members*". That the church itself depends on its members is described [p.69](#) above. The priest noted that the churches organize feasts for holidays to feed beggars, but this too depends on community members' support.

The role of *mehabers* and **Meskel associations** (see [p.73](#) and [p.72](#)) does not involve financial or material support to their members; on the contrary, they require a contribution from the members. So, among the women interviewed, the destitute woman (see [p.176](#)), an 18-year old poor young woman and another very poor young woman (divorcee, with five children from different men, the elder 16-year old daughter working as housemaid in Atsbi and the older 14-year old son as shepherd in Harresaw and herself living of daily labour) were not members of a *mehaber* due to their poverty. The other very poor woman already mentioned several times (see [p.175](#)) has a *mehaber*.

Equubs are also not primarily a one-way support mechanism; they entail reciprocity as each member has her/his turn. They are more a way for an individual to save to be able to invest later on when she/he gets the lot. In Harresaw *equubs* do not seem to be very common. However, in at least one of the cases that was mentioned – an *equub* created out of and with the same membership as a development army group of women also formed into a *mehaber* - the way it works includes a form of support to members: any woman facing an urgent need can get the lot before her turn i.e. even if she has not (yet) drawn it, if it is accepted by the members (see [p.73](#)). The sum involved is 600 *Birr* (30 members contributing 20 *Birr* each and drawing the lot every two weeks).

The primary role of **iddirs** is to support members in the event of funerals. In Harresaw, they were said to support members for other social events as well such as weddings. Like for *equubs*, their importance as a form of community organization was not much clearer in 2018 than it was in 2012. Many respondents referred to *iddirs* and their role, but in general and vague terms. Several also noted that *iddirs* that had been functional at some point were no longer. However, there were some *iddirs* said to be strong, like a 300-member *iddir* in Lima't *kushet*, of which a middle-wealth woman farmer head of household and ex-model farmer is member; and a 70-member *iddir* established from an older *Meskel* association (see [p.71](#)). Reportedly, some strong *iddirs* started providing loans to their members but this was mentioned only once.

There is little data in the interviews on the extent to which *iddirs* actually fulfil their role. More of the respondents who commented on this point were not members, usually because there was no *iddir* in their area or because it ceased to be functional, than respondents who were members. The destitute woman and the two very poor women mentioned above were not members of either an *equub* or an *iddir*. The only case of actual support mentioned is that of a man who lost livestock in a storm (he lost an ox, one cow and six sheep) and whose *iddir* replaced all his livestock.

Government social protection interventions - Overview

The government interventions implemented in Harresaw with a social protection objective included:

- Livelihood/food insecurity - The **Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), and Emergency Food Aid (EFA)** – a number of respondents suggested a difference in that EFA is associated more with drought, whereas PSNP is associated more with poverty and vulnerability;
- Health - The **Community Based Health Insurance (CBHI)** including the component of exemption of especially poor/vulnerable households from insurance premium payment; the scheme exempting veterans and their families from payment for health care;
- Vulnerability - The **Community Care Coalition (CCC)**.

Among those, the best known and oldest programmes are the EFA and the PSNP. In early 2018 in Harresaw the CBHI was widely known too, although with some critical gaps in people's information including in relation to its most protective component i.e. the exemption from payment of the annual premium; in contrast, the scheme of exemption of health care charges for veterans is very well known. The least known intervention is the CCC. The way these programmes were implemented in Harresaw is described below.

Besides the main programmes just mentioned there is **no crop or livestock insurance scheme** in place although it is being talked about (see p.62). There is **no other government programme** targeting specifically any of the vulnerable categories identified above. So for instance, a 23-year old young woman graduated from a level 3 TVET training in agriculture (livestock) in 2008 EC and still jobless said she has no support to take short courses that might help her to find a job more easily.

Some of the **existing initiatives** pay **special attention** to **vulnerable categories**. For instance, orphans, elderly people with no support and households with a disabled or mentally-ill person or a member living with HIV/AIDS are considered in priority for receiving Direct Support under the PSNP. Landless disabled people, people with HIV/AIDS and female-headed households are given priority in the (re-)allocation of farmland (see p.220). Less is known about the selection criteria to be exempted from insurance premium payment for the CBHI – to the point that even the HEW said in an interview she is not sure, and she thinks that it is depending on households' economic situations and the factors considered include landlessness and having no asset/livestock.

There were cases of support extended by the **Veterans' Association** and the **wereda PLWHA association**: one veteran, a farmer graduated from the PSNP in 2006 EC, explained that he was given a 10,000 *Birr* loan by the Association with an interest rate lower than with other organisations; it was a relatively substantial amount at the time, and larger than was offered then as maximum loan by Dedebit. One male PLWHA received financial support, five sheep and clothes from the *wereda* PLWHA association (see *Box 29* below for the latter).

With regard to migration, *wereda* officials highlighted the programmes of post-repatriation support. As seen above (see *Box 20*) these made very little difference on the ground in Harresaw. Other vulnerabilities arising from migration to Saudi and described above (see p.192) are not explicitly recognized at *wereda* level.

Among the respondents, there were cases of individual/household benefitting from a combination of support which appeared to make a difference, as illustrated below in the case of a man living with HIV/AIDS. There were also cases like the destitute woman in *Box 26*, which appeared to be 'out of the radar screen' of some basic government intervention (like in her case, exemption of CBHI premium payment) for unclear reasons.

Box 29. Support to HIV/AIDS positive man

He is HIV/AIDS but he is using ART medication (free of charge). He does not have feelings of exclusion as the community is more aware of HIV/AIDS and "there is no stigma". He lives in his

own house with his wife and five children. His siblings are all better-off and help with labour and other things up to their ability.

He is assisted by the government in several ways, besides free medication and free health services generally. *First*, the household got one *timad* farmland which was given to him directly, aside from the lottery in 2007 EC, after the *kebele* administration discussed his case with community members. *Second*, he gets food assistance for all seven members of his household. *Third*, last year he received 530 *Birr* from the Community Care Coalition through the *kebele* social affairs office. *Fourth*, his household is also a non-paying member of CBHI. *Fifth*, he also received five sheep, clothes, and financial support from the *wereda* association for PLWHA in 2007 EC.

He has been using all services the same way community members do. For some of the services, he has even better access than others do. For instance, he is exempted from community labour contribution and from the CBHI annual fee, he is beneficiary of CCC, and his household receives food aid for seven members while others get a maximum of five.

However, he believes that he and other destitute people could move out of destitution if in addition, government or NGOs helped them to be organized and involve in different non-farm income generating activities. The support can be financial for business start-up, in-kind such as grinding mill machines and business skill trainings.

The next sections describe how the PSNP and EFA, the CBHI and its exemption component, and the CCC are implemented in Harresaw as well as how they are perceived.

Productive Safety Net Programme and Emergency Food Aid

Overview

The box below provides an overview of the key milestones in terms of food insecurity and drought, and of the government interventions in response to these over the past ten years in Harresaw, as community respondents described them.

Box 30. Drought, food insecurity and responses in Harresaw (2008-2018 GC) – An overview

Harresaw has been recognised as a chronically food insecure community since 2005 GC. The PSNP started being implemented in 2005/06 GC (1998 EC). There was a very severe drought in 2000 EC (2007/08 GC), that people call the ‘Millennium’ drought. The drought of 2015/16 GC (2008 EC) was severe too. And (see below), this year is very bad as well.

All agreed that the most severe was the **Millennium drought**: there was no production at all, not even straw, and mass livestock losses (see WIDE3 community report). Government provided food aid and fodder aid. In 2018 GC, most people recalled that food aid then was timely and sufficient.

Next in terms of severity comes the **2008 EC drought (2015/16)**: there was no production, not even straw; many households were forced to sell livestock (when they had some) in a depressed market, to get money to buy food for themselves or other livestock and to avoid losing more livestock due to shortage of water and fodder. Migration and borrowing increased. There was food aid and fodder aid, with a mixed picture in terms of timeliness and sufficiency (see below in this section).

Community respondents mentioned a number of other measures, including the provision of drinking water with ‘rotos’ (big containers) installed in a few locations in the *kebele* and supplied by tanker truck sent by the *wereda*; priority given to beekeepers to get sugar to feed their bees; school feeding; improved seeds for female-headed households for the production season following the drought. Grain prices went up according to some, insignificantly thanks to food aid according to others. All agree that livestock prices plummeted, but returned to normal (i.e. expensive) rapidly. After the drought, as mentioned above, a borehole was dug through a partnership between the Regional Government and UNICEF (see [p.21](#)) – although the scheme has not worked to standards ever since it was considered as completed.

All respondents noted that in Harresaw **2010 EC (2017/18 GC) is a drought year too**: the rainfalls were poor in the summer of 2017 (GC); most farmers had no production or only a very small one at

the beginning of 2010 EC; only those with fertile land had some harvest; the difference with 2008 EC is that there was at least straw. One compounding factor (which did not appear to have been registered at *wereda* level) is that in addition to poor weather that year, with the cumulative effect of several years of drought or poor rains the irrigation capacity of the dam had completely disappeared, nobody had been able to irrigate in 2010 EC.

There is little information on the ‘fodder aid’ that was provided in 2008 EC. All respondents who mentioned it said it was helpful but not sufficient so they had to decide which livestock to feed and keep and which to try to sell. A woman farmer head of household, comparatively rich but who considers herself as poor, explained that as for food aid for human beings (see below), fodder assistance was better during the Millennium drought than in 2008 EC: there was more of it in volume and during the Millennium drought they were given three types of fodder, straw, *frushka* and *fagule* – whereas in 2008 EC they just received *frushka* and some straw.

The table below gives a sense of the ‘size’ of the PSNP and EFA (number of individuals supported, duration of support) every year since 2008 EC, comparing with 2003 EC (data from WIDE3 Harresaw Community Situation Report, 2012). The data for 2010 EC is as at mid-March 2018.

	2003 EC 2010/11	2008 EC 2015/16	2009 EC 2016/17	2010 EC 2017/18
Emergency Food Aid (EFA)	1,294 people	4,000 people 10 months (all in grain) ²⁵	750 people 8 months (all in grain)	No info on any EFA provision
PSNP public works (PWs)	3,314 people	1,880 people 6 months (3 cash, 3 grain)	1,880 people 6 months (3 cash, 3 grain)	1,880 people One month paid in March, in cash
PSNP direct support (DS)	426 people	426 people 6 months (3 cash, 3 grain)	426 people One year (4 cash, 8 grain)	426 people Not started yet in March 2018

Of note:

- 1) If no EFA is provided in 2010 EC, which as said earlier, all community respondents consider a drought year too, only 2,306 individuals in Harresaw will receive any support aimed to address food insecurity (1,880 PWs + 426 DS PSNP beneficiaries). This compares to 6,306 individuals who one way or another (PSNP or EFA), received ‘food aid’ support in 2008 EC.
- 2) The number of PSNP PWs beneficiaries in 2008 EC is less than 60% of what it was in 2003 EC (green highlights in the table). *Kebele* officials explained that in 2008 EC, all households except five were receiving some kind of food aid support; and former graduates from PSNP were reintegrated under PSNP PWs or EFA. There is no data on how many households graduated between 2003 and 2007 EC, and how many were reintegrated under PSNP PWs in 2008 EC. The data suggest that either, the number of PSNP PWs households had dropped significantly (many graduated) before the 2008 EC drought, or, the largest proportion of the graduated households were reintegrated under EFA - i.e. very temporarily for most (only 750 individuals were under EFA in 2009 EC, down from 4,000 in 2008 EC – blue highlights in the table).

Taken together, these two points give a picture of **significantly less food aid support** known to be available in 2010 EC compared to 2008 EC and to 2003 EC, whereas the other chapters of this report give a picture of an altogether **more vulnerable community** in 2010 EC than in 2003 EC.

A third point of note is that **no one** among the community respondents explicitly mentioned that the **PSNP Direct Support**, covering 426 individuals, was extended for the **full year in 2009 EC** (yellow highlights in the table). This arises from a policy shift at federal level and is meant to provide

²⁵ Some respondents mentioned that in 2008 EC, EFA was provided for the whole year.

permanent support to households and individuals for whom it is recognised that graduation is not a realistic prospect, and that such assistance is required throughout the year as they have too little productive capacity of any kind to be self-sufficient. This policy shift does not appear to have been communicated to the community in Harresaw; and if it was, it does not appear to have made much impact. It is possible that people did not understand what happened in part because of confusion with the fact that the year before, many people received ten months of support as EFA.

Selection of beneficiaries – PSNP and EFA

More generally, as noted earlier (see p.84), **PSNP and EFA** appear to be ‘used’ as ‘**pooled resource**’ by *kebele* officials when it comes to distributing food aid support among households. So, although in principle the processes of selection for PSNP Public Works and Direct Support and for Emergency Food Aid are three distinct processes²⁶, it appears that at least since 2008 EC when EFA was provided ‘at scale’, *kebele* officials in Harresaw use a ‘combined selection’ strategy: an implicit signal that the policy distinction between chronic food insecurity addressed by PSNP and non-chronic food insecurity addressed by EFA has become increasingly blurred on the ground in the past few years. For *kebele* officials, this strategy was complicated by the fact that, they said, they are never told in advance when EFA stops (and for instance, in March 2018 they did not know whether any EFA was being planned for the 2010 EC), and that PSNP has been unreliable in the last couple of years. For community people, the results of this selection strategy are **quite confusing**.

In addition, possibly due to the fact that EFA was provided for longer than the PSNP in 2008 EC (ten/twelve months according to different respondents), followed by a year in which the PSNP DS was provided for the whole year (and little explanation appear to have been provided as said above), and that both EFA and PSNP DS beneficiaries do not work (at least, in principle, though this too is confusing, see below), there appears to also be **some confusion between EFA and PSNP DS**.

The cases narrated below give an illustration of the complexity and confusion surrounding the selection of beneficiaries for PSNP and EFA.

- A 60-year old divorcee with a small plot of infertile land, who stopped buying fertiliser and improved seeds two years before the fieldwork, explained that she was then excluded from the PSNP when the retargeting was done at the same **period** as the drought started. She was told she would be included in EFA and got EFA for one year. She now does not get anything even though her household is a female-headed household with little labour force (she has a son studying in Woldia with the support of a rich relative, another son who is a grade ten student, and an under-18 daughter who migrated to Saudi but is only repaying her loan).
- A veteran graduated one year before the drought was again in trouble during the drought; his household, like many, was reintegrated in the EFA in 2008 EC. However, he said “*this was an emergency assistance not a sustainable support*”. The household is in trouble again in 2010 EC as the production was so bad again.
- A 17-year old poor young woman living with her parents and two younger siblings explains that two years ago, her household was transferred from PSNP PWs to EFA because her parents were considered too old to still work on the PWs. Yet this year (2010 EC) there is no EFA so far. The young woman requested that the household be reintegrated in the PSNP PWs and she would do the PWs, but *kebele* officials told her this is not possible because she

²⁶ The targeting of PSNP beneficiaries is done every five years and a distinction is drawn between households with able-bodied adults who are PWs beneficiaries, and households without labour force registered as DS beneficiaries. In principle there is no fixed proportion of DS beneficiaries in the total number of beneficiaries (quota) that each Region, then *wereda*, then *kebele*, is allocated. In practice, as *wereda* have targets in terms of what to realise with the PSNP PWs, this has translated into separate quotas for PSNP PWs and for PSNP DS, as shown in the table above. The latest retargeting was done at the beginning of the 2015/16 drought year.

is under 18-year old. (Presumably it was impossible to transfer to household under DS, even though the PSNP policy does not fix quotas between PWs and DS).

- A 23-year old disabled young woman living with her parents too, explains that she gets EFA support independently due to her disability, whereas the other household members are beneficiaries of PSNP. (More plausibly, she gets PSNP DS whilst the household has to provide PWs labour for the other household members).
- The relatively well-off woman head of household, ex-WA leader and known as influential and a 'wise mediator', with two sons working as government employees and supporting the household, says she got EFA in 2008 EC like almost everyone in the community. She was then excluded from the EFA but included again this year; and, she said, she was not told any reason for either move. (This is very strange considered that no one knows whether there is going to be EFA in 2010 EC; she may mean DS, which would also be strange considering her wealth; or, she was told she would get EFA – assuming there is going to be some assistance as they season is almost as bad as 2008 EC).
- A man whose household 'graduated' at the last PSNP retargeting in 2008 EC explains: *"I was not even officially informed that I was graduated; I heard about it informally in a drink house and indeed when I went to get the PSNP payment as usual, I was told I would not get it as I was graduated. I was told I would get EFA and I did during the drought. Then the EFA stopped; but I was told I was reintegrated in the PSNP PWs again, without explanation. I expect I can be excluded again from the PSNP any time in the future."*
- The head of one of the very few households who was not included in anything (PSNP or EFA) during the 2008 EC drought explains how unfair this was. His household did not have any production, and they did not even have straw for the livestock. He could not migrate as he is a disabled veteran. He had to sell 15 goats to feed his household and the rest of the livestock the whole year. He added that this year (2010 EC) is going to be very difficult again. Last year (2009 EC) with the better rains he produced 8 quintals; this year he produced just 2 quintals, and he no longer has goats to sell.

Besides confusion, a number of respondents said there **was bias/unfairness** in the selection of both, the PSNP and the EFA – with *kebele* officials selecting relatives etc. (see in the *Local government and community management* chapter the discussion on quotas and on perceptions of nepotism, bias and corruption); whilst *kebele* officials explained that people in the community do not realise or do not want to understand that the main issue is about quotas that are too small to accommodate all those who would in principle qualify for support. A few comments on this point were **more nuanced**, e.g.:

- Less problems with the selection of DS beneficiaries - *"there was no problem in the targeting of DS beneficiaries. But there was partiality and injustice in the selection of PSNP PWs and EFA beneficiaries... There is an appeal committee but not effective. I and others submitted our complaint in writing three times in addition to a verbal appeal in 2008 EC but no solution was given at all"* (same 'graduated' household head as above)
- PSNP last targeting better done - *"The last targeting (three years ago) my wife and son were included in the (PSNP) programme. The selection was fair unlike in the previous time when it was done carelessly"* (Saudi returnee, who was included in the PSNP as a third household member when he returned).

Emergency Food Aid

As shown in the table above, all emergency food aid was provided in-kind. *Kebele* officials explained that the support consisted of 15kgs wheat and 1/2l oil per household members and all household members were supported – in contrast with PSNP PWs where maximum five household members are supported. The support was also provided for longer. The HEW explained that there is no special

programme of support for vulnerable people during the drought²⁷, but households with a patient affected by HIV/AIDS, diabetes or TB were given extra support: for the one patient they received food aid for three people.

The selection of EFA beneficiaries is, like for other selection processes, done through the development army groups, then discussed at *kushet* level before being submitted to the *kebele* cabinet for final decision.

Kebele officials said EFA beneficiaries did not have to work to get the support. A couple of respondents mentioned that EFA beneficiaries were expected to be involved in “*simple works like sowing and watering the garden of vegetables, apple trees and potatoes of the FTC*” (WA leader). One respondent said that EFA beneficiaries worked half day on road construction on the road linking the *kebele* centre to the main road, with advice from the DAs.

A number of respondents (14) commented on the timeliness and sufficiency of the food aid support provided in 2008 EC, some of them comparing it with the support extended for the Millennium drought. Five of seven women who commented on this said that the assistance was not as timely and/or regular in 2008 EC whereas in 2000 EC it was provided regularly every month. In contrast, most men (six out of seven) thought the support in 2008 EC was timely and/or that there was no difference with the Millennium drought. A poor farmer was of a different view; he explained that the support was timely from the *wereda* to the *kebele*, but *kebele* officials delayed the distribution as they wanted everyone to buy fertiliser which, as seen earlier, is plausible (see [p.82](#)).

Productive Safety Net Programme

Selection and appeals

The most salient **selection and appeal** issues are described above²⁸. In summary, with regard to selection there may be a sense that the latest PSNP full retargeting was better done, but since then the drought and the provision of EFA complicated everything. There is also a ‘lighter’ re-selection process every year – for instance to replace beneficiaries who passed away by others; other people whose ‘quota is taken’ are those who migrate, as one woman who had migrated to Mekelle for a few months explained. These annual processes are likely to be less comprehensively involving community people in decision-making. Together, these factors may have blurred the sense of an initially better selection.

With regard to appeals, most respondents concur in saying that people do not go to the appeal committee (sometimes because they do not know about it); and appeal processes are generally ineffective even when brought up to *wereda* level. A few respondents noted that most appeals are about wanting to be in another support category – most often people appeal to be under DS; or to be included in the PSNP rather than the EFA as the latter is provided only at drought times.

Timeliness

With regard to **timeliness of the PSNP support** things were quite confused too. By the time of the fieldwork in January-March 2018 the overwhelming issue on everyone’s mind in this very bad year was when PSNP transfers would start to be paid; and in addition, as noted earlier, whether or not there would be EFA. Several respondents highlighted that not only PSNP was late for 2010 EC but some transfers for 2009 EC had not yet been paid – as illustrated by this quote:

²⁷ Child growth monitoring and the provision of food supplement for malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women is now a part of the ‘routine’ activities to be carried out by the HEWs in the community.

²⁸ See section on ‘combined selection’ strategy above, and sections focusing on quotas and perceptions of nepotism, bias/unfairness and corruption in the local government chapter.

“What should the government do (about migration)? The first thing is that PSNP has not been paid for 8 months. People in Harresaw were paid in June/July 2017 (end 2009 EC), then they worked 8 months without payment. Only last week we were paid, and only for one month; and in addition, the amount of payment was reduced from 220 Birr to 170 Birr per person. The media is full of false reports, that people are happy and changing their life etc. but this is completely false, and with things like this non-payment we suffer even more” (young woman, husband repeat migrant to Saudi; she wants him to stop but what to do).

Some respondents talked about months for which the support due was ‘expired’ or ‘burned’, meaning, it would not come at any time and they had worked for free. Others mentioned the story of the *wereda* finance official who disappeared with PSNP money (see p.94) and that this led to several months of support foregone. *Kebele* civil servants confirmed that by March 2018 there were several months of support due and outstanding; and that there had been ‘too much delay’ generally in transfer payment in 2017 GC.

There is no authoritative data on PSNP transfer timeliness, but there was clearly a general sense among community respondents and *kebele* officials alike that transfers had become **a lot less reliable** over the past two-three years. This perceived deterioration and the consequences on people are illustrated by this quote:

“The timeliness of the PSNP is getting worse each year. Worst is this year with a delay of six months. It was also better in 2008 EC than in 2009 EC. No one told the community about the reasons for the delay; we are just told when some transfers are about to be provided. So, community members are forced to sell assets such as livestock in order to buy food for their households during the delay and they borrow money from individuals as well as the government. We also gave up on involving effectively in the public works because we did not get the payment for what we did” (young man, Saudi returnee included on return whilst his wife and son were targeted at the last retargeting).

And, by March 2018, the first month of transfers had been paid in cash for the PSNP PWs beneficiaries, but apparently nothing yet had come for the DS beneficiaries²⁹. It is not clear from the data if DS and PWs beneficiaries are paid together/at the same time, which some respondents said is the case, or not. Those who said they are paid at the same time complain that the delay is due to checks done in relation to the PWs. The WA leader said it is because the *kebele* PSNP PWs coordinator takes time to check that people finished the work properly (and she added that in some instances the delay was such that the grain expired). Another woman, who was transferred from PSNP PWs to permanent DS beneficiary some years ago when she got sick, believes that the issue is at *wereda* level when *wereda* officials check who among the PSNP PWs should get reduced support because they did not do the work fully (see below).

A woman said that with these delays, *“the support is always provided after people are exposed to hunger”* and, she added, that is one reason why young people decide to migrate to Saudi, taking their chance rather than waiting for support without knowing when it might come.

Type and volume of support

The reduction in amount paid in cash was also hard to swallow³⁰, the more so that there was an information that support would now be given in cash only, instead of the mix of some months paid

²⁹ The respondent might have been misled but this information was given by *kebele* officials in charge of the PSNP. If true, this delay in paying DS beneficiaries suggests that they might be paid in-kind (different supply channels); it may also be linked to the transfer of responsibilities for DS beneficiaries to MOLSA and the social affairs regional/ *wereda* bureaus/offices. In Atsbi *wereda*, the social affairs’ office has a total of five officials.

³⁰ This policy decision was taken at federal level due to hard tight budget constraints on the current PSNP phase: as a result, the amount paid for one beneficiary reduced from 220 Birr/month to 170 Birr/month.

in cash and some months paid in-kind of the past two years. *Kebele* officials said that they had not been informed of the reduction ahead of it happening.

On one hand, some respondents said transfers would be paid only in cash; on the other, people appeared to believe that unlike the reduction in cash transfers, there would be no reduction in the volume of food transfers. The general position was that whereas most people had appreciated the mix food/cash and some would even have preferred being paid only in cash under past terms and conditions, with this change everyone would by far prefer being paid in cash. For instance:

"We were complaining previously of getting the sacks of wheat thorn by rats in the store and sometimes we used to get poisoned wheat as it was staying for long time in the store. So, we were happy when the payment was shifted to cash last year. But this year, the amount of money is reduced from 1100 Birr to 850 Birr for a household getting the support for five members. However, the price of wheat in the market is ever increasing and the current amount paid cannot buy enough wheat to feed five household members. I personally prefer to get the payment in wheat back and many people whom I know too prefer that."

This, community respondents explained, is one more development in a series of unexplained changes: first, in the past two years (2008 EC and 2009 EC) there was a 'cap' of five household members as maximum supported regardless of the actual size of the household³¹ (hence another difference with EFA under which all household members were being supported); then, on the positive side, in 2009 EC the amount of cash paid for a month increased; now, it is decreasing again, whilst a) food prices are not going down and b) this is a drought year again.

Cash payments were also done differently this time, as described by the young Saudi returnee mentioned above, who explained

"... payment started to be made by rich people who are representing the wereda in Dera. The money is transferred to them through bank and data of beneficiaries is also send to them by text message so that they pay the beneficiaries according to the data they get from the wereda, including names, number of household members and amount to be paid. I know three rich people from Dera involved in this payment system³²."

Public Works

PWs have continued to focus on soil and water conservation activities (further developing the Zereroha watershed, which was at initial stages in 2012 at the time of the WIDE3 fieldwork, and starting work on two other smaller watersheds, see [p.12](#)). In addition, a lot of road construction was done (connecting the *kebele* centre to the main road and to the rural parts of the *kebele*, see [p.19](#)). In recent years there was also a lot of emphasis on water harvesting activities, well digging etc., in line with the *wereda* priorities (see [p.53](#)). In keeping with the not quite participatory *kebele* planning process in general (see [p.76](#)), community people do not appear to be much involved in the planning of PWs. The work is said to be selected by *kushet* and *kebele* leaders with the support of the DAs, approved by the *kebele* council then announced to community members. The *kebele* manager alluded to the fact that they also get priorities from the *wereda* when he explained that in March 2018, they had not yet been told anything about the *wereda* plan for the PWs.

³¹ The 'cap' at five household members supported regardless of the actual size of the household was in place in 2011/12 too (2004 EC), at the time of the WIDE3 fieldwork. However, the official federal government policy was full family targeting. The policy then changed due to budget constraints. The interviews in Harresaw suggest that for at least a year or two the full family targeting principle was adopted, but then this changed again and things are now back to what they were.

³² This might be the way the Region/*wereda* is shifting to e-payment, another policy decision taken in the past few months at the federal level.

There were a number of recent **changes in the way PWs were organised**. First, with regard to the period during which PSNP and free community work overlap, unlike last year when PSNP PWs beneficiaries were working in afternoons after the free work in the mornings, this year they work on the PSNP PWs only one day a week and other days are for the voluntary work. Second, the work is divided into work pieces given to groups of individuals and the number of days needed is calculated depending on the work. *“For instance, a person is expected to dig five meters of a deep hole per day, she/he can go back home whenever this is completed. The DAs follow up the amount of work done by each individual and take attendance accordingly”* (blacksmith introduced above). The Research Officers added that in each *kushet* the party leaders also follow up. Several respondents said that the work given is the same for men and women.

For those involved in these types of work, *“if someone who should work does not work, he is paid a reduced amount. Someone absent from PWs for a day loses that day’s payment; all beneficiaries are paid only for days worked”* (young man Saudi returnee whose household is under DS). There are a number of people who get the PSNP transfers and are counted as PSNP PWs beneficiaries, doing other work. These include: the forest guards, the FTC guard, a household whose work is to guard grazing land, the man regulating the irrigation water flow and checking on people’s turns, and when school feeding was provided, the people helping the school in preparing the meals. This is considered as fairly ‘light work’ by others.

Several women explained that the PWs were very laborious, especially for women. Community respondents were also somewhat thorn between recognising the immediate usefulness of getting the PSNP transfers to receive or buy food for their household, and yet counting the opportunity cost in terms of time spent on the PSNP PWs and community free work for little pay, which is time that cannot be spent on other activities. For instance, a 28-year old poor woman, landless as well as her husband who is doing daily labour in the *kebele* and in Afar and who is trying to grow vegetable to cover the household’s expenses, explained that she is limited in this activity as she has to spend a lot of time on the PSNP PWs covering the work for five household members when her husband is in Afar (they have three children).

One respondent highlighted the issue of lack of tools: PSNP PWs beneficiaries have to bring their own hoes and shovels, which the *kebele* does not provide. They appealed to the *wereda* about this but no solution was provided even though the *wereda* provided gabions and sand for the infrastructure developments on the watershed.

More generally, on one hand many respondents said that PWs were useful to the community, mentioning land rehabilitation and better access to various parts of the *kebele* thanks to the roads. On the other hand, the delays in payment are affecting people’s motivation to work and creating a real dilemma as time spent on the PSNP PWs does not bring any immediate income. This is compounded by the small amount of payment, further reduced this year (2010 EC). Under such conditions, young people who when they turn 18, should no longer get the support as dependent members of their parents’ household but should start working for it themselves, refuse to do so and prefer losing the support. The Research Officers noticed that when they returned for the second round of fieldwork, both the PSNP PWs and community free labour had begun and most of the young men usually hanging around in the *kebele* centre had disappeared, reportedly on yet another attempt at migrating to Saudi.

Livelihoods development support

Kebele officials explained that there is no livelihood development support specifically associated to PSNP. There are young women and men who are PSNP beneficiaries and landless and are organised into groups to engage in different activities and that are supported under that programme. (See the *Young people’s economic and other experiences* chapter for more on this).

Community respondents who were asked about any PSNP-associated livelihood development support were indeed rather confused and mentioned things like the youth livelihood support activities, the regular extension programme, access to credit generally, and even the training programme by the Green Diversity NGO (see [p.121](#)).

Graduation

There was some odd/conflicting information with regard to graduation. The *kebele* manager said since he came (just a little less than two years before the fieldwork i.e. during the 2008 EC drought year) there was no graduation; there is only the annual process of replacing people who died or migrated by others. Whereas the WA leader said that “*many people have graduated from the PSNP programme. But, it is not because they have improved their economic situation. Rather it is because they migrate, or they get involved in other income generating activities such as trade and labour work. So, it is thought that better to let them graduate*”.

On the community respondents’ side, two of those who graduated did so four years ago, before the 2015/16 drought. However, one woman said her household graduated last year. One of the older graduates is the blacksmith introduced earlier (see [p.130](#)), who heard about his graduation informally in a drink house, was reintegrated in the EFA then in the PSNP PWs, but says he does not know what may happen next (see [p.198](#)). He said the graduation when it occurred was highly unfair – his livelihood was precarious and at the time he did not have farmland. After that he inherited land from his brother but that happened after he was graduated. He added that when he (was) graduated his sons dropped out from grade 10 and migrated to Afar to do daily labour to support the household, even though an uncle in Mekelle tried to convince to get a driving license with his help instead of migrating.

The other man, a veteran member of the association, gave some detail on what happened:

“I graduated from safety net program in 2006 E.C. First I was recruited at kushet level and the list was sent to the kebele graduation committee. The committee presented the list of graduates to the kebele council for approval. After graduation, all participants got a two days training in the wereda. The wereda briefly explained how we should present their complaint about the graduation process (if any), and to work hard to change our life accordingly. After graduation, I was selected by the disabled veterans’ association and got 10,000 Birr loan, with a lower interest rate compared to financial institutions. One year after my graduation, I and my household were in problem due to the drought”.

He added that the only support he got during his graduation period was the loan from the veterans’ association, nothing from the government. He too was reintegrated in the EFA quota during the drought but unlike the blacksmith, he does no longer get any type of support.

The woman who said her household graduated last year (2009 EC) is a comparatively big crop trader; 40-year old, a husband doing daily labour, one timad of land but this is “*not important since the drought*”, and seven children, from a two-year old to a son who returned from migration after one year, sick and with no savings as he just repaid what they borrowed (she also sold the residential plot she had received in the *kebele* centre to finance his journey). She did not elaborate on the fairness or unfairness of their graduation, although she mentioned that this year (2010 EC) is a rough year for the community and yet there is no EFA and PSNP is much delayed.

Direct Support

There were some **changes** in relation to the **Direct Support** component of the PSNP as well. The HEW explained these as follows:

Women who are PSNP PWs beneficiary and are pregnant and lactating are exempted from the PWs and transferred under DS for a specific period of time. Previously they could be exempted after the first four months of their pregnancy. This has changed, and they can

now be exempted as early as their pregnancy is detected and they bring the laboratory results showing it. They remain on the DS for one year after delivery. Women who are PSNP PWs beneficiary and have an under-five child affected by malnutrition are also exempted from PWs for four months, which is the normal period of time for her child to complete the treatment. These changes took effect in 2009 EC. The HEW is in charge of communicating by letter to the PSNP coordinator about women to be exempted.

In addition, the SURE NGO programme, implemented in collaboration with the *kebele* health and agriculture workers (see [p.121](#)), is a component of the PSNP focusing on nutrition.

It is not clear the extent to which the information regarding the possibility of an earlier **temporary transfer to PSNP DS** for pregnant women reached community people. In the case of the destitute woman already mentioned earlier (see [Box 26](#)), she was transferred to temporary DS when she was four months pregnant. She said this is because she did not know that she could request it before. In addition, she said, when she went to the health centre to get an 'evidence paper' as she was told by the HEW, the health centre worker told her that she did not seem pregnant and they did not do the test; so she had to return another time. Another woman explained that sometimes the machine to do the test does not work in Dera and the woman has to go to Atsbi – which the health officer director of the health centre confirmed. There were other cases of pregnant women who had been transferred as temporary DS beneficiary once their pregnancy was known. Nobody among the respondents mentioned being exempted to take care of a malnourished child.

There are also some slightly odd situations like the household of the young man Saudi returnee, who are all three under DS because his wife is pregnant whilst he is able-bodied. The Research Officer explained that this is because when the household was included in the PSNP it was under the wife's name as the husband was away. She was under PSNP PWs. When she became pregnant she was transferred with the whole household under DS even though in the meantime her husband had returned. If the household had been registered under his name, she would be the only one to be under DS and he would work for two household members, himself and his son.

No one among the respondents mentioned any other condition to get the PSNP temporary DS. A woman who is a temporary DS beneficiary as she is pregnant explained that she follows her ANC although she is not regular because her daughter was sick for a long time and anyway, this is 'not compulsory'. No one seemed to know anything on 'nutrition-sensitive activities' beyond the support by the SURE NGO for selected malnourished infants and pregnant or lactating mothers.

With regard to **permanent Direct Support**, the criteria mentioned were that these are people who are "old, poor and with no caregiver, people who are HIV/AIDS positive, physically impaired people and people who had a difficult surgery, and recently this also includes diabetes patients" (*kebele* manager); that is, "people who cannot do labour work for different reasons" (HEW). Other health issues mentioned were fistula, heart attack, and TB. Cases mentioned earlier in this section include two PLWHAs and one woman with a fistula. No one mentioned a case of someone who should evidently be a DS beneficiary and is not; and there was a general sense that the selection of permanent DS beneficiaries is the fairest of all – within the limitations of the quota.

As noted above no one mentioned the twelve months of support to DS beneficiaries provided in 2009 EC according to the *kebele* data. On the contrary, an HIV/AIDS positive woman who said she was included in the PSNP DS since 2000 EC on account of her illness explained that the support was six months as follows – which again, likely points to confusion between PSNP DS and EFA:

The DS assistance is only in food, 15 KG of wheat for a person; and there is no household quota in the direct support unlike the PSNP PW support. A household gets support for eight members most of the time if it has eight members – "if there is no special reduction of quota". The direct support is provided for six months from February up to August. However, there is always delay, sometimes two, sometimes three months. The DS was more regular

and on time during drought season; and if there was delay, the delayed months were all coming at once. She was never told about the reason of the delay.

Perceptions of usefulness of PSNP and EFA

The immediate/short term usefulness of PSNP and EFA was unquestioned. As noted elsewhere, for many respondents who thought that inequality had reduced in the past few years, one of the reasons was the government PSNP and food aid support to poor, very poor and destitute people; and for many, this support may have been especially useful for the very poor and destitute³³. One particularly enthusiastic respondent highlighted that *“the PSNP has had a great impact on people’s overall situation in the last three years. Some people were prevented from illegal migration and stayed in their place because of this support. There are also a few other people who improved their lives by buying chickens, sheep and other assets and they graduated from the PSNP”* (WA leader).

However, this optimistic view is contradicted by several other accounts in which respondents highlighted the delays in PSNP transfer payments and their consequences, and/or noted the lack of enthusiasm for PWs of especially the young people ‘voting with their feet’ and migrating. Even those recognising that the support *“greatly contribute to the community’s survival”* and allows their household to afford their food, also noted that it is a temporary solution. Whilst some respondents say that the PSNP *“should continue until the area is free of drought and community members can improve their economic situation and free from poverty”*, others called for sustainable solutions. For one woman, *“God should be with us to solve our problems”*. Others said that the government has to more fundamentally re-think the ‘solutions’ it is promoting for the community and prioritise options that take drought (and land scarcity) into consideration (see [p.113](#) and [p.139](#)). For instance:

“The safety net should be continued in the future, especially as the number of landless people is increasing, until other employment opportunities are created. In addition, elders and disabled people who do not have people to support them should be continually helped. But to really support the community and solve the problems, of the youth especially, job opportunity through industrialization should be expanded” (graduated veteran).

Community-Based Health Insurance

As noted earlier in this report³⁴, the Community Based Health Insurance was clearly both, a top priority for the *kebele* administration, and one of these initiatives which they said, were ‘stepped down’ onto them by the *wereda* without consultation ([p.77](#)).

CBHI implementation

The box below summarises **how the CBHI is implemented in Harresaw** as presented by the HEW.

Box 31. CBHI in Harresaw

When the *wereda* informed the *kebele* about the CBHI implementation they did a lot of awareness raising (see [p.81](#)). The information given included the benefits of the CBHI, the amount to be paid, the renewal principle, services excluded from it (e.g. cancer, dialyse, and teeth cleaning and implants), and health institutions where members can get services using their CBHI card (health centre; Atsbi, Wukro and Mekelle hospitals). People were also explained that only half their costs will be covered by the *wereda* if they visit Wukro Hospital without referral; full costs will be covered if they get medicines from private pharmacies as long as they have a referral paper.

³³ In addition to commenting on inequality generally, respondents commented on how poor, very poor and destitute people/households fared since 2010. There were differences in opinion, but the general sense is that the livelihoods of very poor and destitute had slightly improved or at least not worsened; whereas a majority thought that conditions had worsened for the poor.

³⁴ See section [Messaging and mobilising the community](#) in the local government chapter.

The process of registering is as follows – for a newcomer. The household head first pays, fills the membership request form, gets a receipt, then brings the data and a picture for all household members; the HEW or *kebele* manager fills the card, attach the pictures and send the card to the *wereda* for stamping; the *wereda* send stamped cards every week or more often depending on the number of cards. Anyone who wants his/her card quickly can go to the *wereda* to get it if there is delay in bringing them to the community. For membership renewal the *kebele* manager can handle all steps, no need to send the card to the *wereda* again.

The payments are collected by three people appointed to this task, one for each *kushet*; the HEW and *kebele* manager can also collect payments if people come to them. The three people collecting the payments get 2% of the collected amount. The funds collected are brought by the *kebele* finance leader who is one of the collectors to the *wereda* CBHI agent where she gets a receipt for this. The HEW is of the view that this is a much better system than when only she and the *kebele* manager could collect the payments (they do not get any incentive for this additional task). There is a CBHI coordinating committee comprising the *kebele* manager, the HEW and these three people but all *kebele* officials are involved in awareness creation.

The annual premium was 140 *Birr* in 2008 EC. It is now 240 *Birr*. New members pay 250 *Birr* (10 *Birr* for membership, 240 *Birr* for the first annual premium). Those who paid the first year but did not renew the second year are considered as newcomer and pay the 10 *Birr* membership again. The payment is the same for all households regardless of wealth status and household size; but there is an extra-premium of 55 *Birr* for any 18-year old and above household member. Households paying within two months of the start of the subscription period (January-February) can use the card as soon as they get it. Those paying later (until 1st May) must wait one month before using it.

Implementation challenges

As explained earlier, the data concerning the CBHI in Harresaw is problematic due to a combination of data management and other implementation issues, such as in the first year member cards never delivered to households who had paid (see p.84). The HEW also highlighted that the CBHI is one of the interventions for which there is a lot of false reporting in the *wereda* as a whole.

In addition, besides the data and false reporting issues there are a lot of other implementation challenges. First, this year (2010 EC) **registration is much below the target** of 558 newcomers and 340 households renewing; by end February 2018 – two months in the new subscription year – only 157 households had renewed and 25 registered as newcomers³⁵. It is **hard to convince people**, the HEW said. *First*, in her view awareness-raising should be done by people from the community and not by *kebele* civil servants or officials. That is because civil servants have other responsibilities to handle and also, community people are more easily convinced when they are told by peers; and if they are told by *kebele* officials they think these people do this just to get more incentives. She suggested this at the *wereda* level but it was not accepted. In addition, January is a month of high social expenses (weddings etc.); this year is particularly problematic with a very bad harvest; and at the same time, the payment increased – so, **paying the premium is a real challenge** for many.

She believes that most people understand the **principle of annual contribution** as insurance but they are not convinced that they have to pay every year whilst they did not use any health service; there are also people who think ‘why should I pay money for services I might not use, better to pay directly if and whenever I feel sick’; and there are a few people who do not understand the principle, so they think the government is gambling when they are asked to renew their membership whereas they did not use any service because they were not sick. Finally, there are people who renew even

³⁵ More confusion with the CBHI data? Earlier in February, the *kebele* manager said that 393 households were beneficiaries of the CBHI. This may have been the 2009 EC data, and it is not known whether it includes the quota of non-paying members – which in 2009 EC was of 144 households.

though they did not have health problems in the past year, and who thank God for this. There may be a few households who are not well-informed about the annual payment or the time of payment.

There are **other implementation issues** which discourage people, such as information gaps, delays in refunding processes and gaps in the registration process - as in the examples she gave here:

- The health centre director said there was an agreement with Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa; a man from Harresaw went, thinking of getting services there using the CBHI card; but this agreement is not yet in place, so the man came back without getting health services.
- A woman went to Wukro hospital without referral, and asked the *wereda* to meet half the costs as foreseen. Many months later, she is not yet refunded. *Wereda* officials said the money was released from finance and they tried to call her but she did not respond, and the money was deposited back to finance so they have to make the request again; yet the woman complains that no one from the *wereda* called her.
- One very poor woman was included among those exempted. However, she was not informed, and she did not know about it. So, her relatives paid for her and got the CBHI card quickly because she had a sick child. So now, she got out of the quota of the non-paying members, and it may be hard to get her back in again.

Community perceptions of CBHI

On the **community respondents'** side, the HEW's summary of the different views held on **registering or renewing** is quite accurate. There are those who were members but do not and will not renew, arguing both that they do not need it and can afford the small payments for health care when they need it, and that there is discrimination and people paying directly are better treated at health institutions, like this woman:

"Health workers in the health centre provide different medicines for CBHI members and non-members who have similar disease. Non-member patients get better services and treatment. That is why, I don't care about registering again for the CBHI. I prefer to get health services paying with my money. Three weeks ago for instance, I visited the health centre to get treatment for a headache and paid very little so, why should I be a CBHI member?" (Rich farmer's wife living mostly in Dera)

For some others, it was a combination of not affording the 240 Birr contribution, they say, and the same argument about discrimination in treatment. A poor farmer, member, said he went to Wukro hospital and he was happy with the way he quickly got a referral letter from the health centre workers, but he could see that the hospital health workers paid better attention to the non-insured patients. A woman even alleged that the health centre provides expired medicines to CBHI members, which the HEW challenged as, she said, there is a system whereby every month, the *wereda* health officer supervisor of a facility checks the medicines in store and withdraws anything that would expire within two months.

For the woman running the second largest snack bar in the *kebele* centre, it is the combination of not having used the card for a year and increase in premium that decided her against renewing; also, she believes services are better in private facilities and that is not covered (she actually went to a private doctor for her daughter who had a skin problem and was cured). She said she may decide to register again, but then cards should be promptly distributed, which has been an issue in the past. A development army group leader decided not to register (in spite of her position) because she never feels sick and it is too expensive. The HEW, *kebele* leader and *kushet* leader try to convince her. She might register in future considering her children's health and if the payment is reduced.

One woman (wife of a poor farmer) appeared to have some wrong pieces of information – it is not clear from the data how widespread this might be. For instance, she said that the government covers only half of the costs. She also did not know the premium was payable annually, she had just

heard about renewing it this year after two years. She also seemed to think that her new-born was not covered because he was born after registration. Her husband is sick with malaria but as he gets medicines at the health post they did not use the card thus far.

That said, there were also cases like the poor woman, 1-5 network and water users' committee leader and militia, who was a member since the start and was very happy with the system as she had faced a lot of health issues with her children. She had this to say:

"The payment of 240 Birr is very high and it is problematic for me to pay it at once. But, I decided to renew it every year because I know I could spend more on health care for me without the card. Last year my son was repeatedly sick and I took him several times to the health centre and Wukro hospital. Also, my older daughter had an eye problem and I used the CBHI card for her up to Wukro hospital; after this I had to spend some money for specialised health services in Mekelle. But I would have spent a lot more money than the premium if I did not have the card. So, I really learned how the CBHI membership is very important especially for poor households like me. But it would be good, for me and for most community members, if the payment could be paid in two times per year rather than at once."

Another woman said she brought her son to Mekelle hospital on referral with her CBHI card; she could have paid 5,000 Birr for this if she did not have it.

Implementation of CBHI exemption

A key component of the CBHI is the **exemption** of a number of households **from paying** for insurance cover. They get exactly the same services as paying members. The HEW explains:

They get a quota from the *wereda* – which is now 138 households. Quotas are given to development army groups, balancing between groups depending on the assumed greater or lesser poverty of their members. The groups select and there is first a discussion at *kushet* level with the *kushet* leaders (*kebele* cabinet members in charge of one *kushet*). The *kushet* lists come to *kebele* officials who make the final decision and names are sent to the *wereda*.

There are also, in the *kebele* records, 68 households with disabled former fighters who benefit from free health services "*using their own paper*" as the HEW put it. She said the range of free services that they get is wider than the CBHI and they can even be referred to Addis Ababa.

Quite strikingly, the HEW is not very sure of the selection criteria for exemption of the CBHI premium payment. These are sent by the *wereda*, and they have to do with poverty, landlessness and being without asset. She believes that the selection is fair in so far as only very poor people are included, but many other people should be exempted and this cannot be accommodated in the quota. She thinks most community people think the same. There is **no link between the CBHI exemption selection and the selection of PSNP beneficiaries**, generally or for the Direct Support beneficiaries; some may by chance be selected for both, others not. There are some appeals but (see p.69) like for the other selection processes the *kebele* administration explains to people about the quota and the annual reselection process.

The *kebele* manager said that the criteria are almost the same as for the PSNP but as the quota is much smaller, they must select those who are comparatively poorest. In his view, people in the community who think that the selection is not fair are not aware of the so very small quota.

Among **community members information on the exemption scheme** seemed to have been much sparser than the general awareness-raising about why to register etc. Several women with a clear opinion on the CBHI did not know about the exemption scheme. The wife of the poor farmer with the quite confused information about the scheme in general (see above) also did not know about exemptions from the CBHI premium payment; she knew about the veterans' scheme. A very poor man was a paying member and he did not know about exemptions.

However, the (generally well-informed) influential widow head of household, ex-WA leader, knew about the exemption scheme; she thought that there were households who should have been included but are not because the quota is too small but like for the CCC (see below) she said there are also households excluded because of implementation problems.

The case narrated in the box below suggests that at least in some cases, some thought was given to whom should be included as priority, such as this woman with an autistic son (she is also a relative of the *kebele* manager; she was well-informed about where she could go, the referral system etc.).

Box 32. Woman with autistic child exempted from CBHI premium payment

She first got the information about the CBHI in 2008 EC but she could not register as she lacked the money. Then the *kebele* manager, who is her relative, told her that she was selected to be a non-paying CBHI beneficiary by her development army group leaders and the *kebele* officials approved her selection. She was told she was selected because she is poor, and her son is mentally retarded/autistic. The *kebele* asked a photographer from Atsbi to come to the *kebele*, she got the pictures needed in that way and the photographer did not ask her to pay for the picture of her son. She was never asked to pay and she also was not told to apply to be exempted. She knows households who could not pay and are waiting until they get money to be a member. However, she thinks that the selection is fair because *“all poor people who are always exposed to health problems and have a household member with a health problem like her son but do not afford health costs, are included in the non-paying CBHI membership”*. She thinks most community members think it is fair too.

She used the card for her son last year and she got good services and hospitality when she took him to the health centre; she even got priority because her son was disturbing other patients. She said she wants to continue to be a member even if she is asked to pay; she would pay the membership even selling her chickens, because *“it is very necessary for households like her who have someone with a permanent health problem to get health treatment every time using the CBHI card”*.

As seen earlier, the male PLWHA (see [Box 29](#)) is also among the non-paying CBHI members.

There were people thinking that the selection of those to be exempted was fair. A woman who said she did not know about the exemption scheme added that she did not think and she would not want to be exempted because her household is economically independent and she can afford to pay with her work. The woman running the Selam snack bar and who had not renewed her membership even though she said she might now consider it, also said she did not think her household should be exempted because she is not amongst the very poorest in the *kebele*.

In contrast, a relatively rich woman farmer head of household but who considered herself as poor, had a lot of issues with the CBHI generally, including the exemption scheme:

The premium is not affordable. Even though she is under a lot of pressure (see [p.81](#)) to do so she will not register unless the premium is reduced - Anyway, last year she only needed 50 *Birr* to pay for the one time she had to go to the health centre, which is very reasonable and a lot less than the premium. She does not know the selection criteria for the non-paying membership but in her views this is not done fairly: *“I know about those selected, and that there are so many very poor people in the community who are not included in it because they do not have relatives in the kebele administration”*.

Among respondents interviewed because they are very poor or destitute, three women were not among the non-paying CBHI members and thought this was unfair on them:

- The very poor 60-year old divorcee whose livelihood continuously worsened since her return from Asmara after her divorce (see [Box 25](#)) did not know about the exemption scheme; she was always asked to pay. She paid in 2008 and 2009 EC but had no money to pay this year; she was awaiting that the *wereda* would repay medicines she had to purchase at a private

pharmacy (280 Birr) to use that cash but it was taking a lot of time. She thought it was unfair that she was not included in the non-paying membership.

- Another woman was also not included even though, she said, she is very poor (her two oldest children, 14 and 16, are working as shepherd and housemaid). She registered the first year and paid 142 Birr but never got the card because she could not afford paying for photographs; now she was told that the card expired and she has to register paying again. She added that her son was sick recently and she took him to the health centre and paid money for the medical treatment because she does not have the CBHI card – however, she was more upset by an ongoing land case than by the CBHI issue.
- The destitute woman (see [Box 26](#)) did not know about the CBHI until recently and when she was informed, she was not told about exemptions: “The kebele officials always tell me to pay for the membership”. As a landless woman with young kids, living of charity and petty trade from which she makes around 100-200 Birr/week which she immediately uses to buy some food for her and her children, it seems understandable that it would be hard to pay the premium. In the meantime, she lost her daughter because, she said, she had no money to take her to the health centre and she took her to the holy water.

Community Care Coalition

Wereda officials described the CCC as follows:

“The Community Care Coalition is established by people from different sectors such as Social affairs, women’s affair, youth affair, public relation, agriculture, health, education as well as the justice office at wereda level. The purpose is to create local NGOs and strengthen the culture of supporting each other. Each farmer contributes 24 Birr per year. And the money is spent on supporting poor people in each kebele. These poor people are recruited according to some criteria and are supported in two ways: 40% of them are supported directly by the money and 60% of them are recruited to get the support in credit.”

In Harresaw, the kebele manager said that it started being better organised and people started contribute 24 Birr per year, when he was appointed in 2008 EC. Before this, he explained, “the contribution was not permanent and it was in grain: people were contributing some amount of grain to support vulnerable people whenever they received the PSNP payments. There was also false report about the implementation progress of the CCC.” The box below summarises how the CCC is now supposed to be functioning, according to the kebele social affairs’ leader.

Box 33. Community Care Coalition in Harresaw

The kebele social affairs’ leader is leading, but other officials and offices are also responsible for it. There is a CCC coordination committee comprising the social affairs leader, the kebele chairman and the vice-chairman, the propaganda leader, the women’s affairs leader, the finance leader, and the party basic organization leader (“meseretawi aderejajet”). The health and agriculture offices are also involved: the HEWs are responsible for supporting HIV/AIDS patients and those who are under Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) monitoring; the agriculture office is responsible for providing seeds for free. However, she said, “they (DAs) did not yet work on it practically.”

Contributions are voluntary, and receipted. It is the responsibility of the kebele manager to bring a receipt pad from the wereda. The social affairs’ leader is collecting contributions from community members, together with membership payments for the party, the associations and the TDA, alongside other kebele officials who do the same. Contributions are managed by the party basic organization, women affairs and finance leaders. Funds are deposited at the Ambessa Bank in Dera.

In the past, up to 893 households contributed to the CCC; in March 2018 only 551 households had paid for 2010 EC³⁶, well under the target that the *kebele* fixed, of payment by 402 households from Harresaw *kushet*, 402 households from Maekel *kushet* and 433 households from Lima't *kushet*.

Beneficiaries are selected from among orphan children, old people (and especially, parents of ex-fighters who died), HIV/AIDS patients, physically impaired people and destitute female headed households. They are selected every year by the *kebele* officers and development army group members from every *kushet*; the number depends on the amount of money available. The CCC selection has no link with the selection of PSNP DS beneficiaries or of CBHI non-paying members. The support is provided in cash and in-kind like for instance, providing sheep or goats for orphans to involve in an income generating activity. However, the in-kind support is not implemented yet. They report every three months to the *wereda* social affairs' office.

The **kebele social affairs' leader** explained that last year they were only able to support one PLWHA, three destitute and some parents of ex-fighters who died, with 530 *Birr* for each. This year they have not supported anyone because the amount of money collected is small; there is only 7 or 8,000 *Birr* on the account. Even the year before, she said, these were very few people, the support is too small to really help, and she thinks it would be better if it was provided in terms of sheep or goats.

She believes that community members do not have a positive view toward the CCC contribution, mainly because they are stressed to pay all membership payments and contributions at once at the beginning of the year (see p.59 for the list of contributions and more on this issue) . People understand the goal of the CCC but it is difficult for them to pay in addition to everything else. Also, there are people saying that the support is too small anyway, and others complaining that they do not know where the money is going. Yet, some people are willing to pay the CCC contribution as long as they receive receipt for it.

Across all interviews, two of the respondents **received** the 530 *Birr* in 2009 EC: the **male PLWHA** interviewed as 'destitute', who did not comment on the usefulness of the support (see *Box 29*), and a woman identified as a CCC beneficiary for the Research Officer by the *kebele* officials. The woman said she does not know how the CCC is working; she only knows that she got the support in 2009 EC, which she spent on buying food for her household. She was told that this support was because she is poor and cannot engage in any income generating activity as she is a **fistula patient** since when she had surgery to deliver twins, who died, thirteen years ago. She is also a beneficiary of PSNP Direct Support. This support is very useful to her, she said.

Among **women respondents**, most knew about the CCC, with the exception of the destitute woman (*Box 26*) who did not mention it whilst she mentioned the PSNP and CBHI; but they had only a vague idea of the criteria ("*sick and poor people*"). Most women also recalled the grain support which the CCC replaced and one of them (a development army group leader living in the *kebele* centre) thought that the former system was more transparent (unlike what *wereda* officials and the policeman said about this):

"Previously, under the administration of the former kebele leader and when the contribution was in grain, community members were informed about those who were getting the support. For instance, a woman who is HIV/AIDS was supported. However, since the contribution is changed to cash we do not know to whom the support is provided. The idea of supporting poor and vulnerable people is good in principle, but the way this is done is not fair because community members are not informed about whom the support is provided to."

The other women also indicated that they did not know who was supported and they did not know anyone in the situation. Several of them said the CCC is a good idea but only if it is implemented

³⁶ The *kebele* manager has yet another number: for him, 449 households were members i.e. paid in 2010 EC.

correctly/if the people who need the support get it; the wife of a rich farmer, living most of her time in their house in Dera, thought the support does not go to the right people; the relatively well-off widow known as influential and ‘wise mediator’ was more categorical and said that there are implementation problems and that “*those who need the support are not getting it.*”

The woman militia said that whilst the contribution is voluntary in principle, in fact it is rather compulsory.

Among **men respondents**, most knew either nothing about it (five of them – including the investor living in Dera, a rich farmer living in the *kebele* centre and a very poor head of household) or very little – and one of those knowing little seemed to suggest one knew better who the beneficiaries were with the former system:

“In the past there used to be a contribution from the community (from the food aid) to support orphans and HIV patients. However, this has stopped now. I contributed two years ago when I was getting emergency food aid. The selection of orphan beneficiaries was fair, because the community correctly know the orphans... About the CCC I only know that last year it helped some destitute households. It is supposed to help very poor female-headed households, orphans, and people living with HIV/ AIDS” (Rich farmer)

Three other men knew a lot more, with more details on the selection criteria (PLWHA, orphans, disabled, elders, female-headed households) and knowing that in 2009 EC fifteen (15) people were given 530 *Birr* each. Those who knew these details were a man living in the *kebele* centre; the social court leader (former *kebele* leader); and a landless farmer renting-in land and who received a residential plot in the *kebele* centre in 2007 EC – he generally knew a lot about other issues too; he thought the CCC is a good idea and needs to expand as the community should help each other more.

The RUSACCO leader explained that the contributions from the different *kebeles* are pooled at the *wereda* level and the *wereda* send quotas for the *kebele* to select people, but this ‘pool’ system was not mentioned by anyone else.

NGO social protection interventions

As noted earlier it seems only two NGOs were present in Harresaw in early 2018. Green Diversity appeared to focus on livelihood support more broadly. The SURE programme, focusing on improving nutrition outcomes for the poorest infants and pregnant and lactating mothers, can be considered as a social protection intervention. See [p.121](#) for more details on the programme. It appeared to be quite limited in scale and no one at *kebele* or community level talked about scaling up plan or for how long the NGO would be active. An NGO called GOAL had also distributed jerrycans for PLWHA through the HEW but this appeared to be a one-off activity.

3. Selected policy topics

Land use and urbanisation

Wereda

Wereda boundaries

There was no change in Astbi-Wemberta boundaries in the past ten years. In the whole Eastern Tigray zone, land from one *kebele* in Hawzien *wereda* was reallocated to Saesie Tsaeda Emba *wereda* but this does not affect Atsbi *wereda*. Maps are found in the first chapter of this report.

Investors in the wereda

In the *wereda*, land was given in various rural *kebeles* for beekeeping and honey production, including in Harresaw. In the past year, urban investment land was provided for five water production factories: in Dera, Hadenet, and Felegewayne (all three neighbouring Harresaw), and in Habes and Golgolnaebe³⁷. The one in Golgolnaebe (adjacent to Atsbi town) is the only new investment which started production. One water production factory had started production earlier, in Endasselassie, which is now part of Atsbi municipality. However, most urban investment land was given for hotels: 53 investors took land for this, and Atsbi *wereda* is first in the zone in this respect.

These investors are locals, many living in Mekelle and wanting to invest in their home area. *Wereda* officials highlighted the benefits of the hotel kind of investment as facilitating trade and tourism, job creation (each hotel creating 8 to 10 jobs) and demand for local food products (dairy products, meat, vegetables and grain).

Issues include investors using their duty free import allowance to import then resell goods instead of using them for their investment, and, particularly for the water production factories, delay in starting work. This led the *wereda* to write to some investors to warn them that the land would be taken back from them if they do not start soonest. Most of the other cases of investment are under study to decide about taking the same issue. However, no land was actually taken back so far.

The decision-making process to allocate land for investment was described as follows:

A study is conducted beforehand in all areas of the *wereda* (urban and rural). *Kebele* administrations wanting to attract investors can indicate land that they think is suitable for this. So, this shows what kind of land is available for what kind of investment in both urban and rural parts of the *wereda*, and how many investors could be given land. In principle, land indicated as investment land by *kebele* land administrations is announced as available by the *wereda* through various medias and is reported as such to the Regional Government. (Research Officers were unsure whether this is actually followed in practice.) Investors can also come and indicate land that they think is suitable for their purpose. One way or the other, once an investor comes and indicates interest for land, the land is measured by an expert from the *wereda* land desk. In the course of the process, reportedly an environmental impact assessment is also done (one *wereda* official suggested that a regional expert also comes and studies the land). Final approval is given from the regional level. If the land is farmed, farmers must be compensated before the land is given to investors. There have been complaints from farmers regarding the compensation amount; some farmers came and presented their grievance to the *wereda*.

In Harresaw's only case of land given for investment (see below), it is the investors who initiated the process and not the *kebele* administration.

Urbanisation in the wereda

The expansion of Atsbi and Hayek Meshal (the other larger town in the *wereda*, on a road to Mekelle through Agulae instead of passing through Wukro) meant that land was annexed from Felegewayne and Golgolnaebe *kebeles* (to Atsbi) and Hayelom (to Hayek Meshal). There are also emerging towns such as Dera, Kelisha, Habes, Hadinet and Harresaw. Dera was established as a municipality in 2008 EC (other respondents said 2009 EC) and as noted in the first chapter, it will annex some land from Harresaw *kebele* although the process is not finalized.

Moreover, emerging small towns around *kebele* centres have also emerged, including through the 'sketch plan town' development project. This is a regional project. As explained earlier (see *Non-*

³⁷ Another respondent had a slightly different list, without Dera and Hadinet, but with one in Hayelom.

farming chapter), the underlying objective is to create employment opportunities for rural youth by developing selected *kebele* centres into small urban areas where young people can start small service businesses; this should reduce outmigration from rural communities. Every year the Region sends a quota for the *wereda* to select four to six *kebeles*. Thus far in the *wereda* four *kebeles* were selected: Harresaw, Hadinet, Habes and Kelisha. The criteria for selection of *kebele* include a) a population of around 2,000 residents living in the area, and the feasibility of further expanding the small town in future. One *wereda* official explained 20-30 ha of suitable government land should be identified; another said that one criterion was the willingness of the *kebele* to compensate displaced farmers. Once agreed, the area is mapped and a sketch plan is prepared by the Tigray Region Housing Development and Management Agency so that housing and any other infrastructure will be built according to the plan. In Harresaw, the project has prompted a lot of tension between the *kebele* administration and the community and within the community, as further explained below.

From observations, Atsbi has expanded but not visibly in terms of productive activity. A TVET institution recently opened. New services include several bank branches as well as many new shops, cafés, restaurants and hotels.

Landlessness and homelessness in the wereda

Wereda officials interviewed did not have information on the number of landless and homeless people in the *wereda* as a whole but noted that in general, landlessness has been increasing. There are many landless people in both urban and rural *kebeles*, except, they said, in two rural *kebeles*, Era and Kelisha. In rural *kebeles* these issues are addressed by the local land bodies and *kebele* administrations. Farmland is reallocated when land is available from people dying without heirs and people moving 'permanently' outside of the community. Homelessness is high in both urban and rural areas of the *wereda* as well. Young newly married people can be given residential land according to plans made by their *kushet*.

The *wereda* official following Harresaw *kebele* more closely knew that landlessness and homelessness is high in Harresaw. He said that of 522 young people between 18 and 34-year old, 366 are landless (the *kebele* administration had a much higher figure, see below); and there are 266 homeless young people just in that *kebele*. The *kebele* is implementing farmland reallocation to individuals and allocation of hillside land to groups; as well as allocation of residential land in the different *kushet*. According to him, in the past three years (2008-2010 EC) land was given to 189 people for residential purpose, to 65 landless people as farmland, and to 153 individuals on rehabilitated hillsides for 'non-farm activities'.

Kebele

Kebele boundaries

See *Map 5* and further details in the *Geographical context* section of the first chapter of this report. The only change in Harresaw *kebele* boundaries is that land from Abidera *got* was demarcated to Dera when Dera was established as a municipality one year ago. The process is not yet finalized. It has created some uncertainty but (so far) no active opposition as farmers are still awaiting to know more about compensation. See below (*Urbanisation*) for more on this.

Municipality boundaries

There is no municipality in Harresaw; the nearest municipality is Dera, adjacent to the *kebele* and due to take some of its land.

Kebele land use

The total land area of the *kebele* is 16,500 hectares. There are 12,190 hectares of protected forest, 675 hectares of arable land, 238 hectares of grazing land, 560 hectares of rehabilitated land, 325.5 hectares of rocky terrain and escarpments and 75 hectares of land that is not cultivable. The *kebele*

administration records that 275.5 ha land can be used for irrigation through various options including the dam, other smaller dams, individual and communal ponds and water reservoirs, and sources and streams; and this benefits 649 households. However, as explained in earlier chapters most irrigation options were not functioning in early 2018 due to lack of water.

In terms of user rights, a distinction is made between smallholders' land; government and communal land, and; land owned by institutions such as FTC, churches, schools etc. The distinction between government and communal land is a bit blurry. Generally, community respondents consider as government land only the large government protected forest found in the *kebele*. More on implications with regard to certification in the relevant section below.

Smallholders' landholdings are generally small. When land was allocated in 1983 EC, adult men and women were getting 1 *timad* and $\frac{1}{2}$ *timad* was allocated for each child. One woman farmer said that the largest allocation of farmland for one household was 3 *timad*³⁸. A group of women said they did not know anyone who had significantly more land than others in the community, but a woman farmer said that some people who were very influential under Haile Selassie were allocated a larger area of farmland in 1983 EC, and she mentioned the case of "a family who claims an ancestor who was a *Dejazmach* and who were allocated 11 *timad*" (probably the family whose head was interviewed as a case of historically influential family).

Recent (past five years) changes in *kebele* land use include

- Reallocation of farmland to landless people, allocation of residential land to homeless people, allocation of hillside/rehabilitated communal land to organised youth groups (described in relevant sections below);
- In two *kushet*, a change in the way communal grazing land is managed: individual households have been allocated equal-size grazing land plots that they use through the 'cut-and-carry' system; the land remains communal land;
- Land taken for the construction of drinking water infrastructure – In at least one case this created tensions and conflicts (see below);
- Some land given to St Giorgis church for extension of the cemetery;
- Recovery of government/communal land and paths encroached by individual farmers over years through the 2nd level land measurement and certification process (see below);
- Further back in the past, a few farmers lost land when the Farmer Training Centre was built; and even earlier, a number of farmers had land taken for the dam or the lake (see below). Of note, none of the respondents suggested that some of the land now no longer covered with the lake might be used again now that most of the lake has disappeared, possibly indicating people's hope of regaining the irrigation potential of the dam with a few years of good rains.

The loss of farmland and other land arising from the demarcation of parts of Abidera got to Dera has not yet been finalised so that it did not, thus far, prompt changes in land use.

Urbanisation

All land in the *kebele*, including in the centre, is considered as rural land and was measured under the 2009 EC 2nd level certification process. See more on the process in the relevant section below.

Ongoing rurbanisation

Four urbanisation-related features have emerged or grown in importance since 2012. *First*, the current *kebele* centre, although still very small, has expanded (see A in [Map 5](#)). Allocation of

³⁸ This does not fit with the idea of $\frac{1}{2}$ *timad* per child, except if there was a cap.

residential land in that area began in 2004 EC, it was therefore very new at the time of the WIDE3 fieldwork. Residential plots of 240 square meters (20m*12m) were allocated, with the most recent allocation made in 2008 and 2009 EC to 159 landless people. Houses have been built on these plots, some of these with migration money and quite a few being rented out (including for businesses); more service businesses of various sizes are concentrated there (shops, hospitality services, leisure services and other personal services such as shoe-shining and tailor, see *Non-farming* chapter).

Second, other smaller residential areas have emerged in Ekunta *got* (Maekel *kushet*), alongside the dry-season road connecting the *kebele* centre and the main Atsbi-Dera road, and in Endamariam Wuo *got*, Lima't *kushet* alongside that same main road, not far from Dera. These are relatively dense neighbourhoods of small houses built on residential plots allocated to homeless young people, within each *kushet*. The settlement in Endemariam Wuo was formed in 2007 EC when 147 landless young people were given plots of 216 square meters (12m*18m).

Livelihood options in these smaller residential settlements are mainly about offering the same kind of services as in the *kebele* centre, but constraints such as low demand, competition from the *kebele* centre and Dera, difficulty of access in rainy season, are stronger. In addition, these areas are not electrified (it would be feasible given the concentrated settlement but does not appear to be planned at the moment). The plots allocated are small so that activities such as fattening (of cattle or sheep) or poultry cannot be undertaken on a large scale (supposing that some of these young people would have the capital).

As noted earlier, even if the smaller, newer residential areas cannot compete with the *kebele* centre, housing styles in both types of areas are very different from the traditional *hidmos*. In the *kebele* centre several houses have a 'modern look', using bricks, cement as well as decorated with paint. As noted about *Electricity* (see first chapter), this is also the only area of the *kebele* which is electrified – which some community respondents are quite unhappy about.

As mentioned in the *Migration* chapter, young people being given residential land in this way must build a house in it. If they do not the land will be taken from them. Several of respondents said they were able to build a house thanks to savings from migration, but mentioned other young people who had not been able and had 'sold' their land, sometimes also migrating with the money they got for this. This is indeed one of the ways for adult people to get access to land in the *kebele* centre. More on this in the relevant section below.

Expansion of nearby urban area

Third, Dera, the adjacent rural town, has been established as a municipality in 2008 EC (*wereda* information; some respondents said 2009 EC). It is now one of only three municipalities in Atsbi-Wemberta *wereda*, with Atsbi and Hayek Meshal. As noted above, in the process, part of the land which used to be Harresaw's has now been demarcated to Dera (see *Map 5*). This land will therefore become urban land, to be managed by the municipality.

Kebele officials explained that the town has a town land use plan that was prepared by the Regional Government, which also decided that Dera would be administered as a municipality. It is the *wereda* which approved that some of the land of Harresaw (and also Gebre Kidan) would be demarcated to Dera. They instructed the *kebele* by a simple directive, the community was not consulted and did not participate in the decision. They said they do not have detailed information, but they estimate that approx. 11 ha will be taken, including the land on which the health centre, the larger and older Gr1-8 school and the St Giorgis church of Harresaw *kebele* are located, as well as farmland of 23 farmers. At *wereda* level, officials confirmed that Dera's land use plan was prepared by the Regional Government and, they said, no one from the *wereda* was involved or trained.

The process has not yet been finalised so that farmers can still use their land. There has been no information on compensation, thus far, which according to *kebele* officials, creates disquiet among these farmers. *Kebele* officials even talked about "*frustration and resistance*".

Meanwhile most respondents from the community sounded neutral or expressed satisfaction about Dera's new status and its expansion. They noted that it will expand the range of services they will have access to – as has already been the case with the Dera Gr9-10 secondary school. More recently, the Ambessa (Lion) Bank has opened a branch in Dera. They also look forward to the 'urban influence' resulting from Dera's expansion and which "*could be applied to the kebele as well*". Some people thought that farmers who would lose land were rather anticipating good compensation and were not unhappy. However, the process has already prompted a conflict as livestock traders had started using a plot of land that the municipality is planning to use for the livestock market, whereas farmers owning that land have not yet been compensated.

A few people highlighted that Dera's municipalisation was going to raise the value of urban land generally in the area, making it even less accessible for poorer people. The first auction in Dera seems to vindicate that fear, as show in the box below. There is also an underlying rivalry between Gebrekidan and Harresaw *kebele* regarding whether the municipality 'belongs' to the one or the other, although this does not appear to have any practical implication as municipalities are not subordinated to the rural *kebele* within which they are located.

Box 34. Auction in Dera

Dera town has started auctioning land leases in 2010 EC. Ten plots of land of between 200 and 211 square meters were identified by the municipality and auctioned, one for business and nine for mixed (residential/business) use. The auction was very competitive, with 247 individuals who participated in the bidding process. The nominal/ minimum bidding price was 195 *Birr* and 200 *Birr* per square meter, for mixed and business use respectively. However, the bid winners paid between 1,127 and 2,361 *Birr* per square meter. The down payment is 20%; the rest is paid as annual lease over 30 years for business use and over 50 years for mixed use.

So for instance, the person who bought the largest plot (211 square meter), if he paid the highest price (2,361 *Birr*), owes a total of 498,171 *Birr* for the plot. He will pay 20% (99,634 *Birr*) as down payment; if it is a mixed use plot the annual leasehold payment will be 7,971 *Birr* to be paid every year for 50 years; if it is a business use plot it will be 13,285 *Birr* to be paid annually for 30 years.

Planned rurbanisation

Fourth, one big issue on people's mind in Harresaw in 2018 was the question of where to establish the sketch plan town of the *kebele* (see above). This question of location, and the role of the (by the end of the fieldwork, former) *kebele* leader in it, was a serious source of tension, deeply dividing the community. This is outlined in *Box 1* above. At the time of the fieldwork the issue, which was one of the reasons for the *kebele* leader to be demoted in the annual *gemgema* process, was still outstanding; *wereda* officials were rather unhappy about the whole thing.

Rural-urban linkages outside of the kebele

In addition to these various forms of urbanisation in Harresaw, reportedly between 50 and 100 **farmers** (one respondent said more than 100) with farmland in the *kebele* have **houses 'in town'**. It is not clear whether these figures include the farmers who have houses in the *kebele* centre, but many also have houses in Dera and Atsbi; and a few have houses in Wukro.

Those farmers, especially those with houses in Dera and Atsbi, may share their time between their town house and their farm or they may even live most of their time outside of the *kebele*. Yet, they maintain user rights on their farmland by ensuring that one way or another they are seen as fulfilling their obligations as a rural *kebele* resident. This includes paying tax on their land and other contributions (such as for the Farmers Association) and contributing to the annual voluntary community labour "*to show their existence in the kebele*". They do this in one of two ways: either the household regularly commutes, or some household members live mostly in town whereas others mostly live on the farmland. They keep their ID from the *kebele* and pay the land tax to the *kebele*, and they pay taxes on the urban house to the municipality or *wereda* tax office concerned.

Losing one's rural land seemed to be infrequent. A rich farmer with a house in Dera himself knew two cases, of a teacher and a woman who had moved permanently to Mekelle. Another farmer knew presumably the same woman. Everyone else said they did not know anyone in the situation, suggesting indeed that the cases of those who lost rural land because of an urban property or other link must have been very few.

As noted in the *Diversification* section, some of these urban houses are rented or partly rented and provide an additional income to the farmer. For instance, one of the rich farmer has two houses in Dera and one house in the *kebele* centre and he earns 900 *Birr*/month for the three. Another of the rich farmer with a house in Dera partly occupies it and rents another part for business. The young businessman with multiple businesses in the centre of the *kebele* is renting several rooms for 1,000 *Birr*/month (see *Box 16*); another young couple with a shop in the *kebele* centre rents the shop premises and their living space for 500 *Birr*/month.

Linkages with urban areas outside of the *kebele* have many other forms including

- Most *kebele* residents **access some services** in Dera and Atsbi (education, health, banking and MFI services) for themselves or their children. Atsbi is also where *kebele* residents have to go for any issue involving the *wereda* administration, including: inheritance processes, justice cases; getting one's business license and paying any tax other than the land tax; getting one's CBHI card if urgently needed etc.
- As seen in both the *Farming* chapter and the *Non-farming* chapters, there is a dense net of **trade linkages**, with farmers from the *kebele* selling products on the Dera and Atsbi markets and traders from these two towns also coming to Harresaw to collect products (some of which are exported farther away such as honey and sheep). Some of the Harresaw residents also have direct links with traders in Mekelle, like the bigger crop trader. Among the business people and service providers, many have business links with towns too, to get their inputs and sometimes also to get advice (e.g. the tailor and the baker get advice from friends who have a tailoring business and a bakery in town, when they face a challenge with their equipment).
- Many *kebele* residents also have **relatives** in Dera, Atsbi, Wukro and Mekelle, and visit them.

Land planning in the kebele

Most community respondents did not know whether the *kebele* had a land use plan or not or had little idea of what this should be. A few said there was no such plan, even for the *kebele* centre. The woman militia said that this was problematic because houses had been built "here and there" and this negatively affected the effectiveness of the militia

"In the centre of the kebele there are not enough ways of reaching areas on one side of the main street from an area on the other side. So, if there is a security problem at the back of the houses on one side, and if we are in the other side or on the main street, there is no way of getting there quickly and provide support on time to the people in trouble. We have to walk too long in order to get a way to pass between houses."

Meanwhile, the NRM DA thought that the mostly scattered settlement of Harresaw is inconvenient from the point of view of both access to services and doing proper environmental rehabilitation, and he suggested households should be resettled in a dedicated residential area built with a plan.

Kebele officials mentioned two 'land plans'. There is one 'plan' including agricultural land, residential places, individual grazing land, communal and government land, showing the different areas as they are currently used. And there is also a plan about the future use of communal and government land. This was prepared by the *kushet* and *kebele* land administrations and it explains where land should be given for organized youth and as residential places. The LAC member interviewed by the ROs said

that the plan specifies how much land should be given to how many landless and homeless people; how much illegally held land should be returned etc. To prepare that plan they used the existing land distribution plan as an input. The plan was first drafted by the LAC leader then discussed with the LAC members then approved by the *kebele* council. It is therefore officially in use. It was also sent to the *wereda* land desk for comment. It is not computerized.

However, the *wereda* official interviewed on land issue said that there is no clean land use plan for Harresaw. Land is still being used based on the land use plan prepared at the time of the 1976 EC and 1983 EC land distributions. There are two *kebeles* for which the Region did a land use study: Kal-Amine and Dibab-Akhorya *kebele*, but not for Harresaw. It is true that recently, the *kebele* land administration committee prepared what they call a land usage plan and the *kebele* council approved it, but it is not based on expert study.

Landholdings, landlessness and homelessness

Landlessness and **homelessness** are big issues in the *kebele*, with multiple consequences including in relation to the continued flow of outmigration, especially to Saudi.

The *kebele* administration had much higher figures than the *wereda* for **landlessness**, explaining that all 699 young men and 725 young women recorded as unemployed youth (18 year-old and above) are landless. Landlessness is the fourth most frequently mentioned 'key problem' of the community, immediately after migration to Saudi, shortage of water, and youth un(der)employment. Of course, the latter, migration to Saudi and landlessness are related as the landless people are mostly young people and many migrate as an option to 'move on'. Most of the young men and women interviewed mentioned landlessness as an issue. One young man said that just 20% young men in their twenties have their own land and it is very difficult to get land.

With regard to **homelessness**, the *kebele* manager explained that a new study was ongoing to ascertain the number of people in this situation, but they are many as well. Again most of them are young people, including married couples who live with their parents or build extra-rooms in their parents' compound. For instance, a 25-year old poor man, married since two years and with a daughter, lives in a separate room in the compound of his mother. A man in his forties, whose wife died on migration and with six children, also lives with his parents as he does not have his own land. A young woman with a migrant husband and a small daughter was living with her in-laws (see [p.192](#) above), which she was all the more unhappy about that she realized it was a big drain on their own limited resources. The priest interviewed about migration also raised homelessness as one of the reasons of young people's frustration, explaining that for instance in his case, the only thing his children can contemplate is to inherit his old house when he dies. "*How can there be development in these conditions?*"

The initiatives taken by the *kebele* are (as mentioned by *wereda* officials) reallocation of farmland, allocation of residential land, and allocation of hillside/ rehabilitated communal land to organized youth groups for 'non-farming' activities, described in the section below. One key issue that everyone agreed on at *kebele* level was that these were not sufficient considering the big numbers of homeless, landless, and underemployed mostly young people. Hence, some people calling for the government to re-think the 'solutions' it is promoting for the community and to prioritise options that take land scarcity (and drought) into consideration (see [p.113](#) and [p.139](#), for instance).

Land allocation and transactions in the kebele

This section talks about re-allocation of smallholder land; reallocation of communal land; allocation of residential land; reallocation of land for infrastructure or building or other development uses; land given to investors; other rural land transactions (including inheritance); other urban land transactions; and who the most important actors are in these processes. In Harresaw there was no land allocated to cooperatives other than to the youth groups. The first section below considers

together the processes of reallocation of farmland, allocation of residential plots and reallocation of communal land to youth groups, all having the same target group i.e. the young people of Harresaw.

(Re-)allocation of land for young people

There is no urban land in the *kebele*, so all three most common forms of (re-)allocation are about rural land:

- 1) Reallocation of smallholder farmland to individuals
- 2) Allocation of land plots for residential purpose, from communal land
- 3) Reallocation of hillside/rehabilitated communal land to organized youth associations.

The most important actors in these processes are:

- The LACs – The reallocation of smallholder farmland to landless people and allocation of residential land are made within the boundaries of a *got*, for people from that *got*, and managed by the *kushet* LAC (see *Land administration* below);
- The *kebele* administration, as the user right holder of communal land, although it is also allocated strictly within each *got* boundaries;
- The *kebele* council, which approves the land allocation plan mentioned by the LAC member above, and the reallocation of communal land to any kind of purpose.

Farmland can be reallocated to other user right holders if someone dies and no heir can be identified (see inheritance below) or if someone loses her/his land because he/she has a permanent job outside of the community. As seen above, in reality farmers keep their farmland even if they reside part or most of the time outside of the *kebele*, provided they do what is needed to fulfil their rural *kebele* resident obligations.

Land available in this way is recorded by the *kushet* LAC. It is redistributed once in a while so as to accumulate enough land, through a lottery system, and strictly within *got* boundaries: young people from one *got* cannot have access to farmland from another *got*. The size of the farmland plot given to each individual is 0.25 ha. According to *wereda* officials, landless disabled people, people with HIV/AIDS and female-headed households get priority in that 20% of the land available is allocated to them first, then the remaining 80% of the land is allocated to all other landless people by draw. One of the respondents, HIV/AIDS positive and benefitting from a number of other support (see *Box 29* in the *Social protection* chapter) explained that he had indeed got 1 *timad* of farmland outside of the lottery system in 2007 EC.

Residential plots are also allocated once in a while, following decisions made based on proposals by the LAC and approved by the *kebele* Council. As a *got* level process, if a *got* does not find land that can be allocated for this purpose, young people from that *got* have no chance of getting residential plots. Many respondents, including young people who benefitted from the measure, said it was done through lottery as well, but officials explained that it is done by ranking residential land seekers in terms of age, the oldest getting land first. One respondent suggested that priority is also given to homeless disabled and HIV/AIDS positive people and female-headed households. The plots are concentrated in areas identified by *kushet* LACs, and feed into the ruralisation trend outlined earlier (see *Urbanisation* section above).

It seems that unmarried young people are eligible for residential plots and for farmland, but they need to get an ID, which some young women suggested is a less smooth process than when one is a married young woman. People under 18 are not eligible (and also, according to one 17-year old poor young man, they are not eligible to be member of an organized youth group). Women and men have in principle equal rights to be on the list of potential beneficiaries. For residential plots and in the case of married couple, once a spouse gets a plot the other is presumably no longer eligible. One young woman whose spouse had received a residential plot explained that they were in the process of transferring the ownership to both of them. For farmland, there was no case of both spouses in a

married couple with farmland received through reallocation; there was no information in the interviews as to whether this is allowed or not. Officials explained that one same household can be allocated both farmland and residential land, if they happen to be both landless and homeless (which is the case for many).

Different respondents have different figures with regard to the number of young people who benefitted from farmland reallocation and allocation of residential plots. Using mainly information from *kebele* authorities (manager, leader and LAC member), it seems that:

Residential land

- In 2005 EC, 320 youth were given residential plots in different areas of the *kebele*, including 180 young women.
- In 2007 EC, a new settlement was formed in Endemariam Wuo *got* in Lima't *kushet*, whereby residential plots of 216 square meters each were given to 147 young people.
- In 2008 and 2009 EC, 159 young people were given land in the centre of the *kebele* (Maekel *kushet*) (240 square meters each).

There were interviews of people who got or whose children got residential plots in the centre of the *kebele* in 2007 EC. This may be a confusion or the same process as the one which *kebele* authorities said happened in 2008 and 2009 EC.

Farmland

- Since 2004 EC, several land re-allocations have been held. Farmland was provided to a total of 150 landless people across the three *kushet* over the six years until 2010 EC. (This seems a rather high number compared to figures given in other interviews).
- Over the last three years before the early 2018 fieldwork, 46 *timad* of farmland were reallocated to 46 young people – across the three *kushet*.

Other respondents mentioned that in one reallocation process around three years before the fieldwork, 20 young people were given farmland in Maekel *kushet*; one young woman spoke about 10 landless people given farmland in Ekunta *got* in 2009 EC (including two young women); a 23-year old, grade 10 young woman (supposed to be knowledgeable) said that this year only three people were reallocated farmland in the *kebele*, including one diabetes patient and a woman who had serious surgery; meanwhile, the women affairs' *kebele* leader (whom the RO said was not reliable with figures) said that 30 youth were recently allocated farmland, among whom 23 were women.

The *wereda* official who supervises Harresaw had yet other figures and said that between 2008 and 2010 EC, "land has been given to 189 people for residential purpose, to 65 landless people as farmland and to 153 individuals on rehabilitated/ developed hillsides for non-farm activities".

Like farmland and residential plots, **communal land reallocation** is managed at *kushet* level and conducted within the boundaries of each *got*. Except the one case of land given to investors (described separately section below), all such reallocation cases were to **provide hillside/ rehabilitated communal land to organized groups of youth** – which following the logic of land allocation by *got*, will most likely be formed on a 'same *got*' basis. This kind of reallocation was already mentioned in 2012, but it has been given new impetus as part of the government efforts to create jobs for urban and rural youth, as explained by *wereda* officials.

These groups must meet a number of conditions (such as being licensed for the business that they plan to undertake and be constituted as a formal association with its own 'stamp') and they are approved in final at *wereda* level. For rural youth, as all options offered to them are land-based, one of preconditions for the *wereda* to give their final approval is that the group must have obtained land from the *kebele* authorities. In Harresaw in early 2018, hillside/rehabilitated land had been given to 12 associations of 12 to 25 members. *Kebele* authorities said each group got 2,500 square meters. However, for a range of reasons, only two (stone and sand quarry) had started production

(see young people chapter); and in several cases the membership has already decreased since the group was formed. (See details in *Young people's economic and other experiences* chapter).

Land and migration - In principle, people involved in migration to Saudi are not eligible for any of the initiatives just mentioned. So, an individual who is on a migration trip is not included in the list of the lottery for farmland; he/she is also not part of the list for allocation of residential plots³⁹. Returnees get a temporary six-month ID before getting a 'full ID' again (if they have not migrated again), but it is not clear if this means that they also become eligible again for these initiatives six months after their return. As mentioned in the *Migration* chapter, most community respondents who mentioned this discrimination against migrants and their households thought it was not fair. Meanwhile, there were several cases of young people who had got land and migrated afterwards. This was particularly the case for young people with residential plots who migrated to be able to build a house on it.

Constraints - Many respondents, adult and young people alike, highlighted that whilst valuable, these efforts were insufficient. With regard to **farmland** in particular, the main issue is that reallocations are done infrequently, and few people get a chance as the amount of land available in that way is small. One poor young man in his late twenties estimated that fewer than 10% of the landless youth have a chance to get farmland any time. Another said that the size of the land available and number of landless young people were clearly not proportionate. One 18-year old poor woman explained that some adults requested the *kebele* to allocate the grazing land in *Maekel kushet* for their young people as farmland, but others refused saying that this grazing land is source of food for their livestock.

There are also limits on how much **hillside/ rehabilitated land** can be given and it cannot be used indiscriminately. For instance

- One of the most critical constraints faced by the stone quarrying youth group is that they have almost exhausted the stone potential that they can exploit from the land that was given to them. To continue their business they need either a crusher to be able to also exploit the bigger stones, or to be given another plot of land (in their *got!*), which they have requested to the *kebele* administration.
- Another group who was given land to start eucalyptus tree production faced outright opposition from three individuals who were using the land for themselves and had to be 'convinced' by the *kebele* administration. There was also a complaint addressed to the *kebele* by a group of other youth who asked, "*why them and not us*".
- One respondent mentioned that with others they formed an association in 2009 EC, and tried to get land to start a shoat fattening activity, but they were not given any. There can be many reasons (or excuses) for this, including that the re-allocable rehabilitated land was exhausted. The young man explained that they appealed to the *kebele* youth affairs and the *wereda* but they did not get feedback yet.

The above suggests a real dilemma with regard to the best use of communal rehabilitated or grazing land. As highlighted by the NRM DA, some of the activities proposed by the youth groups should not be done "*anywhere*" or otherwise, it will undo the gains made earlier in environmental protection. Although he did not mention specific activities, it may explain the refusal of giving land for shoat fattening (goats are notorious for needing large areas where they graze on bushes); and that it may not be easy to give another plot to the stone quarrying group. And to develop livestock production, access to fodder is key.

³⁹ There is no information on whether, if the migrant is married, the spouse also loses his/her rights.

The pressure on communal land is nothing new, as illustrated by the 18 ha communal land recovered by the LAC through the 2nd level land measurement and certification process. One man indeed did not let go easily:

“Last year I contacted the land administration committee members because they had taken some part of landholding. They said that part of the land was communal land and that I held it illegally and it should be returned to the community. The case was raised in March 2009 EC and finalized two months later, in May 2009 EC. I had been ploughing the land for many years but the LAC rejected my ownership claim. I contacted the members of the 1983 EC land distribution committee. They said that the land concerned was not as large as what the LAC wanted to take back, but that I had taken some part from the communal land and it should be returned. I agreed with what the elders witnessed and finalized the case because I didn’t want to spend my time in the courts.”

With regard to **residential plots**, the main issue is that young people who get allocated a plot have to build a house on it, otherwise the land is taken from them. This has multiple implications as most often they do not have the necessary financial means. First, it opens a loophole through which the very objective of the initiative (i.e. housing homeless young people) is subverted: young people ‘sell’ this land to rich households, sometimes with the aim of migrating. Many of the houses in the centre of the *kebele* were built by adult people who bought the land, illegally, but for instance, from youth who got the land but do not have the money to build a house. This policy is fuelling migration in yet another way: young people who want to keep the land and have no money think about migration as the best (only) option to get this money quickly - assuming one is lucky. Some young people pool labour and skills to cut costs and build each other’s houses. Others have much more ‘grand plans’. In the interviews there were several cases of these various strategies, as illustrated in **Box 35** below.

Box 35. Getting a residential plot but what next

Selling one’s plot because no money to build a house

A young woman who knows some young women who were successful in their migration to Saudi, also knows one who got residential land, sold it because she did not have money to build a house, used the money to migrate, and was deported immediately without having a chance to work.

Migrating to build one’s house

“So, we married in 2003 EC, he migrated for the first time in 2006 EC. We got land for housing and used part of the money he brought back to build the house on this land. The first time he brought back 60,000 Birr. We used 15,000 Birr for the house, 15,000 to repay the government loan he had taken to migrate and the rest for household consumption. Many young people who get land for housing migrate to pay for their house because beyond getting land there is no help. Others get this land but have no money to build a house so they sell the land” (wife of a repeat migrant who wants him to stop as trips are now much riskier and not profitable).

“There are two things they want to accumulate money for, before he comes back; a) building a house and b) getting enough money to lease land so they could live from it, producing enough to eat and assure the lease of the next year. For a house in the kebele they would need approx. 100,000 Birr, and approx. 300,000 Birr for a house in Dera or Atsbi. And to rent-in a sufficient size of land they would need 10,000 Birr” (wife of a first-time migrant who lives with her in-laws; her husband sent 1,000 Birr once; she estimated it could take them 6-7 years to collect the money she has in mind, with the cheaper option (house in kebele centre)).

Building a house with one’s own means

Haftom migrated twice. The second journey was a disaster and he lost his best friend in it. Now he has been given housing land. He and his wife managed to build a house that they are renting. They are building a second house in which they will live. In the meantime, they are living in a rented house in the *kebele* centre. The houses cost little as he and his friends are pooling labour and skills to build their houses one after another: he knows how to mason, another knows about roofing etc.

Parents build the house

A middle-wealth farmer with two *timad* of farmland and who was able to buy land in Dera four years ago, now lives in the centre of the *kebele* where his daughter got a plot of residential land three years ago. They build houses in Dera and the *kebele* centre, rent the house in Dera, and live in the one in the *kebele* centre.

Governance - Overall, most people said that the processes of reallocating farmland and allocating residential plots were fair, and the main constraint was the amount of land available. However, there were some complaints of lack of transparency. First, and in contrast with what the women affairs' *kebele* leader seemed to suggest, several young women highlighted that particularly with regard to farmland, fewer young women were getting on the lottery list so that fewer of them get land. A woman also said the system of lottery is fair, but the problem is in selecting people to get on the lottery list, suggesting that many who meet the criteria are not included because they are not related to *kebele* officials, whilst others who are related to them are included.

In the case of hillside land allocated to youth groups, the number and nature of conditions other than getting land was a major factor too, but there was at least one group which was refused land and one woman thought that the reason given by the *kebele*, about the land not being suitable for the proposed activity, was not genuine.

There were also allegations that those people, clearly not young any longer, who succeeded in acquiring residential plots in the *kebele* centre had to "have money and be well connected with the *kebele* officials including the LAC, to buy it illegally" (divorcee from Saudi returnee, the only woman militia, living in a rented room in the *kebele* centre).

It clearly is complex to manage such processes, the more so considering the high mobility due to repeat migration, and the high number of divorces influencing priorities (with the priority to FHHs). However, it may also be the case that good connections help. This young (27-year old) woman happened to get both, farmland and a residential plot, as she explains below.

I was married and living in the rural part of the kebele but I got divorced and came to the centre of the kebele where I was living in a rented house, selling beer. Then I got land for housing in Ekunta got by lottery chance and moved to there. I am living there with my son and I am nine-month pregnant from a man who has another wife. I got 1 timad farm land through lottery chance too, and my household's main livelihood is farming.

As said above, officials explained that if a household is both landless and homeless they can get both type of land, depending on the lottery and their age. In her case, she is presumably considered as a female-headed household since her divorce, which means she has priority for farmland. She also happens to be the leader of the *kebele* women's league.

Land given to investors

There is only one case of land given to investors in Harresaw. This was initiated by the investors themselves. *Kebele* officials seemed to say that it was not their responsibility to try and identify investment land (unlike what the *wereda* officials explained), and so, there was "no land prepared for investment", although they thought there were various areas which could be suitable for investment in the *kebele*. The investors are two brothers from Harresaw who live in Dera and also have farmland in Harresaw. The brother who was interviewed also has two landholdings in Dera. He explained that

They got an investment license for 15 years for 10 ha of land (*kebele* officials said 8.5 ha), from the region. It used to be communal grazing land. The *kebele* LAC and *kebele* administration were involved in identifying the land. The *wereda* land desk sent an expert to demarcate and measure it. The Region was involved in checking the documentation and giving the investment license. There is no return on investment yet as they got the land in

2009 EC and they have not started production (see p.107 in *Non-farming* chapter), and at the moment only one job was created (the beekeeper). They installed 45 beehives but their license foresees that they should expand to 1,000 beehives.

The added that there were only three people who initially opposed their proposal, who used to collect firewood in the area. But most of the community did not oppose their plan and they got the support from the *wereda* and the region, so these people had to leave it and they no longer collect firewood there. No compensation was involved as this was not land with individual user rights.

Land given/reallocated for other purposes

A number of farmers lost farmland a while ago when the dam was constructed in 1986 EC and the lake covered a wide area at the time. They were compensated with land elsewhere, as for instance the elderly man with a historically influential family explained. A few farmers also lost farmland when the FTC was built in 1990 EC. The following two experiences suggest that this was not a straightforward matter, and grievances are outstanding.

One farmer who still has 3 *timad* of land including 1.5 *timad* of irrigable land explains:

"I lost 1.5 timad farming irrigable land to development. I used to produce barley, wheat, beans, onion and cabbage on that land. The land was taken to build the FTC and for a demonstration site for modern farming. I was informed by the kebele administration officials that my land was needed for development. Since this was good irrigated land with underground water, I first opposed the decision and I was arrested. I opposed due to unfair compensation. I appealed to the wereda and I was given 2 timad farmland and 10 quintal cereals as compensation, which I believe was fair. However, I still have a grievance because the kebele didn't keep the promise to hire me as a guard in the FTC."

Meanwhile, a 27-year old woman explains that she and her sister were outsmarted because at the time both their parents had died and they were living as a child-headed household:

"I and my sister lost 1 timad irrigated land for the FTC. This badly affected our economic status because the land we got in exchange is less fertile than what we lost. We were over-smarted because we were kids and we had no relative to negotiate for us at that time. We were told we would get fertile land in exchange, as daughters of a late fighter, but this was a false promise. Meanwhile, the two men who also lost their land got argued about it and got better benefits because they were men. They even fought with the land administration leaders so that especially one of them got 12 quintal of wheat and a wide and fertile plot of land. The land we got can only be irrigated manually with water from a small spring shared with other farmers. We do not have the labour so we only use it for rain-fed production."

More generally, she said, as they do not have relatives at *wereda* or *kebele* level they do not get what they are entitled to. For instance, she said, the day before the interview there was a registration of ex-fighters' children that would get supported from the *kebele*, but the *kebele* administration did not register her and her sister "because we have no one even though we are ex-fighter's daughters" (their father was a fighter).

More recently, smaller plots of land were reallocated to water infrastructure development and this also created tensions with regard to both communal and farmland (also see *Drinking water infrastructure* section). There were suspicions that pipes lined up on communal land in Lima't *kushet* to bring water to Ekunta *got* and Harresaw *kushet* were damaged intentionally by people from Lima't because they do not have access to water from that scheme. Another issue which was 'hot' at the time of the second fieldwork related to the big borehole built some years ago. The man who lost farmland for this and was the guard and cashier of the water point refused to give the user fee money to repair the borehole, explaining that this was a compensation for his land. Some people thought he was right because he had not got any compensation thus far. Others said that he had

refused to take the compensation land allocated by the *kebele* because he wanted additional benefits such as a house in the center of the *kebele*.

Rural land transactions

The term ‘**transaction**’ is understood here as involving **two private parties**, whereas in the processes of *(Re-)allocation of land for young people*, *Land given to investors*, and *Land given/reallocated for other purposes* just reviewed, one of the parties is a government body⁴⁰. As explained above, there is no urban land in Harresaw. This section will therefore also include transactions related to **residential plots**, making the distinction from transactions related to **farmland** whenever relevant. Inheritance is addressed in a separate section, given the complexity of the issue.

Generally, for rural land transactions, **important actors** include

- a) formally, the Land Administration Committee (LAC) at *kushet* and *kebele* levels, the *kebele* Cabinet and *wereda* land desk and, some people said, the social court. In case of land boundary issues, the elders who were members of the committee distributing land in 1976 EC and 1983 EC are also important. The women affairs’ *kebele* leader is in principle responsible to “*assure the benefit of landless women in the community*”.
- b) informally, the elders that each party to an informal transaction chooses to witness the agreement.

In relation to formal actors, there is a Land Justice body in Harresaw, according to a regional directive establishing it as separate and with a mandate distinct from the LAC. It is noteworthy that most respondents did not make a distinction between the two bodies and sometimes, they make little difference between land bodies and *kebele* administration. The role of these actors is described in the *Land administration* section below.

Renting and sharecropping in/out farmland – There was a consensus that there is more renting than sharecropping. This is also evidenced in the interviews, with more mentions of renting in/out than of sharecropping in/out. Moreover, although it is difficult to ascertain (because most transactions are informal), a larger size of land may well be rented and sharecropped in/out than in the past. Those saying so linked this upwards trend in transactions to, on the supply side, the desire/need for many to finance migration to Saudi, and/or the numerous households in which the male household head is away; and on the demand side, that this is one of the ways young people can access land, and rich households can expand their farming. As noted earlier, in spite of the recurrent drought access to farmland is still considered by many as a characteristic of wealth as well as a way of becoming better-off.

A good illustration is this rich farmer with only 1 *timad* of his own. In 2008 EC he rented-in 2 *timad* of non-irrigable land, one for 3,000 *Birr* for one year and one for 4,000 *Birr* for two years. In 2009 and 2010 EC he rented-in land from three individuals: in 2009 EC he rented-in 0.5 ha for four years for 16,000 *Birr*; then he added in 2010 EC, 0.25 ha (one *timad*) for six years for 14,000 *Birr* and 1.5 ha for six years for 12,000 *Birr*. All three were individuals who wanted to finance journeys to Saudi.

Motives for renting/sharecropping out farmland – There is a range of motives for someone to sharecrop/rent-out his/her land; the most often mentioned or encountered in interviews are outlined below. In two of these situations sharecropping-out would not work, and this may well explain why renting appeared and was said to become more common than sharecropping. *First*, as mentioned by several respondents (talking about others or themselves), households with **no access**

⁴⁰ As explained in the *Rural land inheritance* section, when someone dies his/her farmland is considered as ‘government land’ until such a time it is either rightfully inherited or reallocated. In that sense, the second party to re-allocation of smallholder farmer is the *kebele* administration.

to labour (human and oxen) have no other solution. This include, but is not restricted to, some of the female-headed households.

Second, people rent-out their land to **repay a loan**, formal (from an MFI) or informal. Households with small and infertile land reportedly often end-up doing this: their production is not sufficient to feed the household, so they have to take a loan, and rent-out to repay the loan as they did not manage to find another way. In successive years of drought and inflation, this may set them off on an impoverishing spiral, as noted by many community respondents. Drought was indeed another reason given by some of the respondents, because of its effect of decreasing production and many needing more money to buy food. Finally, a shock at household level may also precipitate this. In the three examples below these were formal loans, 'from government':

- A man was 'forced' to do this to repay a government loan after he was arrested for defaulting for a long time; he rented-out his 0.5 ha land for four years for 6,000 *Birr* and in addition had to sell one donkey, one cow and four sheep to repay the loan.
- A poor household rented out their land to repay a 3,000 *Birr* loan from the government which had become 6,000 *Birr* with interests, when they were threatened to be arrested. Their daughter is hoping to convince both the man and her parents to carry on with the agreement for longer so that she would get a one-off loan of 10,000 *Birr* to migrate to Saudi.
- A 42-year old widow with one *timad* of irrigable farmland narrated her case as follows: "*I have been renting it out since 2006 EC, following the death of my husband. My agreement is for five years, and I rented my land for 4,500 Birr. The man (who is my neighbour) can use all the production, but he must take fertilizer in my name. I had no other solution as I was not even able to buy food and clothes for my children. Also, I had a government package loan taken by my husband, and after a while I was threatened to be arrested and taken to the wereda as I did not repay. At that time, I made this quick and urgent decision to rent-out my land to be saved from prison so that I could raise my children. I do not want to continue to rent-out my land again. Instead, I want to sharecrop so as to get half the production.*"

Third, people rent-out their land to **finance a migration journey**. As explained in the **Financing migration** section, this was reportedly increasingly frequent – and it could lead to very complicated situation if the migrant died. The main form of renting-out for financing migration is for an indefinite period of time, i.e. for as long as it takes to repay the total of the loan. This could be for "*three years, seven years or even longer*", said one woman. She described the situation of a widow who took a loan to send her son to Saudi, explaining: "*she rented out six years ago but as she has not been able to refund her loan so far, the man who rented in her farm land is just using her farmland until now and he is happy about that*".

There were also renting-out transactions concluded for a definite period of time, called '*chilmi*'. These could also be concluded for fairly long periods, as illustrated by some of the cases outlined above (e.g. six years for the widow who had to repay a loan taken by her late husband). In such cases there is no sharing of production between the person renting-in and the person renting-out, whereas in the case of the 'loan access' type of rental agreement, the person renting-out gets a share of the production or the straw.

There seemed to be large differences in land price, arising from multiple factors such as land fertility, the length of the contract and when it was concluded (as the price of land continues to increase in spite of the drought), and of course bargaining power. In the majority of cases, the person sharecropping/ renting-out for any of the reasons mentioned earlier is at a disadvantage, the more so when the need is pressing such as for people threatened to be arrested if they do not repay a government loan. Hence, two poor/destitute women explained, there are people in Harresaw who "*are unfairly rich because they rent in farmland from poor people unfairly*". Support from rich people to poor people is declining, they said, because "*rich people want to rent out poor people's farmland*".

instead of supporting them, so they can use their land; they make them poorer by renting their land for a cheap price."

Forms of farmland-related transactions

Overwhelmingly, transactions concerning **smallholder farmland** in Harresaw were informal.

Sharecropping is formally discouraged by the government (though it is not clear whether it would be considered as illegal). But **rental agreements** are supposed to comply with the provisions of the regional legal framework whereby land can be rented for a maximum of three years, when it is to another smallholder using 'traditional' agricultural technologies⁴¹. All agreements for more than three years and for an indefinite period, which appeared to be many, are therefore illegal.

A number of transactions also concerned the **communal grazing land** allocated as individual plots to farmers, as illustrated by the example of a woman who 'bought' (rented-in) such a plot for a year for 1,500 *Birr* as she needed more fodder. This communal grazing land system is formal in that the two *kushet* which adopted it passed by-laws to this effect; there is no information in the data as to whether the by-laws foresee the cases of transactions for such land.

The LAC member said that in total for the last year, there were only thirteen (13) formally processed and recorded land transactions. Among the respondents who rented in/out land, only one middle-wealth farmer said he rented-in with a formal contract, witnessed by three people from the LAC. In contrast, the rich farmer with three ongoing renting-in agreements mentioned above only went through informal processes.

Wereda and *kebele* officials further indicated that starting from this year (2010 EC), there was a regional directive to the effect that land rental contracts could only be filled at the *kebele* level; they would longer be recorded and 'processed' at *kebele* level but at *wereda* level. However, they said, there is no formal process for this at the *wereda* land desk; the *wereda* land registry has not been started yet. To process a land rental, the form filled-in by the *kebele* land administration is sent to the *wereda* land desk for checking but they do not record it. After this check for correctness, the form is sent to the 'document authentication & verification' office in the *wereda* administration, to 'authorize' the agreement (it is not clear whether this is an authorization or a formalization). Neither the land desk nor this office keep a tally of the agreements so that they do not know the number of formal transactions that are concluded in the *kebele*.

Other transactions - For landless people, besides drawing farmland in *kushet* lotteries (above), inheriting (next section) and sharecropping/renting-in, for which one has to have some combination of access to labour (including plough oxen) and finance, the only other form of access to farmland is when they get it as a temporary gift. This is never a formal arrangement. There were a few cases of this as a parental support to a son or son-in-law (see p.193, the cases of the tailor who also has a barber shop and the 35-year old militia leader). Another example is the successful young businessman who a few years ago was allowed by his brothers to farm their deceased parents' land for free for two years; he counts this as one of the few and important support which helped him in his ascending trajectory.

Parents may try to do this as an 'incentive' to prevent their children from migrating. For the only respondent who mentioned this, a mother of a young newly-married woman, this did not work. Her daughter and her husband had married after they deepened their relationship in Saudi where they both had migrated once already; their parents wanted to give land to keep them in the community, but they did not accept and migrated again (see p.167 above).

⁴¹ *Wereda* officials specified that land can be rented for up to 20 years when it is to rent to users of modern machinery such as tractors and combiners.

Transactions regarding residential land

Transactions regarding residential land are all informal in Harresaw. Rental agreements are not necessarily illegal though their status is unclear. Compared to 2012, room/house renting in the centre of the *kebele* appear to have become more common. People rent for both residential and business purposes. Some of them are poor like the woman who lives mainly thanks to the support of the rich household running the grain mill house in the centre of the *kebele* and who is also very grateful to her landlady who does not pressure her when she is unable to pay her room rent. Others are much better-off like the young successful businessman with the bakery and other businesses.

There were several mentions of people 'selling' their residential plot – especially in the *kebele* centre. These are clearly illegal transactions and they are concluded in front of two or three elders on each side. As seen above, one motive for the person who got the plot is if he/she pressingly needs money or does not have money to build a house on it. This is one of the ways in which the older generation/richer farmers get access to plots that they can then rent or use to start a non-farm activity or have one of the children doing so (like the young woman selling *suwa* in the centre of the *kebele*). A number of respondents mentioned that whilst residential plots have all the same size on allocation, there are rich individuals who have more residential land than others, suggesting that they were able to 'buy' more than one of these residential plots from the people who got them.

A few cases from the interviews are as follow:

- Woman selling - The woman who runs the Selam snack-bar had to sell her house in the centre of the *kebele* to repay a loan taken by her migrant husband which she knew nothing about; she 'sold' the land and the house 60,000 *Birr*. She explained that in this kind of transactions, the elders of each party (in her case relatives of her) could have a very important role if there was a subsequent disagreement regarding the transaction.
- Woman buying – One of the women considered as successful businesswoman by a group of knowledgeable respondents is someone who started with little capital and "*now she bought a house in the kebele centre, owns animals and saves money at the bank*".

As the Selam snack bar owner explained, the LAC does not have any role in these transactions, but "*they know what is going on*" and close their eyes; another respondent talking about how rich people get access to residential plots suggested that they knew how to make the LAC keep quiet and could afford it.

Like for the 'loan access' transactions for farmland, these 'sales' of residential plots are the source of many disputes, when one of the party does not respect the agreement, which has no legal value. Most disputes are about the party 'selling' the plot then denying access to it to the party who bought it, who can do very little except calling on informal mediators. The man who is trying to invest in a grain mill house in the centre of the *kebele* said he was victim of such a behaviour.

"I started a grain mill house, buying a house from a resident in the centre of the kebele and a grinding mill when I returned from Saudi 2 years ago. However, the individual who sold the house then denied having done so. I then started working with the grinding mill in my own house. But kebele officials said it is not allowed so he had to stop it completely."

Use of land as collateral

The *wereda* official interviewed on land issues said: "*It is not legal and totally not allowed to use rural landholdings as collateral. However, urban land can legally be used as collateral if it does not have a legal binding situation; and if the land has site and structural plans and ownership certificate. If one urban land fulfils all these preconditions, it is legal to use it as collateral for banks, MFIs, and as court guarantee.*"

Respondents in Harresaw also did not seem to know anything about the idea that rural land could be legally used as collateral with the second level certificate. However, as just seen, the women who explained how the 'loan access' (indefinite) agreements are working were clear that this is de facto an informal way of using the land as collateral by the loan provider – as the examples given in the Financing migration section above illustrate.

Rural land inheritance

Inheritance rules are very complex, and the process is long and cumbersome too. From the various interviews and after checking by the ROs, **rules** appear to be as follow. Male and female children have exactly the same rights. When one spouse in a married couple dies:

- 1) When the land was **not** jointly owned, the remaining spouse does not have any right on the land of the deceased spouse. But the children have rights on the whole land of this land.
 - i) If the children are 18 year-old and older, they can claim the land immediately. However, if they already have their own land (from the 1983 EC land distribution), then they are not entitled to the land of their deceased parent(s). If those children have children (who are therefore the grandchildren of the deceased person), the grandchildren can inherit if they are above 18. If the deceased person's children do not have children or the children are under 18, then the land goes to the *kebele* to be reallocated.
 - ii) If the children of the deceased person are under-18 (in which case they cannot already have land as they were too young in 1983 EC), the living spouse can take care of the land for them until they are 18.
 - iii) If there are no children, the land remains with the *kebele* and can be reallocated.
- 2) When the land was **jointly owned** by both spouses, rights are divided half for the living spouse and half for the children.
 - i) If the children are 18-year and above they get their land share – Same exception(s) as above if they already have land.
 - ii) If they are all under-18, the living spouse takes care of their half of the land until they are 18.
 - iii) If there are no children, it is not clear if the living spouse gets all the land or if she/he does get half and the other half goes to the *kebele* to be reallocated.

Questions arise/will arise from the process of reallocating 'un-inherited' farmland, including, for instance, if a young person gets land through this process, does this mean he/she can no longer inherit the land of his parents? How does residential land 'count' in these rules, as it is not considered as urban land and at the same time, can also not be counted as farmland, but is certified in the same way as farmland (see below)? Etc. etc. The case below suggests that rules do try to prioritise people considered as vulnerable for specific reasons e.g. in this case orphans:

"I have land that I inherited from my parents who died during my childhood. I also was allocated my own land because I was an orphan."

With regard to **process**, when an individual land right holder dies, his or her rural land is considered as 'government' land until it is rightfully inherited, or reallocated if there is no legitimate heir. There is therefore always a formal process, involving the *kebele* land administration and the *wereda*, of recognition of the rights of potential heirs. The land to be inherited is 'announced' by the LAC; heirs submit their claim on the land; there is a judgment by the *wereda* court, with four witnesses that the heirs are who they say they are; and then the finalization of the formal transfer of user rights (in which the LAC is involved again, as well as presumably the *wereda* land desk office level).

The whole process may take a long time, especially when disputes over land user rights occur. Allegedly, power/ connections and money are often used to influence actors intervening in the disputes (the LAC, the land justice, the 1983 EC land distribution elders) to act in favour of one or the

other party (see *Land administration* section). **Box 36** presents a few **cases of inheritance processes** as described by a range of community respondents.

Box 36. Inheriting rural land in Harresaw

Long processes - A woman explained that her case of inheriting land from her mother took more than a year and a half with the LAC. There still remains “*something at the wereda level to close the case*”. Another woman whose husband passed away, and who could not inherit her half as she has her own land, wanted her landless grand-daughter to inherit. That took a full year to complete, requiring multiple endless queries at *kebele* and *wereda* levels.

A young man described the process as follows. His mother passed away and he and his younger brother claimed their inheritance rights for her two *timad* of land. They first went to the *wereda* court to declare their claim. The *wereda* court declared their rights after they had assurances by four witnesses that they were the children of the deceased. Then they presented the court judgement to the *kebele* LAC, for approval. They got their user right certificate one year from the time they started the process.

Disputes - Two sisters were in a dispute over land that their parents, still alive, wanted to give in inheritance to their grandchildren. Both sisters have their own land, so they cannot inherit. One sister has children and the other does not. The sister who does not have children and will therefore have no benefit whatsoever argues that this is unfair, and that she has rights on the land as much as her sister’s children. She actually took control of a part of the land and argues that it is hers. The case was taken to the LAC two years ago and is not yet sorted out.

In another case, a divorcee explains “*I have a case of my late ex-husband in the land administration since January (2017), and today (March 2018) it is not yet solved. I argue that my son, with no land and no income, is the legitimate heir to this land. Another son of my late ex-husband, from another mother, also argues the same. He is married and owning his own farmland as well as having an income. The land administration did not yet judge and in the meantime, the land is in the hands of that man, using the production so far even though he also has that of his own farm. This is totally unfair and out of the law.*” The women association leader refused to support her because her late ex-husband was well connected with the *kebele* officials and especially with the *kebele* land judges (his other son’s wife is working at the *kebele*).

The same young man as above is also in the process of inheriting land from his grandmother, with whom he lived for four years before she died. She leaves 1 *timad* of land to be inherited. He started the process but his uncle who was living in Saudi returned and is now also claiming his inheritance rights. The young man argues that as he is the one who took care of the woman whilst her son was away, he should be the one to inherit. The LAC suggested the case should go to the elders first, and it is not yet finalized.

In principle, as long as the farmland of a deceased person is not officially inherited or reallocated if there is no legitimate heir, the land concerned is considered as ‘government land’ and should not be used. In practice, when there is a dispute it often happens that one of the parties ‘take control’ of the land and nothing seems to be done to stop this.

Urban land transactions

As explained above, there is no urban land in Harresaw; the residential plots allocated to homeless people are under the rural land regime. These plots (like most transactions concerning farmland in Harresaw) are transacted informally, as seen above. Nobody mentioned anything with regard to the land on which the sketch plan towns are being (in other *kebele*)/will be (in Harresaw) established. Presumably it will continue to be under the rural land regime (until such a time some of these towns become municipalities like Dera).

At the *wereda* level, officials explained there are three ways for urban land to be made available: lease, special assignment (for the benefits of the country/ community – for example, land given for factories, education and health institutions etc.), and provision of land for small and micro

enterprises as working premises. He added that there are people who have large plots of urban land (500 m² and more), because these are cases of older landholding ownership. Any urban resident can participate in land lease bids/ auctions. However, the price of land lease via auction is very high, he said, so that poor urban residents cannot compete with rich people. As seen in **Box 34** above, land is becoming expensive even in fairly remote municipalities like Dera.

The *wereda* official's statement implies that rural residents should not get access to urban land – which is consistent with the idea that people moving to towns lose their right to their rural land. Several respondents in Harresaw also said that “*farmers with land in rural areas cannot be provided with urban land*”. However, we saw above how rich Harresaw residents circumvent legal provisions and ‘own’ both farmland and urban land (most often in Dera or Atsbi). In most cases among those interviewed, their claim on their urban land was ‘legal enough’ for them to have to pay tax on that land/house. Several also mentioned having a *carta* (a *carta* registers the house's location and dimensions on the town's plan).

- Among those with houses in Dera, some got the land before Dera became a municipality, when this land was still under the rural land management regime. This was the case of the investor from Harresaw: “*I have two landholdings in Dera, that were allocated in the late 1990s. I use one as a store and the other for mixed use (residence and shop). In total they make 450m². I have carta for these plots.*”
- Whilst he said he was allocated the land, another man said he bought land in Dera, and he has a *carta*: “*My household has 200m² land in Dera town, which is rented for residence. I bought this land years ago and I have a carta for it.*”
- Meanwhile another household, which was reallocated land as compensation for land taken for the construction of the dam and the lake, has a plot in what was then Harresaw and is now Dera. The wife explained that they do not yet have a *carta* but will get one as soon as the process of transferring the land from Harresaw to Dera is finalized, and they already pay tax on the house.
- One middle-wealth woman head of household has a daughter with a house in Atsbi; her husband bought the land and built the house with money from migration to Saudi. They mostly reside there but have kept the *kebele* ID (involving in government activities such as the voluntary community labour). They pay tax on their house in Atsbi even though they do not have an ID from there.

It is not clear what is meant to happen when people inherited urban land/houses in towns under a former land tenure and management system – like the head of the historically influential family who inherited houses from his parents (who must have accessed these houses under the Emperor) and passed them onto his children.

Land administration

This section describes the dedicated land-related structures, their role and people's opinion about their performance and the land measurement, certification and documentation system. It also presents information on women's rights to land and land disputes in Harresaw.

Dedicated land-related structures

The land-related structures include the Land Administration Agency at regional level⁴², the Land Desk at *wereda* level (which is a branch of the regional agency, in contrast with *wereda* offices that technically report to their counterpart regional bureau but are not a part of it), and the Land Administration Committees at *kebele* and sub-*kebele* levels. In Tigray there is also a *kebele*-level land

⁴² The full name is Tigray Environmental Protection and Rural Land Administration and Use Agency.

justice committee, dealing with land cases. At *wereda* and higher levels, land cases are seen by the regular *wereda*, zonal and regional courts. In Harresaw people can therefore also use the *wereda* mobile court which comes once a week in Dera for appeals with their land cases.

Other important *kebele* level actors in relation to land issues include:

- The *kebele* administration/Cabinet and Council
- The elders who were part of the land distribution committee in 1976 and 1983 EC
- The *kebele* and sub-*kebele* elder committees
- The elders who witness the various informal agreements mentioned above
- To a lesser extent, the community police and militia who pass the decision of the land justice committee to people (police) and execute the order of the land justice (militia).

There is no government-paid Land Administration expert at *kebele* level. All actors involved in land issues are volunteers (and reportedly, they are all members of the party), although the land judges (like the social court members) get incentives.

With regard to the two structures exclusively dedicated to land issues i.e. the *kebele* and sub-*kebele* LACs and the land justice committee, their respective roles and functions are in principle clearly demarcated. The land administration committees handle issues of land measurement, allocation, and planning. Land judges deal with cases related to land and calling for a judgement. The LACs are asked evidence by the land judges. Other actors who can and are often asked to bring evidence are the elders who were members of the land distribution committee in 1976 and 1983 EC, described as 'power-holders' for this reason.

The *kebele/kushet* elder committees (see *Elders* section above) can be asked to deal with cases either by the parties or by the LAC, but they can also refer cases they are brought but fail to mediate to the formal structures, as in the example given p.69 above. The member of the elders' committee explained they get information on when a case should be referred and if it should be referred to the social court or the LAC (land justice?) through regular relations with these bodies.

Land Administration Committees (LACs) - Unlike other government functions, land administration goes beyond the *kebele* level. LACs are established at both *kebele* and sub-*kebele* (*kushet*) levels and land administration issues are first handled at *kushet* level. As seen above, the (re-)allocation processes (of farmland and residential plots to individuals, and of rehabilitated land for youth groups) are even managed at *got* level, by the *kushet* level LAC. According to a LAC member, the LACs were established ten years ago in 2000 EC.

Each LAC has five members including two women⁴³ and at the time of the fieldwork all five members of the *kebele* LAC were working, according to the LAC member. In the *kebele* LAC one of these women is landless. LAC members used to be selected by the community according to one woman, but according to the LAC member, they are now nominated by the *kebele* cabinet and appointed by the *kebele* council as per the highest vote. The main criteria for being nominated are: ethical behaviour, honesty, and good governance. At the time of the fieldwork three of the five LAC members were also members of the *kebele* council. One of them was also development team leader.

The LAC member said that the *kebele* LAC meet regularly, two times a week, and otherwise five times a month. One farmer said that they should meet twice a week by law. One woman said that previously, they used to meet every Wednesday and they were also coming to the water and soil conservation public works sites in order to handle cases there. The LAC achievements, as per the LAC members, include the 'land use plan' for the *kebele* (see *Land planning in the kebele* section above), which is 'operational' after approval by the *kebele* council; and the swift process of 2nd level land

⁴³ One respondent said the *kebele* LAC had eight members, 4 men and 4 women.

measurement. In this process, in addition, they recovered 18 ha of communal land that had been encroached by individual farmers over the years, for which they received a prize from the *wereda*.

He explained the relationships with other structures as follows. The LACs do not have a direct work relationship with the social court, but the social court makes requests related to land issues to the LAC, for instance in cases of divorces. The LAC has more of a work relationship with the land justice, which makes various requests for information to the LAC in dealing with land cases. In addition, to return illegally held land the LAC works through accusing individuals via the *kebele* prosecutor in the land justice. In his views there is a problem with the 1983 EC land distribution members; they sometimes get corrupt and give false evidence (e.g. saying some land is private whereas it is communal land). He believes that the work of the LAC would be improved if the system of asking them for evidence was stopped.

The LAC member (grade 8, member of *kebele* council, militia and ruling party) explained that the members suffer from working most of the time for the LAC, and their families have been complaining. The LAC members are elected for 5 years. But some were demoted or resigned before they finalized their term. In his view, most of the current members are honest and most of the community trust them and perceive they work independently. There are no any rewards – salary and other benefits. For himself, he likes to serve the community; he hates injustice, and when land is given to a person illegally based on false evidence. But he does not plan to continue this work. He has already submitted a resignation letter to *kebele* council. He believes it is better to hire salaried and educated experts to improve the services.

Kebele land justice committee. The current leader of the land justice committee (at the time of the fieldwork) did not know when the committee was established. As noted above, community respondents often do not distinguish between it and the LAC. The leader said the committee has 3 members. The directive indicates it should be 6 which includes 3 as permanent and 3 acting/ reserve members. There is one woman among the three. They only deal with issues related to land estimated under 10,000 *Birr* of production per year or cost of a house. In the past six months, they reviewed up to 40 land-related cases and gave decisions for up to 20 cases (including reconciliations). Any issue first is seen by elders for reconciliation and if not successful is presented to land justice. If decisions are not implemented, the offender is presented by the militia and the community police. Any land-related legal documents they need are found and asked from the LAC.

In his view, the committee is performing well and the best sign of this is that its decisions are accepted and were never rejected by upper justice bodies. Their problem is related to delay and not giving responses very rapidly. They have not changed their way of working in the past five years but many members of the committee have been changed. He believes that the work of the land justice committee could be improved if there were clear land maps. He also thinks that issues of land should be seen at higher courts like *wereda* and above level.

The leader manages the committee working time, follows up that decisions are passed properly, communicates with higher courts' lawyers, reviews documents thoroughly etc. Their working days are Saturdays and Wednesdays from 8.30am to 1.30 pm. As per the directive, they should get an incentive of 50 *Birr* per trial day, from revenues collected from case filing and 2% of the estimated values of cases. But due to weak financial capacity of the *kebele*, each member only got a total of 300 *Birr* for the last six months. When the committee leader needs advice or faces a work-related challenge he goes to the *wereda* court, which gives legal advice and expert support. He also goes to the *kebele* manager and chairman, and former lawyers well-known for their honesty and experience. He said he has solved various problems in this way.

The land justice committee leader considers that serving the public is rewarding but the work has its own problems. One can have enemies when one party is unhappy with the court's or the committee's decision. He does not like the job as land issues are very sensitive and there is no payment. He was appointed in August 2009 EC (August 2017) to replace a member demoted after

last year's *gemgema* (see below). With little formal education (grade 2), he has taken training related to the different *kebele* positions he held over the years, but none related to law. He was nominated by the party basic organization (*meseretawi wudabe*) then appointed after approval by the *kebele* council. He is a member of party and militia and he also works as forest guard. His younger sister is member of the *kebele* LAC. He has no interest to continue. He believes that *"as legal decisions need law practice experience and knowledge, land justice should be led by educated and salaried personnel."*

Performance – Most respondents who talked about this topic had a poor opinion of the 'kebele land administration', in which in most cases they encompassed both the LACs and the land judges. These were blamed firstly for being inefficient and not deciding on land cases for very long times; worse, for being partial and biased in favour of people related to them or who bribe them.

Wereda officials explained that as the LAC and land judge positions were *"highly exposed to corruption"* there is high turnover of members. In Harresaw, as seen above the members of the two structures defended their work. However, the *kebele* manager was of the view that land administration and justice were the least effective category of volunteers. In the past five years, they had been the most influential people in the *kebele* and their authority arise from their position as public appointees, but in a negative manner, due to their partiality and bias in decision-making. Many respondents blamed the land bodies for bias, partiality (for relatives and 'well-connected people'), and corruption – so that people who are not related to anyone and are poor and not able to bribe *"do not get justice"*. One man had this to say

"I am coming here every Wednesday for more than a year for a land case and I did not get justice so far. The land judges do not come on time for the appointment or even can be absent. Rather, they spend their time on drink houses. They give justice and decide timely on the cases of those who give them bribe and invite them to drinks. I do not think that I will get justice soon because I never give them any bribe. Rather I will appeal to the higher authorities of court which is the woreda. Even, I will take my case up to the regional stage."

There was also some lack of consensus in that a few respondents thought that the LAC had been effective in relation to the 2nd level land measurement and certification process, whereas one woman disagreed with this, narrating the case of her father and concluding as follows:

"My father has a land planted with cactus and eucalyptus trees. He planted it during the administration of Abay Weldu. A woman accused him that the land is hers. Thus, they took the case to the land justice and the LAC, which was asked evidence from the land judges, said that he planted the cactus and eucalyptus trees. But they changed their mind and during the 2nd level land certification process, they gave evidence that the land is neither her father's nor the woman's and it is public land (community land). The LAC members are making disputes over land worse rather than solving them. They always create controversy over land ownership. This was especially so during the 2nd level land measurement process. I never saw the LAC judging land issues correctly; instead they lead people to have more conflict over land. During the land measurement, often the LAC said that this and that land is communal even though they know it is owned by someone, in order to get bribe from individuals."

Several men said that as *kebele* council members they attended *gemgema* meetings at which LAC members or members of the land justice committee were dismissed. Several women noted that as a result of the issues of bias, partiality and corruption of the *kebele* land structures, LAC members and judges and their leadership are frequently demoted and others elected, but *"they are all the same"*. Research Officers were both struck by the number of people complaining about these structures either in interviews or in informal chats.

Several women lamented that the women on the LAC (as well as on the land justice committee) *"can do nothing for women; they are in the position just for nothing and without any power due to the*

oppression by male members as well as by the kebele administration” (poor woman, 1-5 leader and water user committee leader).

Land measurement, certification and registration

The rural land 2nd level certification process in Atsbi Wemberta *wereda* started in 2007 EC and according to *wereda* officials it is expected to be completed before the end of 2010 EC. It was undertaken by the regional rural land administration agency with the support of the Sustainable Land Management programme. It covers **all types of (rural) land uses**. It is done using GIS and GPS. No new delimitation is done on the ground; measurement is based on the existing land markers. However, this requires all boundary conflicts that arise in the process to be completed. That is the major constraint on the completion of the process. The complete information on land measurement and registration is kept at the *wereda* land desk, with a hard copy sent to each *kebele*.

One of the officials said the process was complete in Harresaw which is not quite true. All land has been measured, but at the time of the fieldwork, certificates had been issued only for one *kushet* (Harresaw). The LAC member explained that the measurement took place in 2009 EC and it took two months. At the time of the fieldwork (March 2018) 1,700 certificates had been issued in early 2010 EC (September/October 2018). The certificates for the two other *kushet* are completed but not yet distributed. According to him, farmers are unhappy about the delay and the fact that the certificates are coming at different times.

Community respondents explained that all land, including **residential land** for which they previously had no first level certificate, was measured. The young woman who sold her residential plot and the house on it to pay for her migrant husband’s loan, explained that even though she had sold it, the measurement was done in her name because the sale of the land was illegal and for the LAC she continues to be the one to hold the user rights. The LAC member also said that **communal land** has been identified and a certificate is being prepared to be given at the *kebele* administration office. This is important, he said, because *“the administration of common land has been a source of controversy in the last year; for instance, there were communal land ownership disputes between Endemariam Wuo got and Abidera got.”* *Kebele* officials explained that for under-18 orphans the certificate(s) is/are done in the name(s) of their parent(s) and will be transferred to their name when they reach 18. Land used by institutions such as the FTC, schools and churches, are certified to these institutions.

Officials and community respondents explained that the user rights holders were notified to be present on their landholdings when the regional and *wereda* experts would come to measure it. The LAC members were present as well. Whenever there was an issue of land boundaries the elders who were on the 1983 EC distribution committee were called upon. The first level certificates were taken from the rights holders at the time of the measurement.

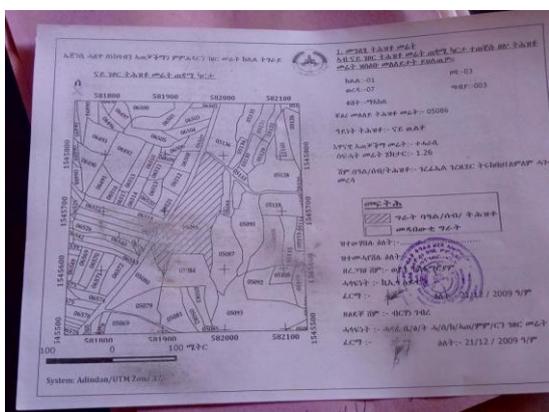
Those who had already received the certificate said that there is no photo on the certificate (but there also was no picture on the first level certificate according to one respondent), it consists of the names of the land holders, and the map of their plot and of the neighbouring plots with GPS coordinates. One characteristic is that there is one such “thick paper” for every plot held by the household/individual. Their land is demarcated on the ground with stones and that did not change.

There were various opinions on the process itself, the technology used, the outcomes of the process (still uncertain for all those who did not yet have their 2nd level certificate), and whether the certificates would be useful or not.

On the process, as seen in various sections above a number of cases of conflicts arose in its course – between individuals and also between individuals and the LAC who has a mandate to try and recover any illegally encroached communal land. As we also saw earlier, some respondents were unhappy about the role of the LAC in these instances (see e.g. the man who had cactus and eucalyptus trees on a piece of land, which he first was granted by the LAC in a dispute with a woman, then denied at

the time of the 2009 EC measurement process), and there were allegations that the LAC was pretending that land was communal just to get bribes from individuals so they would recognise the land as his or her's. One woman, middle-wealth farmer head of household and who used to be a model farmer, said that there were a lot of disputes in other *kushet* during the measurement but her *kushet* was better, with fewer disputes.

Wereda officials have high hopes that as “the certificates, unlike the first level ones, include the exact size of the land and the land plot boundaries are clearly indicated by GPS coordinates... this will resolve the boundary conflicts that have prevailed so often thus far” (*wereda* interview). This was the hope of the *kebele* LAC member as well. In the community, the first reason why certificates would be useful was to guarantee one's user rights. As for disputes, some others that they would help reducing their number, but others thought that it was unlikely and disputes would arise from lack of understanding of “what is written to describe their land” (the GPS coordinates, see pic below). One rich woman farmer thought that many people are sceptical towards the 2nd level land measurement: “they wonder how land can be measured correctly with a satellite”.



A second level land certificate

Most of the respondents who had not yet received their 2nd level certificate said there had been no problem so far but seemed keen to get it soon. The woman ex-model farmer mentioned above explained that she had kept a copy of her first level certificate, and she was eager to get the second level one, because she thought her land was not correctly demarcated by the GPS; part of her farmland seemed to have been given to another person, someone who is not even her neighbour on that side according to the 1st level certificates. She went for appeal to the *kebele* administration but they told her to wait until she gets the new certificate.

Land administration and justice processes

In summary, land is administered by *kushet* and *kebele* LACs. In terms of process, for (re-)allocation of smallholder and communal land, each *kushet* LAC studies the land size and type and what it could be used for in their *kushet* and submits to the *kebele* LAC and *kebele* administration. This is how the *kebele* LAC prepared the *kebele* ‘land use plan’ referred to above (p. 218). The plan goes to the *wereda* land desk and is approved by the *kebele* council.

The formalisation of reallocation of smallholder land to landless people, including issuing the certificate to the land user right holder, involves the *kushet* LAC (managing the lottery), the *kebele* LAC compiling all information, and the *wereda* land desk. The allocation of residential plots involves the transfer of the land from communal into individual land user rights. This is being processed as part of the 2nd level land certification process for land that was allocated as residential plots in the past. There is no information on how this will be done in future.

The communal rehabilitated land given to youth groups does not change status, it continues to be communal. The whole process for a group to start involves many other aspects. With regard to land,

one input to identify which land can be given is the plan prepared by the *kushet* and *kebele* LACs but it also seems that youth groups can proactively identify and request for specific plots. That seems to have been the case for the group which was refused land for shoat fattening (see p.222).

The inheritance process is described above (see p.230). In case of divorce, the information differs depending on the respondent. One woman said the parties make their claim to the LAC, which decide whether claims are legitimate. Another said the woman needs to 'accuse and go to the social court' and three elders are called as witnesses for each party. Presumably this is in case the divorce is not amicable. It is not clear whether the land justice committee is involved at all and in what capacity, in cases of divorces.

Anyone who has a complaint about land-related issues can present it to the *kebele* land justice committee, and if not satisfied can appeal at the *wereda* 'complaint' office, and higher up if not yet satisfied. Cases involving a judgement concerning land issues estimated to be under 10,000 *Birr* of production per year or cost of a house (see p.234) are first seen by the *kebele* land justice committee (but not in cases of divorces?) and otherwise directly at the *wereda* court. A party whose case was first judged at the *kebele* level and who is not satisfied with the decision can appeal at the *wereda* (then higher) courts.

Women's rights and land disputes and the associated processes are described in the next two sections. The land measurement and certification process is described in the preceding section.

Women's rights to land

Everyone agreed that women have equal rights to land as men by law. Processes like allocations of residential plots and reallocation of farmland in principle give the same priority to young women and young men, and higher priority to female-headed households. Young women are included in the youth groups given hillside/rehabilitated land, and the rights of women in divorce, widowhood and inheritance are well known. See *Rural land inheritance* above. In case of divorce, a woman has the right to half the jointly owned properties, including land if it was jointly owned. However, according to a poor farmer, jointly owned land can be divided only if it is more than one *timad*; if not, only one of the spouses gets the land and the other is registered as landless to get land from reallocation.

There were general issues affecting equally women and men, including land scarcity for all initiatives of (re-)allocation, and the lack of efficiency and alleged bias and corruption of the *kebele* land bodies. However, women also pointed to issues that were specifically affecting the way women's land rights are respected in Harresaw.

With regard to the land (re-)allocation initiatives, several young women alleged there is bias in how the lists for land (re-)allocation are made, and more young men than young women are on these lists – this may also arise from young women's lesser awareness of preconditions such as having an ID etc. Young women's membership in youth groups appeared to be problematic in several ways. Some male respondents said that they were forced to include young women in their group; others, that young women find the work too hard. Several young women explained that the group activities are difficult to reconcile with domestic responsibilities, and, in the case of the stone quarrying group, that the work is hard for them. See more in *Young people's economic and other experiences* chapter.

More generally, women respondents also highlighted the vulnerability of female-headed households (including women whose husband is away on migration) to land grabs by other men, with the women unable to defend themselves because they lack power and are not listened to (see in *Impact of migration to Saudi – Examples and perceptions* section above). This lack of consideration was faced by the woman who is trying to have her son inheriting from her late ex-husband (see *Box 36* above) and who in the process, had dealings with the *kebele* leader and the community police:

"I told the kebele leader that the land inheritance belongs to my son but, he treated me in a harsh way and let me out from his office in a rude way. In addition, in our kebele you have to pay

100 Birr for police to call those who allocated land in 1983 EC as witnesses in land cases; I told the police about my case and I paid him 100 Birr and he promised to bring the elders to the land administration office for the appointment; but no one came so I asked him why? He said he had told them but it is none of his business whether they come or not. And, he shouted out on me to leave his office. There is no justice even in the wereda regarding land issues, and the wereda land desk officials never allow people to even pass their gate for appeal let alone listening and solving their problems.”

According to several women, even when they are in official positions like the women on the *kebele* LAC, they are powerless in reality (see *Dedicated land-related structures* section above); or, like in the case of the women affairs’ leader refusing to help the woman just mentioned (see [p.231](#)), they protect their own relationships.

In several women’s views, this lack of power is compounded by the better knowledge of land laws and regulation by men, and their greater ability to bribe members of the relevant bodies (including paying them drinks in drink houses where they can also chat and conspire). They highlighted how the prone-ness to corruption of land bodies was affecting especially poor women with cases of divorce, widowhood or inheritance, as *“they are dominated by men who have better exposure to knowing the laws as well as they bribe the land administration and invite them for drinks”*.

Wereda level bodies may not work better, like in the case of this poor woman, now living in Harresaw and who explains:

“I lost a house in Atsbi due to divorce. My ex-husband was in Saudi and he came back and we bought a house in Atsbi. We got divorced, but then he begged me to reinstate our marriage and we did. He went back to Saudi and I moved to Atsbi and spent time constructing additional rooms and making the compound on the land. When he came back from Saudi, he was with another woman in Saudi and he divorced again from me. In addition, he claimed that the house is only his property and the wereda land administration decided in his favour, even though I also contributed to the construction of the house. I do not want to appeal because I am so sad, I only want only to exclude him from my life.”

Land disputes

There are many cases of land disputes or tension or conflicts about land for a range of reasons and for all types of land. These include

- Conflicts about *kebele* boundaries (mentioned by one of the elders of the *kebele* elder committee) or recently, in the process of expansion of Dera (on farmland identified to become a livestock market but not yet formally transferred) (see [p.217](#))
- Conflicts between *kushet* or *got* (including the example given just above on communal land (see [p.236](#), and also the case of the water pipes laid out on Lima’t *kushet* communal land, see [p.21](#))
- Conflicts when farmland is taken from an individual for development purpose, like in the case of the water guard (see [p.21](#)).
- Opposition by some community members when communal land is given to youth groups or to the only two investors of Harresaw (see relevant sections above).
- Disagreements between people about distribution of communal land as farmland for landless young people (see [p.222](#))
- Disputes between an individual and the LAC in the land measurement process (see example [p.235](#)).
- Disputes between individuals in the course of processes of inheritance and divorce (see [Box 36](#) above); about land boundaries (see box below); and increasingly often, because of the ‘loan access’ transactions described e.g. in the *Financing migration* section) – either because

one party denies the (non-formally established) rights of the other; or because there is a controversy about loan repayment.

Examples for most of these were given in the other sections of this chapter. The data suggest that there may have been an increasing number of such incidents as generally conditions have become tougher in Harresaw due to the recurrent drought; the need for financing migration further fuels this trend, as well as (possibly temporarily) the land measurement process.

Several respondents mentioned that most disputes are resolved by 'community elders' (people trusted by each party) or by the elders on both parties who witnessed the agreement in the many cases of informal transactions; or by the *kebele* elders' council or the members from the *kushet* concerned if both parties are from the same *kushet* (see *Elders* section above). Most cases go to them before being brought to the LAC/land justice. One of the elders suggested that indeed, most of the conflict resolution cases they are brought are about land. However, overall, the land bodies seemed to be quite busy too with addressing land-related disputes.

In these land dispute resolution processes, the fact that land is managed at *kushet* and *got* levels further entrenches a sense of prime loyalty to one's *got* or *kushet* (before the *kebele*), which Research Officers felt was widespread in Harresaw. This may at times further complicates disputes between individuals, like in the example below.

This conflict between a man living in Ekunta *got* and another from Enda Gebriel *got* arose on farmland found at the boundary between the two *got*. The case was first seen by community elders but the parties couldn't reach a consensus. In 2007 EC (three years ago) the case was taken to the *kebele* land justice and the man from Enda Gebriel *got* won the case. But the man from Ekunta, seeing that members from the land justice were from Enda Gebriel, appealed to the *wereda* court and won. Now the man from Enda Gebriel *got* has appealed to the zonal level court.

Young people's economic and other experiences

This section draws from conversations with twelve young people from Harresaw, interviewed in-depth about themselves, other young people of their age, and their views on life in Harresaw in general; parts of discussions with adult farmers and 'urban residents' during which they were asked to comment specifically on what they saw as the key opportunities available and problems faced by the young people of the community; and interviews with *kebele* and *wereda* officials about programmes for young people. As seen above (see p.90), the future of young people is one of the key problems of Harresaw for a large majority of respondents with a wide range of profiles, asked to identify three topmost issues. That gives the background to this chapter.

The chapter is structured as follows: first the stories of the twelve young people are briefly presented. This is followed by sections focusing respectively on young people's perceptions on the economic aspects of their transition to adulthood; their perceptions of other transitions; their views on setting up an independent household, and on life in the community – including with regard to relationships with government and politics. Next come two sections outlining adult perspectives on young people, and describing young and adult respondents' perceptions of intergenerational relationships in Harresaw. The final section focuses youth policies and programmes as described at the *wereda* and *kebele* level, as well as by young people themselves.

The twelve young people interviewed comprise six young women: one poor and one richer/middle-wealth in each age group 18-19, 20-24 and 25-29; and six young men chosen in the same way. The initial idea was to have three young people in each age group for each gender: poor, middle-wealth and rich. When Research Officers asked to be introduced to this range of respondents they were told that it was not possible to distinguish between rich and middle-wealth; this, they were told, is

already difficult for adult people but especially so for young people. Hence it was agreed that in each age group and gender, there would be one poorer and one richer young person.

Young people's perspectives

"The kebele has many plans, to develop a small city etc. But there is no plan for the youth. We don't even know who is the youth association leader. There is a youth association but they are sleeping in their home. We are the future of this country, but we don't know what our future will be" (Young man unsuccessful returnee from Saudi).

Young people's stories

Young woman, age 18-19, poor

She is 18-year old. She lives in Ekunta *got* with her parents and a younger brother and sister. The household used to get PSNP transfers but her parents being too old to do PWs and the children all under 18, two years ago they were transferred to EFA. She asked the *kebele* two years ago to do the public works but they refused because she was under-age. Her father has 1 *timad* and his brother is farming it; her mother inherited 1 *timad* from her father and it is sharecropped out. She considers her household as very poor. She dropped out from school at grade 4 because of being ill and failing, and lack of school materials. She wants to continue her education in future if her livelihood improves but it is difficult currently due to their low economic situation.

A month ago, she started trading *kolo* preparing it and selling it in Dera and Atsbi markets, to support her parents in covering the household's consumption. She makes roughly 10 *Birr* profit every market day. She also does farming activities, for instance weeding. She is not involved in any livelihood support by the government or NGOs. In her views, the *kebele* does not select poor people for such support; rather they select rich households. She gives the example of the training recently provided by an NGO, for which her household was not selected. They appealed to the *kebele* administration and they were told that they will be included next time.

Her parents had a longstanding loan of 3,000 *Birr* from the government, which had grown to 6,000 *Birr* with interests. They had to rent out her father's farmland to repay it, as the *kebele* told them they would be arrested if they did not repay it rapidly. So, the household's farmland is rented out to a relative until they can repay the loan they took from him to repay the government loan.

She never migrated but she has a plan to migrate to Saudi if she gets money for that:

*"There is no young woman or young man in Harresaw who never thinks about migration and who never plans to migrate to Saudi. The problem is lack of money to migrate. I know that there is a risk of death and other problems while migrating illegally. But, I cannot help it because it is not an alternative to stay here. My hope is that the man who rents my father's land will give me 10,000 *Birr* extra loan to use our land, and I could migrate to Saudi."*

She is planning to migrate with other poor young women of her age. In her views, parents who have male children are lucky because their sons can migrate to Saudi and change their life. Her household is unlucky that they have no older son; they would be better off if they had a son who could migrate.

She makes *sifiet* (hand-made decoration) to decorate her home. She wants to make more of it and sell it but she is lacking money to buy the materials. She spends her spare time doing this, having coffee with her friends, and chatting and joking about marriage and young men in the community. Also, she listens to some Tigigna songs but she is not interested that much. She spends the night at church during annual holidays; but she does not belong to a *mehaber* because she does not have money for the contribution and to prepare feast. She is not interested in politics and she is not involved in any political and sport activities.

Most of her friends are young girls like her, poor and who dropped out from school. But, she has two friends who are different, one from a rich household because her brother is in Saudi and the other is

grade nine students. None of her friends are boys because it is taboo in the community for young girls to have male friends. She does not have a boyfriend and she does not plan to have a boyfriend before marriage because it is not acceptable in the community.

She does not want to stay in the community, but leave once she has saved some money or if she marries someone. However, she might consider staying if she gets land so that she could take care of her old parents. She also would like to involve in petty trade. She does not think that someone will marry her as she is poor; her plan is to improve her and her household's livelihood before marriage:

"Who could propose me for marriage? No one currently! Because I am from poor household, why for will a man want to marry me? He will not get any dowry from my parents. Even, my parents have no economic capacity to prepare the wedding feast (crying). Men look after those girls from rich households for marriage. There is no one who proposes us, girls from poor households. Sometimes, I spend my day crying observing my friends from better off households getting married. Thus, my plan is changing my economic situation in any possible way and I have started my way to do it. I started the kollo trading recently borrowing 100 Birr from my uncle and I hope I will be successful to save some money in the future."

She wants to be involved in trading and improve her economic status through hard working. But her major plan is to migrate to Saudi and improve her household's economic situation. Or, she might go to Atsbi or Mekelle after saving money by trading here, to involve in business activities in the towns and get married and live there. She knows no one who lives in the towns currently but there are people from the community who live there.

She does not plan to continue her education before becoming better off. However, she will continue her education after that, to become equal with her peers. She explained this as follow:

"If I start involving in trading and business actively, I will not continue my education because wealth is better than education. But, if my economic situation is changed and I get an opportunity to continue my education, I will continue it. I do not want to stay back from my peers in any case."

She wants to get married and have children after becoming better off economically. She plans to have three sons; she does not want to have daughters:

"I want to have three sons after I change my economic situation. If not, I might have only one son. But, I do not want ever to have a daughter. You see, because I am a daughter, I cannot move to other areas to be involved in different jobs and get money like sons are doing to improve their parents' economic situation. Thus, I do not want to suffer, myself and my daughters. That is why I do not want to have daughters." (about to cry)

Her role models are those women who are better-off and got married and are leading their life peacefully without any concern about poverty. She hopes in the future she will be like them by involving in business activities and hard work to improve her economic situation and contributing for her future children's good life as a mother. Her worries for the future are that getting an opportunity to marry, and improving her livelihood, might be difficult for her.

Young woman, age 20-24, poor

She is 20 and married six years ago. She has two sons age four and two. She lives with her husband and children in the centre of the *kebele*. They are landless but her husband rents-in farmland and also farms his parents' farmland. Thus, farming is their main livelihood. They have an ox and their parents contribute a lot in supporting them to raise their children. She terminated school at grade 6, seven or eight years ago, like her two brothers, because of longing for their father who was in Saudi. She does not plan to go back to school; she is busy raising her children and with household activities.

She is helping her husband in farming a bit, e.g. handing him seeds during sowing, taking his lunch to the farm. She is not doing any other income-generating activity, and she is not involved in any government or NGO support to young people. Her husband got a credit of 5,000 *Birr* once in order to buy an ox. He is trading oxen as income generating activity. She is member of an *equub*. She works on the PSNP and gets the support for the household's four members (600 *Birr*). The public works are very laborious but "it is good to think that I have some income even it is small". She spent the last PSNP payment buying food for her household.

She never migrated. Her father was planning to take her and her husband to Saudi legally before they got married but it was not successful. She is happy that it failed; she has no plan to ever migrate in the future.

During her spare time she has coffee and chats with her neighbours and she visits her parents and siblings in the rural areas of the *kebele*. She is interested in traditional music, like the *Worhi Tiri*, a wedding ceremony song currently popular in Harresaw. She is not very active in religion and politics; but she goes to the church every annual holiday and she is a member of the women association and pays the membership contribution. She sometimes attends *kebele* meetings.

Her friends are married young women like her. They eat breakfast and have coffee together and chat about their married life and share experience about the problems they face in their marriage. She has also a boy who is her intimate friend who was brought up with her since childhood so that she consults him and asks advice from him about different issues because he is currently a grade 10 student.

She does not plan to leave; she wants to stay in the community, in the centre of the *kebele*. She wants to be involved in any income generating activity such as trading, or opening a shop in her house. Her husband wants to continue his education, she wants him to let her do this too. But she wants to have seven more children because, if she has many children, some of them will migrate to Saudi and others will pursue their education and have government employed jobs.

Young woman, age 25-30, poor

She is 28. She married thirteen years ago, she has three children, and they live in the centre of the *kebele*. The household's livelihood depends on non-farm activities such as labour work and migration and they are PSNP public works beneficiary. Her husband also migrates to Kunewa (Afar) now and then; and he has also repeatedly migrated to Saudi. He returned last from Saudi a year ago, after an unsuccessful stay of only for five months there, then he was deported without having worked at all. They are landless. She got no formal education but she can write and read through informal education. She has no plan to continue education: she has children and it would be difficult.

She grows vegetables in her garden and sells small quantities for local customers, to cover small household expenditures like for coffee and salt. Last year she did farming daily labour and got 60 to 70 *Birr* per day. But she was working only twice or once a week, because there are many people who want to get work but only a few rich farmers who employ labourers. It is also laborious for women but she does it to get some additional income for her household. Recently she was involved in a training by an NGO called green Diversity and got 500 *Birr*. She was selected because of her activity in growing vegetables. Her household took a loan of 9,000 *Birr* to send her husband to Saudi, of which thus far they repaid 5,000 *Birr*. In the past one year she also worked on the PSNP public works, which is hard especially for women, and affected her health and her household and income-generating activities: she could not spend as much time as she needed on her vegetable gardening as she was spending most of her time on the PSNP public work and the free public work.

She never migrated, and she never had a plan to migrate. She wants to stay in the community by involving in labour works employed by rich people, and involving in vegetable growing.

She spends her spare time on household chores, watering her garden and tending to her vegetables, and having coffee and chatting about their life and problems with neighbour women. Her brothers also act as friends for her and she consults and discusses with them about her problems in general. She listens to music on the radio to refresh her mind. She goes to church once or twice a year for religious holiday celebration and prayer. She is not active in politics and she is not member of the ruling party, but she takes part in general community meetings. She is also a member of the women association and pays for the membership every year when the WA leaders tell her to do so.

She intends to stay in the community. She plans to be a farmer if she is allocated farm land by the *kebele*, and will work as daily labourer during good harvesting seasons until she gets her own land. She wants to have additional two children if her household becomes better off in the future. Her hope for the future is to get farm land and be rich. Her worry is that the household might not get farm land so that they would have to live their life by being employed on rich farmers' farm land for ever. However, if she gets land and there is good rainfall and water in the area, she has a plan of involving actively and more widely in the vegetable growing activity.

Young woman, age 18-19, middle wealth

She is 18. She is the first-born daughter of 'Kofi Anan', the influential man introduced elsewhere in this report. But she lives with her mother (who separated from her father), her step-father and two sisters and two brothers. She is the oldest in the household. Their main livelihood is farming, and she sees her household as middle wealth. She completed grade ten and started a first year in accounting diploma programme in Mekelle Admas University College. She was working as waiter in a café during the day and studying at night. She was earning 600 *Birr* per month and paying 200 *Birr* for her education. But she could not get enough time to study and she stopped this for the time being. She has a plan to continue her college study in the future when things will be good for her. She never got any government livelihood support. She never migrated to Saudi and she has no plan to do so. She moved to Mekelle mainly to join college education even though it was not successful and was affected by her work.

When she was at the college, she was spending her time studying her lessons after her classes and work. Currently, she spends her time chatting with her friends in the community and supporting her mother because she recently gave birth. With her friends they are preparing coffee and chatting about their life and future. Her friends do not include boys because she is mindful that the community already give special attention and make plenty of gossips about young girl who returned from towns and big cities, let alone having friendship with boys. She is very interested in music and spends her time listening to Amharic, Tigrigna and Eritrean love music songs on her mobile phone. She is also more interested in Amharic music songs. She does not involve in religion and politics and she is not interested in either. She does not do also any sports.

She does not plan to stay in the community. She wants to go to Mekelle to continue her college study and look for a job there alongside her studies. She does not have an immediate plan to marry. After graduating she wants to be employed in a government or private organization. She wants to marry only after she graduates and gets a job, and have three children. She would return to Harresaw just for visiting her parents and relatives. She would prefer to go again to Mekelle because she has already the experience of living there and has some relatives and friends there. Her role models are any civil servant, because she wants to be a civil servant in future. She hopes to complete her college education and get a job. But her worry is that she might lack money to pursue her college education.

Young women, age 20-24, middle wealth

She is 23, living with her parents and two brothers in *Ekunta got*. The household's livelihood is based on farming and PSNP PWs and her two brothers also do daily labour in *Kunewa (Afar)*. They have one ox and plough their land sharing another ox with other households. She is physically disabled:

one of her hands was burned when she was a child and she cannot use it. Even though she faced challenges to get school materials she never dropped out; also, the school supported her as she is disabled. She graduated in 2008 EC from the Level 4 livestock programme in Wukro Agriculture College. She is unemployed. Last year she took job exams for vacancies four times in Wukro and Atsbi but she could not pass. The *wereda* does nothing to support her for instance to access training programmes or job opportunities as a physically disabled young woman.

She cannot engage in farming due to her disability, but she helps with domestic chores. She gets the EFA support individually due to her disability; whilst the rest of the household is beneficiary of PSNP PWs for four members. She is not involved in any youth cooperative or association. She never migrated; one of her brothers migrated to Saudi and returned back two years ago.

In her spare time she prepares coffee for her parents and spends her time at home. She listens to Tigrigna, Amharic, modern and traditional music songs on her mobile phone. She goes to the church every morning for prayer because St Mary's church is near her home. She is not active in politics and she only visits the *kebele* to get an ID card: she lost her's and she is in the process of getting another one, though she missed several of the appointments that the *kebele* manager gave her. She is not involved in any of the associations (women affairs, youth affairs, league or federation).

She is not involved in any sports. But, she said, no sport is needed: as transport within the *kebele* is not available, community people walk long distance to access services like shops or attend *kebele* meetings in the *kebele* centre and to go to Dera for education and market services.

She spends time with her friends although most at her age are married and with children so that their experiences are different. She had boys as friends when she was at the college in Wukro; but she does not have male friends currently because it is taboo and unaccepted in the community. And she does not have a boyfriend.

She does not want to stay in the community and farm. Her plan is to live in a town with a government job, and to marry only after she gets a job and she has her own income to be economically independent. She would like to live in Atsbi or Wukro and visit her parents and brothers for the holidays. However, if she cannot get a government job out of the community, she wants to be involved in trading or business activities. Or, she wants to be organized in a group with other young people and get the opportunity of involving in livelihood support activities such as shoat and cattle fattening. But, this depends on the *kebele* willingness to give the opportunity for her.

She plans to marry, and have four children (two sons and two daughters), after having settled her economic problems through working. Her role models are those women civil servants in the *wereda* who serve in their profession and they are economically independent from their husbands. So, her hope for the future is to get a job and have her own income. But her worry is to be unemployed due to lack of job opportunities in the *wereda*. At the moment she lost her mobile phone so that she is not able to check for vacancies by calling her friends in Atsbi and Wukro as she used to do.

Young women, age 25-30, middle wealth

She is 27. She was married and living in the rural part of the *kebele* but she divorced and came to the centre of the *kebele* where she was living in a rented house, selling beer. Then she got land for housing in *Ekunta got* and moved there. She is living there with her son and she is nine-month pregnant from a man who has another official wife. She has 1 *timad* farm land that she also was reallocated. She dropped out from school at grade nine planning to migrate to Saudi but she changed her mind because her father migrated to Saudi. She does not want to return back to school because it is too late, she is too old and she already has government and household responsibilities. She is the women's league leader of the *kebele*; she attended some government training like the training given for basic organization of the party in Hawzen a few years ago.

In the last 12 months she farmed her land, weeding and harvesting; her father ploughs her land so she does not sharecrop or rent out. She is not involved in a youth cooperation or association because she has the land. She asked for it and she even formed a group with other young people like her to be part of it, but the *kebele* told them they cannot be included because they are not landless. So, she never got a loan related to young people's livelihood support programmes. But she is a member of the RUSACCO and she repeatedly take loans from what she saved. In the last year, she got the PSNP support without doing public works as she is pregnant. She never migrated, and she has no plan to migrate because she has already a settled life, including government responsibilities.

During her spare time, she chats with her peer young women and they have coffee. She is not interested in music but she listens to some traditional Tigirigna music, just by chance. She socializes with neighbour friends in their *mehaber* and informal coffee ceremonies. Her friends also include boys, even she prefers spending more time with boys because they understand her better. She has some three male friends who grew up and studied with her. She consults them and asks them advice about some issues and her problems as a woman.

She is very active in politics but less active in religion. She participates in *kebele*, party, women leaders, and development army meetings as well as in different government activities such as creating awareness and implementing interventions like the CBHI and women association activities collecting payments. So when she is at home she also has work for the government like writing reports about her work and her plans related to her function.

She plans to stay in the community. She wants to improve her livelihood by involving in chicken and cattle and dairy production, and with her profits she wants to build her house in a modern way and build an additional house on her land to rent. She needs a loan from the *kebele* so that she could start these activities. She does not have a plan to marry another man; no one will propose her for marriage because she already has children and she is established an independent household as a second wife in the community.

In the future, she wants to become a famous politician and woman leader in the *kebele* like Gidena Hailu (the current women association leader); and to be rich woman by involving in different income generating activities. Her worry is to be able to secure a good life for her children by sending them to a good school and providing them good health services – which are lacking in Harresaw.

Teenager 17-19, poor

He is 17. He is not married. He lives with his mother, two sisters and a brother. His mother has one timad of land. His household's livelihood is farming; the father of his two little sisters is ploughing the land, giving the production to the household and taking the straw for him. The household is also a PSNP PWs beneficiary. He describes his household as poor. He used to live with his grandmother. After she died in 2007 EC he started to live with his mother. His grandmother left a sheep for him when she died. Currently, he has two sheep. He dropped out of school at grade 5 in 2007 EC when his grandmother passed away. He has not gone to school after that. As his mother is poor, he is not able to cover his education expenses. He plans to continue his education if his income improves.

He does not have work except shepherding his two sheep. In January 2018 he went to Afar and got hired to herd cattle, for 500 *Birr* a month. He went with friends and got the job thanks to them. His mother decided that he should work in Afar for his wellbeing. But he returned after one month because he feared getting malaria and he was unhappy living far from his family, even though he was happy to get an income. He does not have any plan to migrate again anywhere. He gave the 500 *Birr* he earned to his mother. Last year he sold one sheep for 700 *Birr* and bought clothes for himself. He never participated in youth associations. He is landless and never got support from anyone.

He spends his leisure time in his home. He loves music, but he does not have a radio or mobile, so he does not listen that much. He is somehow active in his religion and he goes to church every Sunday.

He is not active in politics and sports. He does not belong to the Youth Association, Youth League or Youth Federation. He plays with his shepherd friends and they discuss together. All his friends are male and he does not have a girlfriend. He does not do any domestic work in his home.

Looking to the future, he plans to settle in the community and does not want to ever go away to look for work. He plans to start shoe shining in the *kebele* centre, and to continue his education. He wants to inherit his grandmother's one timad farm land and he has started the process with the *kebele* land administration but no response has been given yet.

Young man, 20-25, poor

He is 25. He married with a girl chosen by his parents in 2008 EC and he has one daughter. They live in a separate room but in the same compound as his mother and his younger sister. His household's livelihood depends on PSNP PWs and his income from daily labour. Their household is poor. He attended school only to grade 3. He dropped out when he was 11 because his father died, and he has not returned to school since then due to poverty. He never attended any training programmes.

In the last 12 months he worked as a farm and construction daily labourer in Afar. He also carried out most of the farming for his mother. He is not involved in any organized youth group and did not receive any livelihood support from the government, an NGO or a private individual. Over the past year his household received PSNP transfers for 6 months for 3 people and he earned about 5,000 *Birr* from his daily labour. He spent the cash for household expenses like clothing, consumable items and medical expenses. Last year, he was affected by malaria while he was working in Afar. He has never migrated abroad, but he has been migrating to Afar since he was 17. At the time of the interview he was preparing to go to Afar a few days later and to come back after working at least three months.

In his spare time, mostly he does house maintenance and other related activities around his house. He is not that much interested in music or other arts. However, he listens to radio programmes and Tigrigna songs while socializing with his friends. As he spends most of his time in Afar region, he is not active in religion. But he goes to church at least once a week when he stays home. He is not also active in politics. He is member of the youth association: he has paid the annual membership fee but he has nothing else to do with the association; he is paying the fees only because he is hoping that one day he will receive land through the association.

Looking to the future, he has planned to settle in the community if only he was able to get farm land and improve his livelihood through farming. As there is a plan by the *kebele* to reallocate farm land and land for housing, he or his spouse may receive land through this plan. Otherwise, he will continue to migrate to Afar and keep working as daily labourer.

Young man, 25-30, poor

He is 27. He married in 2006 EC and has two children. He lives with his wife and the two children in his own house. He was one of those homeless youth who received a residential plot (200 m²) in 2007 EC. The household lives by farming. He does not have his own farm land and he is sharecropping-in one and a half timad since 2006 EC. Since five years he has also involved in trading sheep, goats and cattle. He describes his household's economic status as middle. He dropped out from school at grade 9 and has not returned to school since then. He migrated to Saudi in 2002 EC and he was deported in 2005 EC. He has a plan to join school again.

He never joined an organized youth group. The support he got from government is his residential plot and the safety net Public Works. In the past one year, he got a harvest from his farm that fed his household for about 6 months, and he got 6 months PSNP PWs support. He also got 3,000 *Birr* from his livestock trade and he used this income for clothes and other expenses of the household. He hates the drought that affects his farming activities. In good seasons, he gets a good production and he is happy with his efforts.

When he migrated to Saudi, it was his own decision; he got the 3,000 *Birr* needed for his journey from his family. He migrated with 16 other youth from the *kebele*. He was hosted by his uncle and his future father-in-law as his wife was his fiancée at that time. He started construction daily labour with them. He got 100 Riyal per day for two years. His family had a 36,000 *Birr* debt for a loan they took as package for pond construction. He paid this debt, and on top of this he brought around 40,000 *Birr* cash when he returned back home. Out of this money, he spent 37,000 *Birr* and bought gold and clothes for his wife as wedding gift/present. With the remaining amount and support from his family, he organized a wedding ceremony and got married. He is planning to migrate to Saudi again as there is no employment opportunity and government support to the youth in this *kebele*.

In addition to his farming and livestock trading he is working collecting stones and building fences. He likes listening to music. He is not active politically and religiously. He is a member of the youth association and youth league, but he does nothing else than paying the membership fees. He spends his leisure time with his friends, playing billiards and drinking alcohol. He has only male friends. He plays with his wife and children when he stays at home.

Looking to the future, he plans to migrate to Saudi Arabia again and wants to stay for three years. He does not hope to get his own farm land in the near future and he thinks about continuing trading.

Teenager 17-19, middle wealth

He is 17. He lives with his two parents, a 13-year old sister and a 10-year old brother. His household lives by farming and running a merchandise shop. They have one timad of land. He considers his household as a middle-income one. He dropped out of school at grade 5 in 2007 EC due to illness and did not return. He has never taken training.

He supports his household by farming and the revenue from his shop. He did not get any support from a private individual, government or an NGO. He got about 8,600 *Birr* as profit from his shop over the past one year and used it for the expansion of his shop. If he could get a shop keeper for his shop he might continue his education, but it is difficult to find someone. He quite likes his work. He has never migrated, and he is not interested in migrating anywhere in future.

He spends most of his time in his shop. He spends the rest of his time with his household members. He likes music. He is not very active religiously. He is not involved in politics and sports and he is not a member of the youth association. He discusses with his friends as they come to his shop. He does not have female friends or a girlfriend.

Looking to the future, he plans to settle in the community, expand his shop in the *kebele* and continue his education. He thinks it will be very difficult to get land either from his household or from the *kebele*. He does not plan to marry soon as he wants to expand his shop first. He wants to marry as per his family's choice, he has not decided when, but he would like to have four children. His role model is Hagos Tikue (the successful young businessman), who is also his god-father. He chose him as role model as he has improved his life with only his own efforts starting from his childhood. His plan is to expand his shop, improve his livelihood then continue with school. His worry is related to his shop business: the number of shops in the *kebele* is increasing, the competition may get tough.

Young man, 20-25, middle-wealth

He is 24. He married in 2009 EC and he has one child of one year and two months. He lives with his wife, and his son lives with his parents. His household's livelihood depends on selling alcohol and soft drinks and income from a barber shop. He and his wife live in a rented house. He considers his household as middle-wealth. He dropped-out from school in 2003 EC after completing grade 8, because of poverty. In the last one year, he worked for his household in his two businesses and did not work for anyone else. He never got any livelihood support from the government, an NGO or a private individual. Last year, his household earned roughly 12,000 *Birr* from both activities.

He migrated to Saudi in 2008 EC and returned after a year in 2009 EC, taking this decision by himself and getting the money for his travel (25,000 *Birr*) from his parents. He migrated with many other youth from the *kebele*. He knew relatives and other people from the *kebele* who were living in Saudi Arabia. When he arrived he started living and working as a daily labour construction worker with his cousin and two others. He was paid 120 Riyal per day for about 10 months. After some months he sent around 30,000 *Birr* and repaid the money he took from his parents. He used to transfer money and his parents saved the money in the bank in his own saving account. He used the money he saved at the bank and the cash he brought back to buy bride presents, arrange his wedding ceremony, buy the barber shop equipment and home appliances, and start the drink house business. He does not plan to migrate again but he wants to stay with his wife in the community.

He spends most of his time in the barber shop and helping his wife in the drink house. When he has spare time, he spends it with his wife discussing about their businesses and talking. He likes listening to music. He is active in religious activities but not in politics. He is member of the youth association, but he has nothing to do with it. He has only male friends and he meets them in his working place.

Looking to the future, he plans to stay in the community and get land through the system of reallocation to landless and homeless youth. But if he is not able to get land within the next two years, he will go to Atsbi town to do his businesses there.

Young man 25-30, rich

He is 29. He married in 2005 EC and has two children. He lives with his wife and two children in the *kebele* centre in his own house, where he has a shop. Their income depends on the shop, farming and fattening. He has one timad farm land of his own, and he rents-in two timad. He also buys, fattens and sells oxen. He considers his household as one of the better-off/rich households compared with other *kebele* residents. He completed grade 8 and dropped out after taking the grade 8 national exams in 2000 EC; he did not return to school and did not attend any training programme.

In the past one year he was busy with the shop, farming and fattening activities and he did not work for anyone else. He did not involve in any youth co-operative or association, and he did not get any livelihood support from the government, from NGOs or any private individual. He earned about 20,000 *Birr* from all his activities in the last year, and he used this income to expand his shop and cover household expenses. He has never migrated for work, and he has no plan to migrate in future.

In this leisure time he plays and enjoys with his friends or his household members. He usually listens to music while keeping his shop and he likes it. He is active in his religion, visiting the church for the holidays and attending religious programmes. He is party member but not an active member. He does not do any sports. He belongs to both the youth association and the youth league.

Looking to the future, he plans to live in the community for some more years, but after some years he may move to Dera or Atsbi towns to expand his business activities.

Perspectives on young people's economic experiences

This section outlines their perspectives on young people's economic experiences but also the views of other community respondents. The box below first briefly recalls who the twelve people interviewed in depth are, focusing on their economic profile.

Box 37. Twelve young people in Harresaw

F, 18, poor, dependent, household getting only EFA, selling *kollo*, household's land rented out to repay government loan; she wants to migrate, might stay in Harresaw if she gets land.

F, 20, poor, married (6 years ago), 2 small kids, landless, supported by parents and in-laws; husband farms rented-in and parents' land; she wants to stay in Harresaw and engage in trading, shop.

F, 28, poor, married (15 years ago), 3 children; household lives from PSNP and husband migration to Afar; he tried/failed in Saudi; she grows vegetables, wants to get farmland and stay in Harresaw.

F, 18, MW, dependent, tried college alongside working in Mekelle (4 months) which did not work for her; she wants to try again, then get a job and live in town.

F, 23, MW, dependent, disabled, unemployed level 4 graduate from Wukro Agriculture College, wants a job in town.

F, 27, MW, pregnant, got residential plot and farmland by re-(allocation), women league leader, 'second wife', wants to stay in Harresaw and become 'famous woman politician'.

M, 17, poor, dependent, two sheep, tried migration to Afar but didn't like it; wants to stay in Harresaw, inherit his grand-mother's land, and open shoe shining business.

M, 25, poor, married, one daughter, household lives from daily labour in Harresaw and Afar; also farms land of his mother; he plans to stay in Harresaw and hopes to get land/plot.

M, 27, poor, married, two children, landless but sharecropping-in, residential plot, trades livestock; migrated 3 years, paid a big parents' loan (36,000 Birr), brought 40,000 Birr to marry, plans to migrate again because no opportunity, pays YA fees just hoping to get land.

M, 17, MW, dependent, runs own shop, wants to stay in Harresaw and expand shop, though worried by competition.

M, 24, MW, married, one small kid, drink house (alcohol) and barber shop, rented house; migrated for one year, repaid money to parents (25,000 Birr) and with cash (30,000 Birr), married & started his business; wants to stay in Harresaw if he gets land, if not move to Atsbi for business there.

M, 29, rich, married, 2 children, shop, fattening, own land + rents-in, might move to Atsbi/Dera in a few years to expand his business there.

Perceptions of the economy

On a walk in one of the remoter rural areas of the *kebele*, a group of young men greeted us with these words:

"Those whom you see here are the cursed ones; the blessed ones are all away".

This illustrates one end of the range of views that young people expressed on the economy in Harresaw. On the whole, none of the younger respondents had a very optimistic assessment, and the perspective of the *kebele* youth affairs' leader is a relatively typical one. He is a 30-year old man, landless and living of daily labour, with a Saudi migration experience in 2010-2012 GC. In his views, there are resources in Harresaw and they could act as a springboard, but they are not many, and whatever can be done at *kebele* and *wereda* level will never be sufficient. He explained:

"The lack of opportunities, and to start with, the fact that most young people are landless (means that) the only activities that are available are hand-to-mouth like daily labour. There are no jobs locally and they are mostly dropouts so not educated enough to get access to jobs in the civil service or that demand some qualifications. Migration then appears as the only option. In fact it has become so common among those under 40 that it's no longer considered as a problem. Almost everyone under 40 has migrated or will migrate or will migrate again. If you are young, you have to move around to get a source of income and support your family."

Among the twelve young people introduced in the box above, there was no single majority for one or another view on how the local economy as a whole had changed in the past three years. Five of them, found in the three age groups (18-19, 20-24 and 25-29), of whom three young women and two young men, three of them poorer and two richer, thought that the local economy and/or livelihoods had been **worsening** due to drought, landlessness and unemployment. Another young woman (18, middle-wealth, tried college studies alongside work in Mekelle) was of the view that there was no change and she alluded to the fact that this could not improve as it is a matter of imbalance between population and resources.

For another three respondents (one young woman and two young men) there **was a little bit of change but not as needed**. The young woman (27, middle-wealth) was confident that if the

government help all young people, “*the community will be economically independent in five years of time*”. Two among the poorer respondents thought that the community is better-off than three years ago because of people’s hard work (20-year old poor young woman) or because most people are engaged in additional income-generating activities (17-year old poor young man). The 27-year old poor young man, Saudi returnee and planning to migrate again, said the community is a little bit better-off (he noted that for instance, five years ago most *kebele* residents had bad debts and this has reduced), but there is no opportunity for young people of his age except migration: no land, no jobs at all in the *kebele*.

To support their views on the trajectory of the local economy, four of the young people thought that there are no options locally, generally or for the young people. Three of the four were in the youngest age group (18-year old poor and middle-wealth young women; 17-year middle-wealth young man). The fourth one is the 27-year old poor young man wanting to migrate again to Saudi. The 18-year old middle-wealth young woman, with her experience of trying to study alongside work in Mekelle, said

“I like nothing about the community because there is no opportunity for young people to stay here. I dislike that the only opportunity for young girls to stay in the community is to be a farmer’s wife. There is no prospect for a good life and improvement if I and my husband were farmers, due to drought.”

Seven others, including some who think that overall the economy did not improve, noted as a positive development the **wider range of non-farming activities** undertaken by community people (trading, business, daily labour, poultry, fattening, and migration were all mentioned). Three of them explicitly linked non-farm activities to economical improvements either for the community as a whole (17-year old poor young man) or for the households who engaged in these activities (middle wealth young women, 23 and 27). And for three young women (20 poor, 28 poor and 27 middle-wealth), this expanded range of opportunities extends to young women as well. The same three young women talked about ‘hard work’ or an improved work culture in the community.

Several of the respondents in various parts of the interviews highlighted the differences in opportunities and options between young people from richer and poorer backgrounds (with regard to education, work, establishing an independent livelihood and marry). This is further discussed in the Economic inequality section above, see [p.173](#) and [p.174](#).

Access to land

When asked to talk about access to land all of the young people understood it as access to **farmland of their own**. Four out of the six young women said that some young women of their age wish to marry a young man with his own land (as a ‘certainty of at least some income’ etc.). Meanwhile young men all stressed that young people have little chance of getting land (fewer than 10% for one, 20% for another) as the land available is so scarce and the number of landless people ever increasing, and that therefore young men have no other option/prefer engaging in non-farm activities or they opt for migration.

That said, young women too recognized that finding a young man with his own land is difficult; the 18-year old poor young woman added she has friends who are willing to marry an older man who has land. And on the young men’s side, in spite of what they said about land availability, four of the six were still hoping to get farmland themselves, through inheritance for one and reallocation for the other three; among them, the 27-year old poor young man made clear that he pays the Youth Association fees just because he hopes to get farmland through the association (see [p.60](#), conditions to get a *kebele* ID and be included in the lottery list). The only two who did not mention hoping to get land are the richer teenager who has his own shop, and the richer 29-year old man who already has land of his own and does well enough to also rent-in more land.

The 18-year old poor young woman, wanting to highlight the high value that young people still put on land, cited the case of a girl she knows who has inherited land from her grand-mother. There is a young man who proposed her for marriage “*because she has farmland*”, but as she is under-18, the girls’ parents and the young man got scared of being stopped, so the parents of both sides organized a ‘promising ceremony’ as the young man “*did not want to lose the chance and that another man would marry her.*”

Other community respondents highlight landlessness of the younger generation as a very serious problem. Based on what they say about the three key problems of the *kebele*, most appear to ‘de facto’ have shifted their hope onto the government creating other (presumably not land-based) job opportunities, with some of them talking about industrialisation and factory jobs (see [p.90](#)). Several noted the gap between how much land is available anyway, and the number of landless youth. At the same time, as highlighted by the 18-year old poor young woman, there are cases of tension between the older and the younger generations or indeed among parents about ways to ‘find’ some farmland to give to young people, with parents in Maekel *kushet* divided over whether to reallocate grazing land as farmland to the youth of the *kushet* (see [p.222](#)).

Education, work prospects and what do young people actually do

Young women - The ‘older’ young women, 28 poor with no formal education and 27 better-off with grade 9, both thought that education opportunities are better for girls in their late teens than when they were late teens; the poor one added that young women tend to dropout later than in the past. But they and their peers all noted that most young women do dropout at some point, before or at the latest at grade 10; and poorer ones tend to dropout earlier. Moreover, as highlighted by the 23-year old disabled young woman level 4 graduate in agriculture, some of those who get enough points to continue may not manage due to poverty (see case [p.174](#)). Four of them said they knew one/a few young women who did join college or university, but two of them added that they also know one case of unemployed college graduate living at home with her parents; a third one said that she knows there are several of these, they just do not live in the community when they have more than grade 10 or grade 12.

So, they said, there is a **question** about the **value of being educated**. Two of them thought that most young women in Harresaw view education as of no use at all – including the 18-year old a bit better-off who had tried to study at college and work in Mekelle; the others highlighted that young women were divided on the question. There is a sense that **just having grade 10** does not help, it is not enough to get a job. The three better-off young women mentioned that in principle, **skill training** courses (e.g. in hairdressing) are useful but not in Harresaw where there is no opportunity for this kind of self-employment work.

As most young women are no longer in education, according to these six young women what they do include:

- **PSNP PWs** – which only the 18-year old better-off young woman did not mention; but, one of them said, young women tend to be dismissive of PSNP PWs, hard and not well paid. The others pointed that other options (see below) are better paid.
- **Daily labour** in Harresaw, in towns or in Afar – was also mentioned by five of them; and, they said, it is better than PSNP PWs as for instance locally, one can get 50-80 *Birr*/day depending on the season. Several added that anyway, young women with grade 10 or plus, and certainly those with college education, tend not to stay in Harresaw but move to towns and may get jobs like waitresses whilst waiting for a better job for the college graduates.
- **Trade** was mentioned by four of the young women. That too is well considered but as the two older ones said, it requires capital to start.
- The two 18-year old mentioned **migration to Saudi**, for the better-off said the poor one.
- **Marriage** is also a most common option, once a young woman has dropped out.

They all highlighted that once a young woman dropped out it is very rare that she gets back to school, as she will most likely marry and have children.

Young men – Three of them said that some (one) or most (two) of their peers think education is useless. However, five of the six noted a sense that it can be useful/one has a better chance to get a formal job with good performance in order to get at least a diploma/college/university education; the two older ones (poor 27 and rich 29) specifically mentioned engineering or doctor as best paid. Among the younger ones, the 17-year old middle-wealth with his own shop thought that those with more than grade 10 have a better chance of getting a formal job and in his views, driving is the best job and well paid. Like for young women, once young men drop out, they tend not to go back to school later on.

All of them also noted that there were many recent grade 10, grade 12 and even college graduates from Harresaw who are unemployed/cannot find jobs, so this in turn prompts others to dropout. Among the young people with some education, some are **helping their** parents but they are few (24, middle-wealth); some are **migrating to Afar** (17 and 24, middle wealth); most either **do not work**, or **migrate to Saudi**, or migrate, get back and don't work and spend their time **drinking and gambling** (17 and 24 middle wealth; all poor ones). The 17-year old poor young man explained:

“Some students drop out from school because of poverty and others, to migrate. Some think and say that education is useless as they see those who completed their education but are unemployed. Young men of his age (under 18) who are no longer at school cannot form a group and get land and credit from government. Most go to Saudi and get employed as goat or camel shepherds. There are a lot of young people in Harresaw who completed grade 10, grade 12 and even college graduates but they are unemployed. They do not do anything different than the uneducated youth, playing billiard, drinking alcohol and gambling.”

Only one young woman and one young man spontaneously mentioned the youth groups as a work option for those who are no longer at school: the 23-year old agricultural college graduate young woman, who knew about the stone mining groups, and the 17-year old poor young man who said that the young people under 18 do not have access to this option.

Several **adult respondents** highlighted that young people in Harresaw are generally **losing interest in education** especially after failing at the grade 10 exams, but also they drop out earlier as they are discouraged by the lack of job opportunities, land scarcity and drought in Harresaw, and they move elsewhere looking for opportunities.

However, a knowledgeable young woman and young man both stressed the **value of education** to get a chance even when moving out of the community. For the young woman, having at least grade 10 education is very important to get any work anywhere to get an income. She also thought that education is good to manage one's income, to calculate profits and losses in trading activities and to use agricultural technologies. For the young man, educated youth have a better chance too and certainly, education is a must for any government job. They both stressed that uneducated youth have no choice but to stay in the community and be dependent on their parents; although the young man also said that these days, both educated and uneducated people migrate to Saudi, even teachers and other civil servants.

At the same time, there were sometimes very large gaps between what a young person at school may hope and the reality, as in the case of a 23-year old young woman, grade 6 dropout, married with two children, and whose household depends on PSNP, local daily labour, her husband's work in Afar. When she was a student, she said, she wanted to be pilot; she changed her idea after dropping out. Now she would like to be a big trader in a city, but she needs capital to start a business.

As seen above, the young women who talked **skill training** considered it as leading to **unpractical** options (like modern hair dressing) in a community like Harresaw. The experiences of two young women who engaged in hair dressing might have discouraged them: one of them closed shop and

migrated to Saudi and the other, a Saudi returnee, feared to expand her business beyond 'modern hair braiding' for which there was not much demand as she thought she would be asked to get a license and pay a lot of taxes (see p.137). Among adults, the WA leader was feeling optimistic with the opening of the TVET in Atsbi but her optimism was not shared by the head teacher of Harresaw school (see p.142).

The knowledgeable young woman added that **unemployment** is widespread in Harresaw; maybe just one in eight young people might have work. Young men have easier to migrate to Afar, but it is more difficult for young women, so they stay with their parents with no job, or they marry. A few engage in PSNP PWs or petty trade, but most are economically dependent on their parents or their husband. In her views, the impact of unemployment is almost the same for young men and women in the *kebele*. Unemployment is indeed one of the most often cited aspects among the concerns expressed by the many respondents who considered that the future Harresaw's youth is one of three topmost key problems of the community.

Migration

As highlighted in the *Migration* chapter, migration is an important component of the livelihood portfolios in Harresaw, and most of the Harresaw migrants are from the younger generations (under 40). The main points arising from this chapter include how (illegal) migration to Saudi, by far the most frequently mentioned, is a big preoccupation; the drastic change in the balance of risks vs potential benefits for those migrating to Saudi; the rise in the number of young women migrating to Saudi; the various forms of social disruption arising from the continuous flow out and back in the community as migrants get deported, come back then go again, and/or others go; and, especially for people involved in providing education, how migration to Saudi competes with education and how the community is losing its brightest students on deadly journeys. Also, as the journey is a lot more expensive, poorer young people push their households into risky loan-taking strategies such as de facto mortgaging their farmland for as long as they do not repay the loan, which when anything bad happens, leaves the household in severe economic trouble in addition to the emotional distress.

Among the twelve young women and men introduced above, several had in mind to move to towns themselves – the 18-year and 23-year old better-off young women, because they wanted a government job and live in town; the 24 and 29-year old middle-wealth/rich young men to expand their business activities, at least if he does not get farmland for the 24-year old one. Only two of the twelve said they wanted to migrate to Saudi: the 18-year old poor young woman, who sees this as the only way she could help her poor parents and wants to convince them to rent-out their farmland for longer so she can get the loan she needs; and the 27-year old poor young man, who migrated in the past and did well enough to repay a big outstanding debt of his parents and marry, and is frustrated by the lack of any other option for young people like him. The 25-year old poor man was anyway already a regular migrant to Afar.

Talking about the perspectives of young people of their age on their migration, five young women noted that migration is more common for young women than in the past, and for three of them it is specifically migration to Saudi which increases. The causes are poverty, the worsening situation of the community, drought, lack of job opportunities, and an increasing number of failure at grade 10. Not all young women migrate to Saudi, many do migrate to Afar or to towns and in fact, said the 20-year old poor young woman, those migrating to towns or Afar are more numerous than this migrating to Saudi. On **migration to Saudi**, they all noted that there is a **mix of those who succeed** (bring cash, send remittances, get land/house on return) and **others who do not**; the 18-year old middle-wealth young woman who tried to study and work in Mekelle thought that the cases of success are fewer than failures; but, the 20-year old poor young woman said, generally young women are more successful than young men.

The 18-year old middle-wealth young woman highlighted that even poor young women who dropped out from school because they did not afford the costs, would borrow to migrate – but not

to continue at school. That, she said, is because *“they think that they will not be able to repay it if they do not get a job after they complete their education. They hope that they will repay it rapidly after migrating to Saudi and working there as they look at the few young women who migrated and were successful. They do not want to look at those who are not successful and lost their money and life due to illegal migration. Some of these young women who were in Saudi told us that they suffered a lot on the journey, even some of them were raped by the brokers and other men on their way. Yet, they still plan to migrate illegally again. When I ask them why they reply that there is no job opportunity here, but they might be lucky this time, even though they suffered so much previously. They say ‘to try is either to win or to lose!’”*.

Young men similarly highlighted how migration had become so common and gave the same kind of reasons as young women, with the 27-year old poor young man, Saudi returnee and wanting to migrate again, bitterly explaining that *“young people migrate because they lost hope in the government. There has been no effort done by the kebele and wereda to solve problems and address the reasons why youth are migrating.”*

Establishing an independent livelihood

Before turning to the views of the twelve young people introduced above, it is useful to note the **wide range of aspirations** that seemed to coexist among the young people of the community, with regard to what it takes to establish an independent livelihood. At one end is one of the two shoe shiners, 24-year old, grade 9 dropout because of illness, married, and content with the 100-150 Birr/day he is making; he saves 200 Birr/week in an *equub* to be able to have his own shop, engage in poultry and fatten sheep. At the other end, is the young woman (in her 20s) whose husband recently migrated to Saudi and who lives with her in-laws, who explains:

“There are two things we want to accumulate money for, before he comes back: building a house and getting enough to rent land so we can live from it and continue to rent it. For a house in the kebele we would need approx. 100,000 Birr, and approx. 300,000 Birr for a house in Dera or Atsbi. To rent-in enough land we would need 10,000 Birr. If all goes well, he might be able to collect this amount of money (with the house in the kebele in 6-7 years. These days it’s less easy than before, and there is a lot of insecurity, so it might take longer. But it’s the only option. By living here we earn nothing, so it’s better to try this way.”

The whole issue of establishing an independent livelihood also appears to be **strongly gender-patterned**. Of note in this respect, the Research Officers explained that nobody could identify someone who would qualify as an independent successful young woman – whereas several (and one especially) could be identified as independent successful young men. The perspectives of the twelve young people reveal one big difference in the way young women and young men think of **options to establish an independent livelihood**: for **young women, marriage** is ‘centre stage’.

As one knowledgeable young woman explained, *“most (young women) are economically dependent on their husband or their parents”*. Yet, the two young women in their late 20s had different views as to whether it is easier or more difficult than ten years ago for young men to establish an independent livelihood (a better bet for a young woman to marry). The poor one thought it is more difficult, and therefore more difficult for young women to find a husband (most young men are either landless or unemployed; only a few are established in farming or non-farming; most of those who have an independent livelihood are on migration). The middle-wealth one thought it is easier now, because young men can engage in migration, daily labour and other income generating activities and establish themselves independently before marriage whereas *“previously, they had to get land in order to be involved in farming, and to get married”*.

A younger one, 18, middle-wealth and with the experience of trying to study alongside work in Mekelle, seemed uncertain and explained:

“There are some young women who are dependent on their husbands’ parents after marriage for a short time and others, for a longer period of time, depending on their husband’s livelihood situation; some husbands have enough independent livelihood while others take long to establish their own independent livelihood so that they keep their wives for long with their parents.”

Also in relation to marriage as a key element in women’s ways to reach an ‘independent livelihood’, three of the young women (the two youngest ones, poor and middle-wealth 18; and the poor 23-year old) mentioned young women, usually divorcees living in the centre of the *kebele*, who establish themselves as second wife of men officially married elsewhere, or selling *tella* and beer and called ‘prostitutes’ and who will not be proposed for marriage by anyone. The 18-year old poor young woman said that they live from daily labour or petty trade and whatever support they get from their unofficial husband, but the 23-year old middle-wealth young woman seemed to say that they most often do not get much support at all.

About marriage, as noted earlier young women’s responses suggest that young men with land are still valued: for the 18 and 28 poor young women, some of their friends, or even many for the 27 middle-wealth one, want to marry someone with land. However, for the same three young women (two in their late 20s, one under 20), the ideal profile for a husband-to-be is someone who does not depend only on farming, or young men in trade or business or Saudi returnees with savings. The 23-year old middle wealth young woman outlines the same ideal profile, noting that because she and her friends are mostly grade 10 educated they do not want to be a farmer’s wife. For the other two young women, the young man’s occupation is less important than finding one who has an independent livelihood, which should not be a problem for a well-behaved young woman (20-year old poor) or finding someone who is a “*good person, hard-working and with no bad habits*” (18-year old middle-wealth).

Marriage is mentioned by all young women. For the two young women in their late 20s it is the first option that young women have in the community – ahead of education, PSNP PWs, daily labour, trade or business, migration to Afar and Saudi. Meanwhile, the 18 and 23-year old middle-wealth young women, both with post-secondary education experiences (even if cut short for the 18-year old), mention **education** in the first place. The 23-year old one explains that most of her friends want to get educated then get a job, but their second option is **migration**.

Against these aspirations, the picture of the reality emerging from the young women’s responses is that a) very few young women from Harresaw get educated then get formal jobs e.g. in government, and a very few others get employed in business centres or beauty salons after a short training – they live outside of the community; b) some young women establish themselves through migrating for work and saving to invest on return; c) **most** are married, and most are **married to farmers**, then engaging in PSNP PWs, daily labour, trade, shops, poultry or other livestock production with their husband and/or to support the household.

From the responses of the **young men** it appears that farming is still considered as an option, but!... They all mentioned, except the 17-year old poor young man, that one of the options for young men to set up an independent livelihood is to **get land**; but all immediately added that this is (very) **unlikely for most** young men, hence: no/very few of their friends want to be farmers for the poor and middle-wealth 17-year old and for the 27-year old poor young men. The 24-year old middle-wealth young man mentioned the possibility of farming on rented-in/sharecropped land, but fewer than 20% of his friends want to be farmers. For the other two, most of their friends, considering the lack of land, ‘prefer’ other options.

The other most mentioned option is **migration**, which the 18-year old poor says is what most of his friends want to do; for the 27-year old poor young man, there is no better option for young men in the community to establish themselves. The 17 and 24-year old middle-wealth young men both said that most of their friends want to migrate or engage in trade. For the 17-year old poor young man,

most of his friends want to live in town, and only a few want to stay in Harresaw and establish themselves as trader in the community. The other options that young men mentioned are 'non-farm' activities including poultry, fattening, trading. The 29-year old richer young man stressed that opportunities are very limited, most successful young men owe their success exclusively to their own efforts. Only one young man, the 27-year old poor man, mentioned the organized youth groups and said none of them had started work.

To support the data in this section, the *Migration* chapter further documents how, in a context in which young people struggle to establish an independent livelihood, migration to Saudi remains a major 'option' in spite of the higher risks and lower returns than a few years ago. Meanwhile, in the *Social protection* chapter we note the possible emergence of a trend running against the expectation of grown-up children supporting their elderly parents, whereby the parental generation has to assist their children's households more and/or longer than in the past given the difficulties they face in establishing an independent livelihood (see p.192).

Perspectives on other youth transition experiences

This section focuses on a number of other, non-livelihood related, aspects of how young people in Harresaw transition to adulthood. It outlines their perspectives on 'women's issues', marriage and other women-men relations (rape and abduction, harassment, sexual relations, premarital pregnancy, marriage etc.), and life in the community – in general and in relation to leisure, religion, relations with the government and politics. The conversations with the young women covered topics that were not addressed with young men, such as female circumcision, menstruation, rape and abduction, harassment by men; and in general, young women were more loquacious on all topics covered in this section. The section also draws on interviews of other young people; and the perspectives of adult community respondents is also given, wherever relevant.

Girls' transition to womanhood

All six young women said female **circumcision** is not practised in Harresaw. One of them (20, poor) was surprised to hear about the practice. The oldest of the six (28, poor) heard about it but it was 'before her time'.

With regard to **menstruation**, all mentioned that the school is providing education and advice, or that this was being done when the young woman was at school. Only two mentioned that the school is also providing sanitary towels and that girls menstruating at school can water and soap to wash: the 28-year old poor and the 18-year old middle-wealth young women. The 18-year old, who tried college education alongside work in Mekelle last year, must have completed grade 10 recently; she said she was provided with that support when she menstruated at school. Unlike her, the 23-year old middle-wealth, level 4 agriculture college graduate hence who must also have completed grade 10, said in her time this support was not given. So, it must have started relatively recently, and/or it may depend on the school.

The 28-year old poor young woman said she is not using sanitary towels because she cannot afford it; the 27-year old middle-wealth young woman says she has access to towels and uses them.

Four of the women (poor 18, 23 middle-wealth, 28 poor, 18 middle-wealth) mentioned that girls/ young women tend to menstruate late in the area (at 18 or 19, or after marrying). Two of them linked this to drought, the area being "uncomfortable", and not eating enough nutritious food.

Marriage and other women-men relations

This section talks about access to contraception, rape and abduction, sexual harassment, sexual relations out of wedlock, premarital pregnancy, abortion, and marriage – including early marriage and decision-making in marriage. Most of the data comes from interviews with the six young women. Young men were asked questions on premarital sexual relations and marriage but were usually brief on these issues.

Access to and use of contraception

The HEW explained that, **young women** these days are more open to discuss health issues and among others, family planning, use of contraception and abortion, than in the past – which she linked to the awareness creation work done since years in the community as well as the young women’s greater exposure to towns and to people coming from outside the community. However, this view is not fully supported by what the young women told.

The 20-year old poor young woman, married, indeed said that compared to the past when girls were afraid of visiting health facilities, it is “*relatively easy*” these days. Meanwhile, the other five highlighted that physically accessing contraceptives is not an issue, but girls who are single are still shy and do not go to the health post for this, because “*someone could see them and the information would be widely and rapidly shared to all community members*” (18 middle-wealth) and the community would consider them as ‘prostitute’ for having sexual relations before marriage (see below for more on the notion of ‘prostitute’). So, they have to go to Dera or Atsbi.

Four of the six **young men** stated that young men having sex with girlfriends are using condoms, and the two ‘older’ ones said they are available for free in all health institutions.

Risks for young women

All six **young women** said there is no risk of violence against young women in Harresaw. Three of them emphasised that rather than their safety, their parents worry about their future (18 poor, 18 middle, 23 middle). The 20-year old poor young woman living in the *kebele* centre highlighted the benefit of having electric light in the area: hence “*young men cannot do something bad to young women.*” The 27-year old middle-wealth women’s league leader and established as second wife of a man, noted that there is no risk because the security system is good, with the presence of the militia and a policeman; there is even a woman militia, greatly involved in solving women’s problems in relation to security. There are some cases of husbands beating their wife especially in the *kebele* centre, but the police and militia intervene and make them agree.

Rape and abduction

The six young women said **rape and abduction** are no longer an issue, because of their successful ‘eradication’ thanks to “*government’s efforts to arrest and penalise men doing these things*” (middle-wealth 27). Men are afraid of prison or they are “*forced to marry the girl they rape*” (poor 18). Three of them even mentioned that these days, it is the **other way round**, and “*it is women who rape men indirectly*” (poor 18):

“For instance, there is a young girl in the centre of the kebele who lives with her mother who sells tella. The man was passing by their home so that the mother invited him to have tella. He entered the home and the young girl was there. The mother closed the door over them and the young girl shouted that he raped her. The case was taken to court and the court decided that either he should marry her paying all the marriage payments and gifts or he would be imprisoned for six years. He refused to marry her as he had no intention at all on her and does not like her, and currently he is in prison. There was another case of a young female who called the police for a man who just touched her without raping her, last year in January. The court also took a similar decision. The young man preferred to marry her because he might also like her, and he married her buying all clothing and marriage gifts.”

The two other young women (poor 28 and middle-wealth 18) said girls do this when they want a young man to marry them, sometimes against their parents’ will: “*if their boyfriend is not accepted by their parents, they act as if they were raped by him so their parents must allow them to get married*” (18 middle-wealth).

One of the **young men**, 27 and poor, also noted this trend: “*some adolescent girls accuse young men saying they were raped and the boys are forced to marry unwillingly, rather than getting sentenced*”

for many years and being imprisoned". He links this to the fact that "boys' interest to marry early is decreasing whilst the girls want to marry before it's too late" and in turn, this is often due to boys finding it a problem to afford the clothes, gold and other gifts required to marry (see below).

Harassment

Harassment seemed to be partly related to the wider issue of this group of 'drifting' young men hanging around mostly in the centre of the *kebele* (see below). The 27-year old middle-wealth young woman, established as second wife and women's league leader, said there is no harassment. But the other five said there is. Their responses suggest that 'older', well-established married young women may be less likely to be affected; the 18-year old poor young woman seemed to put the blame on the side of the young women; the 18-year old middle-wealth poor young woman thought it is only uneducated young men who harass girls/young women; the 28-year old poor young woman linked this behaviour to drinking. Those of them who do face harassment do not tell anyone.

The women's responses are presented in the box below.

Box 38. Experiences of harassment in Harresaw

Poor 18 (single): "There is harassment and assault by young men in the community. But, they do it on young women who open the way by smiling and responding to their talks and calls. She never experienced this because she does not open a space to do that on her."

Poor 20 (married, living in *kebele* centre): "There is harassment and assault by young men in the community and she always faces it. Sometimes, she insults them back and sometimes she keeps silent and continues her way. She never told her husband because he could go and fight with them."

Poor 28 (married, living in *kebele* centre): "She has never been sexually harassed and assaulted because she is married and respected in the community. But, there are young men in the centre of the *kebele* who harass and assault girls drinking alcohol and it is just a fun for them."

Middle-wealth 18 (single, with Mekelle experience): "Young men in the community harass young girls who look good in appearance and who wear jeans; she experienced that. But, she never told anyone because she thinks that she can handle it by her own. Young men involved in harassment and assault are those illiterate ones. Educated young men do not do this."

Middle-wealth 23 (single, educated and unemployed): "There are some young men and boys who are involved in harassing and assaulting girls in the centre of the *kebele*. I also experienced some few days and I did not tell about it to any one because it was not that much offensive."

Sexual relations out of wedlock

The 27-year old middle-wealth young woman, second wife and women's league leader, draws a difference between three categories of women who have sexual relations out of wedlock:

- Young women/girls who have premarital sexual relations at a young age/without ever having been married: "There are also some few young women at school who get pregnant before legally marrying. Community members think of these girls as disrespectful and prostitute and it is not socially acceptable."
- Women, "young and adult, who (often after a divorce or widowhood) settle in the *kebele* centre and have sexual relations with more than one man. Most of them are selling *tella* and other traditional alcoholic drinks or beer. They are officially prostitute in the community. They have children from several men, and an unstable life".
- Women like her, who after divorce or widowhood set up an independent household as 'recognised' second wife and are in a somewhat stable relation with one man legally married to another woman. This is quite common in the community, she said. Most of them get economic support from their man even though he is legally married to someone else.

This third category seems to be more acceptable, and Research Officers confirmed that it is quite common. The 27-year old middle-wealth woman who is in this situation does get some support from her children's father; she is the women's league leader and considered as an influential woman. However, she adds "*I do not have good relations with my husband parents and relatives because they see me as the mistress of their son.*"

In contrast, **premarital sexual relations** attract general opprobrium. However, **young women** generally noted that there were girls having boyfriends and sexual relations with them. There is a sense that this is increasing, linked to school, exposure to towns, and migration.

Box 39. Premarital sex in Harresaw

"(There are) some young girls who are suspected of having boyfriends and sexual relations. Most of them are students and have exposure to towns. Currently, young girls at the age of 16 and 17 start having sex with young men whom they know at school and this is increasing over time in the community" (18-year old poor woman).

"Most (young women) start sexual relations at the age of 18 but there are also some few who start before this. It is increasing over time because those who were in Saudi or Afar come back in the community having had sexual relations with a boyfriend there and they marry when they are back, or even continue to have the relation without marrying" (23-year old middle-wealth).

The 27-year old middle-wealth young woman said something similar about *"girls who have boyfriends at school or on migration to Saudi or Afar and starting to have sexual relations at 16 or 17. God knows whether their boyfriend will marry them..."*

The 28-year old poor young woman with three children explained that it depends on the girl's background and those who have a strict family are less likely to have premarital sex; and those attending school more likely, as they have exposure to boys/young men who are at school too.

The 18-year old middle-wealth young woman agrees that this has nothing to do with parents' economic status, but with exposure to towns and education. So, girls from both poor and rich households may have sex with men before marriage. She too believes that this is increasing.

Young men were not very loquacious on premarital sexual relations. Two of them said young men usually do not start having sex before 18; the other two of those who commented on this said they start around 20. The 27-year old poor young man, married with his savings from Saudi, said that most of them start having sex with bar ladies in towns, but some with their girlfriends; and that nowadays, having a girlfriend is becoming common.

Premarital pregnancy

Only one young woman (18 middle-wealth) drew attention on the risk of *"being exposed to HIV/AIDs"* for the young women *"having sex with young men everywhere such as in holes or dried river beds"*. The **young women's** responses suggest that the much bigger issue in people's minds is about **premarital pregnancy**, which is a big social shame for both the girl and her parents. All young women reflected this in their comments or indeed their own 'take' on the issue - except the 23-year old middle-wealth young woman, college graduate still living with her parents, who just said she knew nothing about that and abortion.

Among the others, the 20-year old poor young woman thought that it is a disgrace to get pregnant before being married, explaining that *"premarital pregnancy is like prostitution and it is disrespectful of the community and especially one's parents."* Those who were less judgmental also noted that these girls are stigmatised by the community for whom premarital pregnancy is *"not acceptable"*. The 28-year old poor young woman, married and with three children, thought that premarital pregnancy is a lot more common than in the past as more girls have premarital sex and might not take contraceptives, by lack of awareness or because of being shy to ask.

As the young women explained, an unmarried young woman getting pregnant has three options: marrying the man or, if he is not willing and she and her parents decide to leave it at that, aborting if possible hiding it, or having the child and then, some raise her/him by themselves, others leave the child to their parents who raise her/him. The 18-year old middle-wealth young woman said that few young men are willing to marry the girl, most deny being the father. She knows one such case, and the young woman's family accused the young man before the court, but the court judged in his favour. She kept the child and the child is raised by her parents. She also narrated the case of a household in which two daughters faced premarital pregnancies, which illustrates the extent of shame associated with these situations:

"A young woman got pregnant when she was at school, from a boy she knew at school. She consulted and talked about it to her father and her father took her to Wukro private clinic and helped her to abort. Previously, her older sister also was pregnant out of marriage and gave birth to the child with her parents because the father of her child was not a good person to accept her and marry her. The child is raised by her parents. That man (father of the two girls) was dishonoured by his two daughters, and community members back bite him that both his daughters are prostitutes."

Abortion

There were different opinions among the **young women** as to whether the number of cases of abortion increased or decreased in the past few years. Some thought there are more abortions than in the past because of the rising trend in premarital sexual relations and pregnancies, and most young men are unwilling to marry the girl they got pregnant. That is the opinion of the 28-year old poor young woman. In contrast, the 20-year old poor young woman thought that abortion is decreasing, because it is *"more common, comparatively (with three-four years back) to have children out of marriage and raise them with the support of one's parents."*

In any instance, all agreed that the young women who abort do not do this in the community. They go to Atsbi, or Wukro or even Mekelle, usually with the help of their parents and sometimes, of the family of the young man, in an attempt to hide the situation. The women's league leader (27, middle-wealth) said that in private clinics in Wukro one can pay up to 1,200 Birr depending on the method of the abortion and the age of the pregnancy.

None of the **young men** who talked about premarital pregnancies mentioned abortion. The choice for the young woman, they said, is to marry the man, or have the baby and raise it with the support of her parents.

Marriage

As noted in the discussion above on young people's options to **set up an independent livelihood, marriage** is still the way to do so for most **young women** in Harresaw. The 23-year old middle-wealth young woman, college graduate and still single, said that her parents and her brothers advised her *"to look for a government job and have her own income before she gets married"*, but her experience shows that this is not an easy route (18 months after graduation she is still unemployed). For the older ones of the young women, there is no doubt that *"a woman's ultimate goal in the community is to get married, have children and lead an economically comfortable life"* (28-year old poor young woman).

There is a range of opinions as to whether **wealth status** matters or might even be determinant in marriage agreements or not. For some young women, young men or their parents seek rich young women, who have land, or who migrated to Saudi and have savings, or whose parents will be able to give a big dowry (see the case of the 18-year old poor young woman, p.174). Others disagreed with one or another element, saying for instance that parents usually want their son to marry a girl who did not leave Harresaw because they know her behaviour and she has not been exposed to the risks

faced by young women moving out; or that parents, or the young man, value more a young woman's character than her wealth.

One poor young woman (in an informal conversation, so not among the six young women introduced earlier) talked about her own marriage experience as follows:

"When my husband proposed me for marriage his parents opposed and advised him to marry another girl from a rich household rather than me, from a poor household and he would not get good dowry and marriage gifts from my parents. However, he told them he does not care about wealth what matters is a good behaviour."

She noted that poor parents may give a dowry of at most 400 or 500 *Birr*, while there are rich parents who provide marriage gifts up to 30-40,000 *Birr*. *"That is why parents prefer their sons to marry a girl from rich households."*

The **main trends in relation to marriage** were outlined by the two young women in their late 20s as follows. They agreed that compared to when they were late teens, young women are less likely to marry early and 'forced by parents', but it is also less easy to marry and establish one's household than at that time⁴⁴. As the 27-year old middle-wealth women's league leader explains:

"Teen girls used to be married under age, forced by their parents, and there was no problem of getting a spouse. However currently young girls and women cannot get a spouse easily because men too want a wife with an independent livelihood and from a better-off household to get dowry and other benefits through the marriage relationship. It is difficult for young men as well to get a wife and marry, because they have to buy gifts and jewellery for the bride. In the past they were not expected to spend too much money on jewellery and clothes for the bride, so that finding a wife and marrying was easy because parents were willing to give their daughters for marriage without her wanting to get married. Currently young girls have decision-making over whether to marry a man or not, they have to be willing, unlike in the past."

With regard to the **costs of marriage**, the 29-year old rich **young man** concurred that unlike in the past when finding a wife was easy and getting married not that difficult, now it is difficult because clothes, gold jewellery and other gifts have become very expensive. Already in 2005 EC (five years before the fieldwork), the 27-year old poor man spent all the cash he brought back (40,000 *Birr*) from his migration to Saudi on getting married, including 37,000 *Birr* for the gifts and he needed his parents' support for the feast.

Underage marriage – Two of the **young women** interviewed in-depth were married very early - The 28-year old poor one said it was thirteen years ago so she was 15; the 20-year old poor one said it was six years ago so she was 14. And this is not that long ago. However, five of the six young women said that underage marriage is no longer happening in the community, because when it is reported it is stopped. Girls whose parents want to marry underage and who do not want this can inform the police, teachers and other authorities; parents may be sent to prison or are penalised. Girls are increasingly aware of their rights as there is awareness creation by the HEW, and teachers and the women's association are 'controlling'.

Schools, in particular, appear to play a very important role: as two young women said in very similar terms, *"it is difficult especially for girls at school to be married under 18 because there is strict follow-up by the teachers, who will refer to the police or the kebele administration if parents want to force their daughter"* (women's league leader, poor 20).

⁴⁴ As noted earlier, the 28-year old poor woman believes that young men can more easily establish an independent livelihood, but that does not mean that they will easily get enough money to marry.

Three young women gave separately the same recent example of this determination, adding details to each other:

There was an under-18 girl and her parents decided to marry her in January. They had already prepared a wedding feast, but an uncle of the girl who lives in Atsbi informed the police and the marriage was cancelled. They lost their wedding feast for nothing. In the meantime, the young man married another girl who is 18.

The 18-year old middle-wealth young woman said there are still some cases, but rare. She knows a girl who terminated her education and got married at 16, she is now pregnant and about to give birth. This is *“because no one informed the police or other officials in the kebele. If someone was informing them about the underage marriage, it would be cancelled and parents would be penalized.*

Also, she added, *“young girls are not forced by their parents to get married under age like in the past. But, if they want to marry, they go to the kebele and get an ID card that shows they are above 18 so that they can get married without any problem. But, this is rare in the kebele. Most of the time people and relatives report to the police about young girls who get married under 18 age and marriages are cancelled”.*

There is also a sense that as getting married has become so expensive, apart from Saudi returnees who *“can at least cover the expenses of their wedding”* (knowledgeable young man), **young men** tend to marry later, which also affects young women. As seen above one young man thinks that this is the reason why some girls accuse boys of raping them, because *“they want to marry before it is too late”*. A knowledgeable young man says there is another trend, whereby parents of a girl who get worried that she is not married arrange a marriage ceremony in the absence of a groom, called *‘tush’*: in this ceremony, parents fulfil what the groom normally does for a marriage like buying gold. Since all the gifts normally required from the groom are given by her parents, any man who cannot cover the costs of marriage can marry the girl any time after the fake wedding ceremony.

Choice of partner – From the young women’s responses there seems to be changes as well with regard to the choice of marriage partner, with more decision-making left to the young woman. However, their descriptions also suggest that parents do still have a strong role. For the 20-year old poor young woman, *“parents also ask their children whether they would like to marry that man or that girl and if they do not want the marriage plan will be cancelled”*. The case of the 25-year old poor young man who married in 2008 EC that is, just two years before the fieldwork, to a girl chosen by his parents, indicates that arranged marriage is not yet a tradition of the past.

The 18-year old poor young woman also said that girls can refuse a marriage arranged by their parents. In particular, those who have a boyfriend can inform them of their decision to marry him; *“some parents allow this if the man is a good person. But there are also others who refuse.”* As seen above, sometimes these girls then pretend they were raped by the young man to force their parents to accept the marriage. The 18-year old poor young woman narrated another case of a girl whom she knows, who had a boyfriend but her parents refused her to marry him, thinking that *“she got him through prostitution and without their consent”*. The girl then migrated without informing them, calling them later on to ask them to send her money which they did, selling their ox.

Some of the young women indicated that migration also plays a role in the question of choice, pointing to a trend whereby young people get to know each other whilst on migration in Afar or Saudi and want to marry when they return (see [p.167](#) for instance).

The knowledgeable young woman introduced earlier said that young women have started having their own say and decide on their life more broadly, unlike their mothers. For instance, they decide to divorce from their husbands if they do not want to continue with the marriage, and they form their own household. They have also started objecting to their husband’s polygamy. In general, she said, there is greater awareness among young women of their rights and they have greater independence in their household too.

Setting up an independent household

From the interviews of the twelve young people, women and men, introduced earlier, there are two dimensions to this question of how young people set up an independent household. First, is it something that young people do without marrying; second, once married, how independent are the young couples.

Young women were unanimous to say that establishing an independent household without marrying is not socially acceptable for young women in Harresaw. A few young girls do so but they live elsewhere, to study, or work in towns e.g. as waitress in cafés, or on migration; the 18-year old middle-wealth young woman said, those who do so are considered as ‘not good girls’ in the community. The young women explained that the other women setting up an independent household without being married do so after divorce or widowhood. They fall in one of the two categories outlined earlier (see p.259): some have a relatively stable relationship with a man married elsewhere; others, usually living in the *kebele* centre, selling *tella* and other alcoholic drinks and having sex with multiple partners, are considered as prostitute.

The two ‘older’ young women, in their late 20s, said it is somewhat easier for young women to establish an independent household before/without marriage than when they were late teens, with the possibility of doing so for education or work and renting a room in town, and a slight change in the community’s attitude, but it is still not common. In contrast, they said, it is easier than in the past for young men to establish an independent household before/without marriage, because they do not have to wait until they get farmland and can engage in other income-generating activities.

With regard to the second aspect of the extent of independence of newly married couples, as discussed in the *Social protection* chapter (p.192), there may be an emerging trend whereby parental households have to support younger couples more and for longer than in the past. In the first instance, as noted by a group of knowledgeable men talking about general changes in the community, compounds are increasingly shared between parents and their children’s households:

“It is customary for family members to live in one compound having their own houses and livelihoods. But these days this is more frequent than before. This is because there are many young couples who do not have land for house construction so that many married couples live in their families’ compound by constructing house”.

The responses of the young women suggest that ideally, young couples do not depend on the husband’s parents. However, in reality, except for the 20-year old poor young woman who said they do not, the others noted that in some cases the young couple does depend on and lives with the husband’s parents. The 28-year old poor and 23-year old middle-wealth young women said that this is rare or it is not for a long time; but the 18-year old and 27-year old middle-wealth young women said it depends on how long it takes for the young man to establish an independent livelihood. Among the young men, the 25-year old poor one lives with his wife and daughter in a separate room but in the same compound as his mother; the 24-year old middle-wealth with two businesses lives in a rented room in the *kebele* centre with his wife, but his baby boy (one year and two months old) lives with his parents in a rural part of the *kebele*.

With regard to the relationships with their own parents, the young women all spontaneously talked of social rather than economic aspects. They all highlighted that married young women keep a very strong link with their parents, visiting them frequently for social events and *mehaber*, and as per the tradition in the community, delivering their first born at their parents’ house. However, the 18-year old middle-wealth said that some husbands do not like this and may not allow frequent visiting. The 27-year old middle-wealth woman explained that if parents live very far then the young woman will visit them at least once a year. The same two (18 and 27 middle-wealth) noted that as for the tradition of delivering at one’s parents’ house, most young women do this, but it also depends on the distance and parents’ economic status.

Life in the community

In general

The aspects that young people considered when they were asked what they think about life in the community in general include a) do they want to stay and live here or go away; b) how do they see life in the community, do they like it or not, what do they like/dislike in it.

In relation to the first question, going away or staying, things are complex because there are different ways of living whilst somehow 'staying in the community'. As explained in the **Migration** chapter, migration to Afar is almost like commuting for most of those who do this; migration to towns perhaps a little less so, and there is less data on this, but people doing this can still go and come back freely. Migration to Saudi is different, and many respondents of various profiles drew a contrast between young people who decided to 'stay' meaning, to settle and work hard and try to improve their life in the community, and those who are around part of the time and in Saudi at other times and for whom, in some cases, migration to Saudi has become almost like an obsession.

The shoe shiner who 'inherited' the business from the first ever shoe shiner in Harresaw, now successful young businessman, is an example of the first category. He explains:

"I never had the intention of migrating. I never thought of going elsewhere as I convinced myself that if you work hard in your place you can be successful. I never had that mentality. Returnees are spoiled. Some bring some money, but there is no change in their life. Some even come to me to borrow money. My parents never encouraged me to migrate but there is a lot of peer pressure. Many other young people tell me things like "why do you waste your time with these petty activities, why don't you migrate, look at so and so who became rich" etc. I am not interested. There are real cases of success, but they also had to endure a lot of hardships to get what they have, and it's very risky. So, some of the returnees are better-off, but others not. For me, I am advising other young people to take the opportunities that are being offered through the government. Some do, but many don't because they want a quick return to working. But life is not like that: you have to toil hard before getting something."

Meanwhile, the Research Officer met a young woman who, they said, could not think of anything else than returning, continuously comparing life in Saudi with life in Harresaw especially for women:

"Previously, it was not common for young women to migrate to Saudi like young men. It is since 2000 EC that it has become very common. Young women used to marry farmers here and they were leading a bad life, having children and serving their husbands as slaves. This is changing; young women are migrating to Saudi and improving their livelihood independently. I became aware of the hardship and sufferings of life for young women here after I saw so many things in Saudi. For instance, women here suffer too much during labour whilst women in Saudi give birth without any pain during labour because there is a medicine to eliminate it. I was very surprised when I saw this and felt pity for young women in my community. Young women here also cannot wear modern dressing and hair style, it is taboo to act like that in the community – this is backwardness."

A 28-year old young woman, married and whose husband is a repeat Saudi migrant, explains this in these words:

"In their mind, there is only Saudi. One day you can see this guy rearing chicken or something and the day after, he has gone. They hear "Saudi" in their ears all the time."

Between these two positions there is a range of mindset and attitudes. For instance, a young man, 18, just returned from Saudi and with part of his loan outstanding, who is opening a barber shop to keep himself busy but thinking of migrating again (see p.136), explained that ideally, he would prefer to live a good life here: *"if there was a way to make 30-50,000 Birr (in a year) with a local business,*

then I would not go again". But he cannot see how to make this happen. Another young man, 30, landless, married and three children, and with migration experience, also highlighted:

"The only thing we (people from this area) can sell is our labour. But here we get very little for it whereas in Saudi you can get more. So we go where we get something enabling a living. We don't want to stay away. When we are away, our thoughts are here. We love our land even if it doesn't give us much. We all belong here/together."

The head teacher of Harresaw school also thinks that *"migration is here because there is nothing people can hope for, locally. If this could change, the mindset would change too. People do not migrate because they want to move away. They migrate because they have to."* That is also what the knowledgeable young woman says: *"young people would prefer to stay in the community if there were job opportunities or good rainfall to be involved in agricultural labour works."* But for the knowledgeable young man – and this difference of opinion may reflect differences in socioeconomic backgrounds, but possibly also a gendered pattern in relation to the question of 'life in the community' - that is not quite the case:

"Last year, more than 600 youth from Harresaw migrated to Saudi and Afar seeking a job. Most of them do not consider at all the possibility of working and getting changed in Ethiopia. Fewer than 30% of the youth want to work and change their life in Ethiopia."

Turning to the views of the twelve young people interviewed in-depth on life in the community, as noted earlier only two want to migrate to Saudi, and a few consider migrating to towns (see p.254). Four of the comparatively younger ones (18 poor and middle-wealth girls and 17 middle-wealth boy, and 23 middle-wealth young woman, with college education) said they like nothing about life in Harresaw. For the two 18-year old women this is linked to the kind of life one can live: there is nothing else than being a farmer's wife (18 middle-wealth), and even that is not good because of the drought (18 poor). The 23-year old one dislikes that most people depend on government assistance. The 17-year old boy said he dislikes that young men are fighting, even stabbing each other, though this is now better with the intervention of the police.

Most others among young women and men started by highlighting that they like living in Harresaw because it is their birthplace, they like living with their family, relatives and friends; and they like the social life and peacefulness – which even some of those above, disliking 'everything', agreed with. But this more positive group also disliked the poverty, drought, slow or lack of change, landlessness, difficulties for young people to establish an independent livelihood. The 27-year old poor man, landless, Saudi returnee and planning to migrate again, added that he dislikes the partiality of *kebele* officials (presumably in relation to land reallocation). Some in this group were hopeful that things could change *"if there were good seasons"*.

Two of the young women had completely opposite views. On one side, the 20-year old poor young woman said there is nothing she dislikes, and that the community is getting better because of people's hard work; on the other, for the 18-year old middle-wealth girl, *"there is no prospect of a good life in Harresaw"* and she does not think that things could change considerably in future because there is an imbalance between population and resources.

Leisure

The interviews of the twelve young people reveal a very big difference in the ways in which young women and young men spend their 'spare' time. The knowledgeable young woman illustrated the difference saying that *"it is taboo for young women to go to town and have drinks and watch TV like young men"*, and this taboo seems to include these kinds of places in the *kebele* centre as well.

Young women all said they spend their leisure time having coffee or breakfast and chatting with their friends or neighbour women friends talking about their life and life in the community (joking about marriage and young men for the 18-year old poor one; talking about their life as married

women for those who are married), sometimes visiting relatives. They also mentioned *mehabers*, although the 18-year old poor young woman is not a member as she cannot afford the contribution and preparing the feast. Young women and women have separate *mehabers* from those of young men and men in the same way as they do not mix when sitting at church.

Their friends are generally young women like them, although the 18-year old poor woman said she has two friends who are different, one is rich and the other a grade 9 student. Four said they do not have male friends (18 poor, 28 poor, 18 middle-wealth and 23 middle-wealth) because it is “*taboo in the community*”; the 18-year old middle-wealth, coming back from a few months in Mekelle, added that she is “*mindful not to have male friends because the community is already gossiping a lot on girls coming back from town*”; the 23-year old middle-wealth said she had male friends when she was studying in Wukro, but no longer in Harresaw. Two young women said they have male friends: the 20-year old poor young woman has a grade 10 student male friend who is someone who grew up with her and to whom she asks advice; the 27-year old middle-wealth young woman, women’s league leader and established as second wife, said she has three male friends who grew up and studied with her and she even prefers spending time with them because they understand her better.

The young women’s interviews indicate that listening to music and watching music videos on their mobiles is a big thing for young women. Those with exposure to town or at school may listen more to ‘modern’ music and/or non-Tigrean music and they exchange among themselves. Young women also get information and news (Woyane and FM) listening to the radio on radios or mobiles.

In contrast with young men, young women have very little access to TVs – because most TVs are in the *kebele* centre in drink houses and they cannot go to drink houses and have drinks there. A few young women living in the *kebele* centre may get the chance at a neighbour’s home. Those who can watch TV, including young men, get news and information in this way as well as entertaining themselves watching dramas and music videos. Some of the young women did not know any specific TV channel (including the 20-year old poor young woman even though she is living in the *kebele* centre). The 18- and 28-year old middle-wealth young women said that people who have TVs also have satellite dishes and can therefore access channels other than the domestic ones. They mentioned EBS, JTV, Eritrean TV and Kana – although people in the community do not watch Kana, but the 18-year old middle-wealth one used to watch Kana when she was in Mekelle.

Young men were less talkative about their leisure time. Four of them said that they drink beer. For the three middle-wealth/rich ones (17, 24 and 29) it is occasional. The 27-year old poor young man said that he is playing billiard and drinking alcohol when socialising with his friends. They said they do not smoke. The 17-year old poor young man shepherding his sheep, whose only leisure is to spend time discussing and playing with his shepherd friends, illustrates a very different situation.

The young men seemed to be less ‘into’ music than the young women; the 17-year old poor boy said he does not have a radio or a mobile so cannot listen to music much even though he likes it.

‘Drifting’ young men

Four of the young women (18, 20 and 28 poor and 23 middle-wealth) and three of the young men (17 poor, 17 and 24 middle-wealth) commented on a group of young men spending their time drinking and getting drunk, playing billiard, gambling and smoking cigarettes in the *kebele* centre. They are the opposite of what is considered as ‘a good young man’, who is “*peaceful with all in the community, not drinking and not trouble-making, not talkative, working and supporting his household*” (according to the 28 poor young woman).

Community people do not respect them, and they are worried that they teach bad habits to other young men/teens (according to the 18 poor and 23 middle-wealth young woman). The 17-year old middle-wealth boy explains that as his parents worry that these young men would create him trouble when they are drunk and want to get cigarettes, they do not allow him to sell cigarettes. In the same way, as noted elsewhere, one young woman running a billiard place in the *kebele* centre is

not allowed by her parents to authorise gambling, which she says is not good for her business (see p.137). The 17-year old young man said his parents are also worried about peer pressure and that he would be encouraged to drink, but he said he rarely drinks beer.

These young men are mainly Saudi returnees (according to young women) or recent grade 10, grade 12 and even college graduates who do not have a job (according to young men). No young woman does this (according to the 18-year old poor young woman), but among young men it is getting more common (according to the 23-year old middle-wealth woman). According to the 28-year old poor young woman this is unlike when she was a teen; she puts this down to young men's frustration with the lack of possibilities for them to establish an independent livelihood.

As noted elsewhere in this report, this group of 'drifting' young men is indeed mentioned as a concern by several respondents with various profiles. Some of them, like the 28-year old poor young woman, express some empathy with the young men's frustrations. Others much less so, like these two quotes illustrate:

"My brother sold the house he got in lottery chance for 6,000 Birr two years ago in order to migrate to Saudi. He returned back robbed and beaten on his journey between Desie and Saudi. These days, he is just smoking cigarette and gambling calmly in the centre of the kebele with an earring on one of his ears (loti) like a woman" (laughing) - A very poor woman whose two oldest children, 14 and 16, are working as housemaid and shepherd respectively.

"These young men have no reason to disturb the community. They do this because they have bad habits that they adopt from outside the community. The only reason is that they get some amount of money working at Kunewa and in Saudi, and they spend it on drinking and gambling and disturbing by shouting at night. I do not feel pity for them because it is their problem not to use their money on working or income generating activities" - A woman in an informal conversation.

Among the adults interviewed, several, usually men, sounded annoyed with these young men who, they said, disturb the peace of the community. Some respondents also said, though not necessarily blaming them for this, that they overtly challenge the *kebele* leadership about issues such as the lack of consultation about the location of the sketch plan town and forcing farmers to take fertiliser. In one instance, a group of young people wanting to show their dissatisfaction and opposition threw stones at the door of a *kebele* council meeting.

Religion

According to the twelve young people, religion is present in the community's and most young people's life; but many people seem to not attend church more than for the annual holidays. The young people themselves are not particularly active, attending once or twice a year (for most young women) or at most once a week (for the 17 poor man, and the 25 poor man when he is at home but he does not go to church at all when he is in Afar, which is most of the time). One exception is the 23-year old middle-wealth young woman, who goes for prayer every morning because her parents' house is near St Mary's church.

Most of them noted that the community does not spend a lot of time in religious practice, although several also explained that older people and priests and deacons' wives spend more time than others; and/or young people are less interested than the older generations (three poor and 18 middle-wealth young women, two 17 and 24 middle-wealth young men). That said, *"no one in the community is not interested at all"* (18 poor young woman), except *"some young men (who) don't go at all, spending their time working or drinking"* (20 poor young woman).

Even the 23-year old middle-wealth young woman (with exposure to urban life during her college studies in Mekelle), for whom the community is *"quite active"*, recognised that for instance, fasting is less strictly adhered to than in towns because of people's physical activity (PSNP PWs, farming).

The 18-year old middle-wealth young woman, who also knows city life in Mekelle, agreed, noting that for instance *“in Mekelle young people go to Sunday school which is not common in rural areas”*.

The 27-year old middle-wealth young woman and several young men (17 and 25 poor, 24 and 29 middle-wealth/rich) explained that interest in religion decreased compared to ten years ago and/or is decreasing – in terms of number of people attending church very regularly and time that community members are spending on average in religious practices. The same young people or others highlighted other signs of evolution in people’s attitude vis-à-vis religion, including that

- Fewer young men go for religious studies (to become deacon or priest or to upgrade their religious knowledge) (17 poor and middle-wealth, 27 poor and 29 rich young men).
- Rules do not change but are less strictly enforced (*“getting weak”*) (17 middle-wealth and 27 poor young men; 18 middle-wealth and 28 poor and 27 middle-wealth young women). For instance, *“community people, especially young people, are eating eggs and meat even during the Easter fasting; robbery and stealing from church is increasing”* (27-year old middle-wealth young woman). One exception was mentioned by the 18-year old poor girl explaining that prostitution and premarital sex are more strongly condemned than in the past.

Several of the young people noted that even priests and deacons are migrating these days (poor and middle-wealth young women in their late 20s, 17- and 29-year old middle-wealth/rich young men), which they present as a sign of the overall decline in the community’s interest in religion. The 27-year old middle-wealth young woman is of the view that this also contributes to this decline as community members have less trust in these church people who come back from Saudi and start serving the church again. She added that these days some priests are even gambling or drinking, which was not familiar in the past.

The only dissonant voice is the knowledgeable young man, who said that young men do go to church and pray and highlighted that those in Saudi often contribute money to build churches and buy carpets and umbrellas for the churches.

None of the young people minded the role of the church in passing government messages. And almost all noted that whilst people in general, and also young people, do not spend a lot of time on religious practices, *mehabers* are very important in people’s life and it seems from their and other interviews, that most people in the community except the very poorest, spend quite a bit of time in *mehabers*, especially but not exclusively women. See [p.73](#).

The lead priest at St Rufael church indeed reckoned that both women and young people are less involved with the church than in the past *“due to being busy with their own business”*. But young people are more involved in *mehabers* than in the past, in his views.

New things and ideas coming to the community

Changes in lifestyles, and especially clothes and hairstyles, concerned the young generation more than adults. The use of new media, including TV watching, and especially using phones to listen to FM radio programmes, and smartphones and social medias for a few, were also more the feat of young people. There was a quite strong gender pattern: young women generally had less access to TVs and smartphones, though those with a phone were much into listening to music on FM radio programmes. Access to and use of these medias and the new clothing and hair styles were also linked to urban and migration influences, and wealth gaps were also visible.

In addition to their use for entertainment, a few young women and men mentioned TVs and radios as a vehicle for new ideas or information though this was a lot less prominent and quite limited (e.g. how to care for and feed their young children, information on people and things outside the community). Young men highlighted the usefulness of mobile phones with regard to migration (to ask money from family when abducted on the way, to alert family when sending remittances, to

share information with their peers who have migrated and are living outside of the *kebele*, in Saudi or elsewhere in Ethiopia etc.).

With regard to diet, the most striking change related to young people was the quite high level of consumption of beer and commercialised alcohol like areke, mainly by young men. Whilst those interviewed said either that they did not drink, or just when socialising with friends, as noted earlier in this report this trend was new, and worth noting. Several respondents also pointed that this degenerated at times, with young men getting drunk, fighting with each other, and disturbing the 'peace and security' of the community.

New things like electric oven etc. were more related to settlement than age – that is, they were found in households living in the *kebele* centre. However, a good number of these were young households, living there not least because they do not have farmland. Similarly, new economic activities such as the expansion of services and small businesses like the bakery were generally also the feat of young people, and similarly, one major reason for many (who could afford) to engage in these activities was that they did not have farmland, or not enough to make a living.

Relations with the government

Interviews and informal conversations with a number of people of various profiles suggest that there is a sense of **general disaffection** among the young people of Harresaw vis-à-vis the government, which extends to 'politics' (see next section); and several respondents, including adults, suggest that the government has itself to blame for this. The quotes below illustrate this perception:

- *"The government is not paying attention to rural youth. They do not have a strategy for providing jobs for the more educated youth, and yet, they want to convince them to not migrate, that this is risky etc. But they don't have any alternative to offer them, so why should the youth listen to them? If they cannot have anything that brings them hope here (tesfa) then they will continue to migrate. It's purely a government issue. They must resolve this migration issue, and they must pay attention to the rural youth"* (28-year old young woman, grade 10, married, husband repeat migrant to Saudi).
- *"The kebele has many plans, to develop as a small city etc. But there is no plan for the youth. We are the future of this country, but we don't know what our future will be. The issue of the youth must be addressed"* (Saudi returnee).
- *"Even without talking about migration youth participation is not really encouraged. There are lots of talks on the media, by government etc. but how could young people be attracted when even the position of kebele leader is not paid, whereas they already struggle to get a decent independent livelihood?"* (Former kebele leader whose son tried to migrate twice).

As the Research Officers could see for themselves, observing life in the *kebele* centre, young people 'vote with their feet': many left on new migration journeys (Saudi or Afar) at the start of the PSNP PWs and community voluntary labour campaign, because, people said, they do not want to participate to these communal activities. The knowledgeable young man explained that indeed, unlike in the past young people are now reluctant to participate in community free labour or in activities such as building the *kebele* offices. In contrast, the leader of a large *iddir* highlighted that young people contribute their labour, for instance mounting the tents, when there is a marriage or a funeral at one of the member's households.

The Research Officers could also observe, notably during the *kebele* level *gemgema* meetings, that young women knew little about anything that the *kebele* administration does or decides, except the few who have a position such as the 27-year old middle-wealth young woman who is women's league leader. Young men have opinions and know a lot about community issues, but not young women. This **difference between young women and young men** comes out in the interviews of the twelve young people.

In the first instance, whilst **young women** all said that the relation between government and young women is “*not good not bad*” (18 poor) or even “*good*” (18 middle-wealth, women’s league leader), five of the six **young men** said this relation is not good. Only the 17-year old poor young man said it is good, and that the government is trying to support the young people although he does not know anyone who benefitted from any of the interventions. Four of the other five laid the blame on the government side: empty promises of training, access to credit and jobs, then nothing in practice (25 and 27 poor, 24 middle-wealth), very limited efforts (29 rich). The 27-year old poor young man said the young people in Harresaw “*lost hope in government*” (which is why they migrate). One young man, the 17-year old middle-wealth, rather thought that the government is trying – for instance providing loans, but most young people drink the money away or use it to migrate.

The **young women** drew a distinction between unmarried dependent young women, who have very little to do with government except perhaps to get an ID card, and married young women, who engage more with government structures in relation to things like PSNP support for their household, payment of contributions etc. The ‘messages for young women’ that they report to have heard in the past few months are about: young people above 18 to work their share on PSNP PWs and the community free labour, even if they still live with their parents (18 poor); engaging in chicken production and use of improved stove (28 poor); and discouraging migration (18 middle-wealth).

The only one among the six young women who is involved beyond these practical considerations and occasional attendance to general meetings, is the women’s league leader. She also outlines a different kind of message that the government is giving to young women, about the importance for them to have an independent income so as to contribute to the development of their household and the community as a whole: “*women are the backbone of the community anyway*”. She thought that there is no change in women’s participation to the community’s affairs. The other woman in her late 20s, poor and “*not active in government activities*”, thought that participation in government activities and community’s affairs had decreased compared to when she was in her late teens.

The knowledgeable young woman is of the view that young women do want to participate but are discouraged by their parents or husband, and it is frowned upon more widely:

“Husbands feel bad when their wives are exposed outside home and participating in meetings and discussions in the community. In addition, community members do not have good attitude for women who have active participation in kebele meetings and any other political activity. They easily gossip: “what kind of wife is this?” Thus, young women themselves also feel shy to do that.”

On the **young men’s** side, they added that they themselves have little to do with the government, the youth association or the party (see below).

Politics

Again, the **young women** drew a distinction between unmarried and married young women in relation to politics. Unmarried young women do not join the party and have no political activity, they said; they also have no information on the benefits of party membership (18-year old poor and middle-wealth). Generally, anyway, there are only a few women who are “*actively involved in meetings, government activities and kebele leadership positions*” (18 middle-wealth). Most married young women are like the 20-year old poor young woman who said that like herself, many join (the party), but they do not know anything about politics; they do it to get access to things like sugar, oil and other goods for their household (at subsidized price at the cooperative shop), to which those who do not pay the party membership fees do not have access, according to her.

The 23-year old middle-wealth young woman is also not active politically. She said that young women may join the party to get access to an ID card and to government loans more easily, but they are less interested and fewer than young men; and anyway, the *kebele* administration is not

encouraging them, especially unmarried young women (she related this to difficulties for unmarried young women above 18 to get an ID card, see [p.90](#)). The women's league leader had this to say:

"Most unmarried young women do not join the ruling party because they do not understand about politics and they are dependent on their parents. Some young women, married or who set up an independent household, join the ruling party because they have more involvement in government activities and associations such as the women's association in order to get ID card and other services for the benefit of their household. Thus, in the course of this involvement, they understand about politics and reach the decision of whether to become party member or not. Party membership has its own benefits for community members such as accessing loans and inclusion in livelihood supports especially for young people."

The six **young men** were either not party members, or members and not active. The two 17-year old ones (poor and middle-wealth) said they knew nothing about it and politics.

Talking about young people in Harresaw in general, some of them said that among the many youth of the *kebele* only few join the party as it does not bring any benefit. The 25-year old poor young man added that *"previously, the party members were at least respected by the community. However, currently they are killing their times in meetings that do not bring any change. Because of this the old members have got bored and most are not participating actively, and the youths are less interested to join."* Others said many young people do join, to get more easily access to the benefits given to organized youth, but most do not want to be involved in politics.

At the same time, four of them said that in spite of their frustration young people are not interested by opposition party: *"the ruling party has better acceptance than the opposition parties among the young people of the kebele"* (rich late 20s); *"as most of the community people sacrificed their children for TPLF in the previous wars, no one is interested to join the opposition parties too. The youth want to see improvement of the ruling party and of the government rather than to be a member of other political parties"* (poor late 20s).

The women's league leader is the only one among the six young women who commented on political affiliation beyond the question of membership of the ruling party. In her views, generally young people in Harresaw are not interested by 'opposition politics'. But there are a few young men who, she said *"disturb peace by imposing some ideas of opposition politics to other community members and creating disagreement between the kebele and the community and among community members"* - referring to the issue of the location of the sketch plan town in the *kebele* and the allegation that opposition to the *kebele* leader's idea was prompted by 'the opposition' (see [Box 1](#)).

Her views, which we do not know whether they are shared more widely, have either been relayed to the *wereda* level or they emanate from some *wereda* officials: talking about the sketch plan town issue in Harresaw one *wereda* official indeed explained that Arena party members present in the community played a big role in fomenting conflict in the community using this issue.

Adult perspectives on young people

Young people's problems in general

As seen above, a large majority of respondents with varied profiles⁴⁵ expressed concerns about the future of Harresaw's young people as one of three topmost pressing issues faced by the *kebele*. They raised youth-related issues ranging from lack of jobs and landlessness to problems of youth

⁴⁵ Men, women, rich, poor, farmers, traders; young men and women more and less successful, and included in government interventions and not; very poor men and women, included in a government intervention and not included in any; male and female investors present in the community; and a few key *kebele* officials and civil servants. In total they were forty, with only four of them in official/civil servant positions.

behaviour; one young man pointed to the “*lack of empowering the youth*”. Creating jobs for young people was the single most often mentioned recommendation.

A number of other adult respondents were also asked to comment specifically on what they saw as the young people’s most pressing problems⁴⁶.

- All of them, women and men, mentioned **unemployment** and lack of job.
- All the women and three men linked unemployment to **migration**, as a big problem faced by young people considering the risks, the suffering and hardship and the many cases of death.
- Half of those respondents (with as many women as men among them) also highlighted **education**, explaining that there is better access to education, but young people lose interest or do not focus on school (because they want to migrate) or cannot continue due to financial constraints or fail at exams and therefore drop out at one or another stage.

“There is a lot of dropout from school at secondary level, most of the time it is the decision of the boys and girls themselves. Most of them at these ages do not have the motivation to continue after grade 10. Boys want to migrate and work, girls also want to marry after they fail at grade 10” (group of knowledgeable women).

- Almost all the men also highlighted the difficulties that young people faced to marry (because of the high costs involved) and hence, late **marriage**. This was not mentioned as directly by women – presumably because most of the financial burden is on the young men’s side; except by one who said it was a problem young women from poor households.
- **Landlessness** and **homelessness** were also mentioned, but less frequently than lack of jobs as a more general constraint faced by young people.

Those respondents either did not distinguish between young women and young men, or they explained that the problems were the same for young women and young men. However, some of the women implicitly highlighted the difference noted above that for young women, marriage is not only a social/family transition, but it is also a livelihood option among others:

“The problems facing young men are unemployment and landlessness. They are dropping out from school and migrating because there is no hope for them in kebele. So, they give up and migrate to Saudi even though they know they might die on the way. Young women face similar problems. They terminate school at grade 7, 8, 9 or 10 to get married because they have no hope of getting work after completing education. They are also migrating to work and support their parents. They are also landless, and their parents are unable to give them a plot of land because their land is too small to share. So, they get married to a man who has land or is rich in order to have better living status” (poor woman living in kebele centre).

Migration

As seen in the **Migration** chapter, there is a range of opinions about migration in general, and to Saudi in particular. Overall, many adult respondents are clear that the balance between risks/costs of all kinds and possible returns has changed a lot compared to five years ago or more. But the lack of alternatives means that many also do not totally dismiss it as an option for the young people of the community. And whereas there are cases of young people migrating without informing their

⁴⁶ Men and women with different wealth statuses; farmers, and ‘urban residents’ (in the kebele centre or with a house in Dera as opposed to living in the ‘rural parts’ of Harresaw). In Harresaw, many urban residents also farm, especially if they are of the adult generation. There was indeed no difference between responses given by the ‘farmers’ and the ‘urban residents’ with regard to problems faced by young people.

parents, financing the journey often requires the parents' support, even if they may give it reluctantly. See [p.147](#), [p.153](#), [p.157](#) and [p.161](#) for more on this dilemma.

But there is little doubt that even when they agree to finance the journey or endorse her/his decision, most parents with a child abroad or on the way are worried. Those with children still at school but reaching the critical age/education level and/or with the example of older siblings, do worry that they might decide to dropout and migrate, or fail at grade 10 exams and migrate considering the lack of other options. Among the respondents interviewed on young people's problems, almost all expressed one or another of these concerns except one rich man farmer, who has three children in Saudi of whom two have saved some substantial amounts of money and the third has recently joined them. But other parents expressed worry as these examples show:

She was in worry during the interview that her son had started his journey to Saudi and called her to send him 20,000 Birr for brokers. She could not afford that amount of money and she could not get someone who could provide her a loan. She said he migrated to Saudi because there is no one here who could support him; he dropped out at grade 9 and he was doing daily labour in Afar but then decided to migrate to Saudi. She also has a daughter, 17-year old, who failed at grade 10 and is just "there without having a job". She is always worried about her future life and fears that she might decide to migrate to Saudi as well.

His children have never been involved in any government youth intervention, and because of this his 18-year old son migrated to Saudi six months ago. His main worry about his children and their future, is that his other children might also migrate in the same way and face many problems.

As further outlined in the *Migration* chapter, besides the changed 'economic balance' associated with migration to Saudi, many adult respondents also highlighted serious social effects affecting young people in particular (see [p.164](#)). They talked about how some young people develop a 'migration mindset' which brings them to repeatedly migrate and how they become 'dis-adapted' to life in the community so that their frustration continues to build up and drives them into adopting the 'bad habits' outlined earlier in this chapter (gambling, smoking, drinking and getting drunk and disturbing and fighting amongst them, see [p.267](#) above about the 'drifting' young men).

"Young people (mainly young men but there also are young women now) who come back from Saudi are 'dis-adapted' from the local conditions. They don't relate easily with the young people who stayed. There's a huge gap between a young man who returns from Saudi, has seen so many things, sometimes has had a good life, or on the contrary terrible experiences, and a young woman who never left the community. Those who are back from Saudi are rootless. It's the same and even more problematic for young women who come back. Generally, they do no longer want to live and marry here" (focus group discussion of adult women on migration).

"These young people who return from Saudi, they shout and disturb the centre of the kebele and refuse to pay alcoholic drinks they consume and fight with bar tenders as they get drunk. They also fight with their parents and family members, breaking baking stoves of their mother" (knowledgeable women asked about peace and security in the community).

Others pointed to these odd new fashions that Saudi returnees bring to the community,

"Some youth want to show their modern thinking; mostly they are migrant returnees, especially from Saudi. They dress in unusual clothes and cut their hair in unique styles. Young women wear miniskirts and trousers. Young men wear trousers without belt and their buttocks are seen. This type of dressing is not usual in the area. They drink beer in addition to tella. Some youth from the kebele follows them. In addition, they hold and expose ideas which do not agree with the elders' political outlook. They do not listen to elders' advice" (group of knowledgeable men).



Saudi returnee dressed up

Young people's livelihoods

So, overall, these adult respondents appeared to share the young people's own assessment of their limited options with regard to establishing an independent livelihood. However, as noted in other chapters of this report, some other respondents talking about other topics did nonetheless mention as a positive development the increased involvement of young people generally, including young women, in 'non-farm' activities. Several also talked about the emergence of 'model non-farmers' and that these were generally young people (see [p.82](#) and [p.123](#)).

For yet other respondents, the main issue is the young people's 'wrong attitude' with regard to hard work and their wasting the little money they get instead of saving. Those holding these views may be young people themselves, like the young successful businessman explaining how he cannot find anyone to work for him at the bakery because young people from Harresaw are not interested in working and changing their life in Ethiopia, or his friend shoe shiner for whom success in life is built slowly and incrementally. Others are adults, like these respondents talking respectively about farming and irrigation, and non-farm opportunities:

"The main challenge preventing the community from benefitting from changes (in agricultural technologies etc.) is young people's biased attitude against staying in the kebele and involving in work here. They are not interested in working in their community and their plans for the future only focus on migrating to Saudi. They underestimate the jobs that are available in the community" (meaning, they do not value these jobs to their real worth).

"In the past few years, since three years or so, there are these young men involved in stone quarrying and they get 80 to 100 Birr per day, and just spend that smoking cigarettes and getting drunk even during the day..." (poor farmer's wife).

Most adult respondents, however, agreed that not enough is done by the government to support young people: create jobs, give them worthwhile opportunities etc.

"Government is doing something but not enough. There are good policies and programmes at the federal, regional level, but a big gap with implementation. For instance, for the packages, the policy says that loans can be given up to 30,000 Birr but in practice this is restricted to 10,000 Birr. In addition, the packages get delayed. So, the youth get frustrated as it's "too little too late"' (Kofi Anan, middle-wealth influential man).

This is further expanded in the section on [Youth policies and programmes](#) below.

Inter-generational relationships

From other chapters and sections above in this chapter, a number of factors were playing out to shape intergenerational relationships in Harresaw in early 2018. These include:

- The **concerns** expressed both at community level and by parents with regard to the **future** of the young people of Harresaw/their children, generally in terms of livelihood options and also in relation to migration, especially to Saudi;
- **Tensions**, in some instances, around decision-making about and financing of young people's **migration**, between the young people and their parents;
- The longer period during which, and/or new forms through which, **parental households** may have to **support their children** and their children's households – as they face greater difficulties than in the past to establish themselves independently;
- In the same vein, the **unusual household make-ups** that may arise from migration experiences of the young people/households, including a) grandchildren living with their grandparents not to support them, but to be raised by them as their parents or single mother is away on migration; b) young women, with or without young children, living with and depending on their in-laws whilst their husband is on migration;
- The 'clash' between the community's **social norms** surrounding young people's **sexual transition** to adulthood and the changes that seemed to emerge in young people's sexual activity – in particular, with regard to premarital sexual relations considered as 'prostitution', the shame and stigma associated with premarital pregnancies etc.;
- **Tensions** around the '**bad habits**' of some of the young people, young men especially.

Good relations - The twelve young people all started by saying that they have good relations with their parents, household members, relatives and the community generally, and that generally the young and older generations in Harresaw have a good relationship. The exception was the 27-year old middle-wealth young woman, established as second wife and who explained that she does not have good relations with her partner's relatives.

The **young women**, who were more loquacious than young men about intergenerational relationships, outlined many ways in which the younger and older generations are brought together. The most mentioned were the *Meskel* feasts, other social events such as marriage and funerals, and *mehabers*. The 20-year old poor young woman added *iddirs* and *equubs*. For the 18-year old poor women, it is also good when young men with some money invite older people for drinks at the drink house, and they get blessed by them. The women's league leader added that the generations are brought together in meetings of development army groups and public works.

However, all of them - except the women's league leader - caveated this general statement and highlighted several points of tension or disagreements between generations. Most often mentioned were (in this order) i) young people's **deviance from the social norms** defining what it takes to be a 'good young man' or a 'good young woman' in Harresaw (including, but more broadly than the social norms around young people's sexual transition); ii) **migration**; iii) the extent of **parental control** over their children's life. In addition, two young women highlighted that some of their peers have poor relationships with their in-laws and especially mother-in-law, in particular if they live together (poor 20 married, middle-wealth 23 single). The 24-year old middle-wealth young man highlighted that in some cases land inheritance may create conflicts between parents and siblings.

Social norms – The young people described the ideal young man and ideal young woman according to the community as follow:

- For young people generally – including young women: respecting one’s elders and the community’s culture, listening to one’s parents’ and elders’ advice, avoiding ‘bad habits’ (drinking, smoking etc.) and ‘out of tradition’ dressing and hair styles, working and supporting one’s parents;
- For young women in addition: silence, patience, not talkative, not talking too much especially with boys/young men/men.

Young people deviating from these norms are considered by community members/the older generations as weird or odd for the more benign deviances such as modern hair braiding for young women; rude, for young women who are too much talkative; and ‘bad’ for young people (men mostly) adopting ‘bad habits’ and disrespecting adults/older community members, they explained. From their accounts, it seems that the older generation finds less acceptable the new dressing and hair styles of the young men than when it comes to young women - maybe because young women more or less rapidly give up on the most provocative aspects such as wearing jeans. The 18-year old middle-wealth young woman said that young and older men may even get to fight when they meet at the drink house and get drunk whilst the older generation is trying to advise the young people.

Further illustrating the power of the community’s ‘traditional’ social norms, the 18-year old middle-wealth, talking about herself, explained:

“I have good relations with my parents and family members. However, some older community members do not consider me as a good girl because I was in Mekelle for education. They think that I was exposed to bad habits and I broke the traditions and values of the community because I was in a big city. I think that it is because I was wearing trousers at the beginning after I returned back. I stopped and returned back to wearing dresses just to respect the community’s tradition.”

In the same vein, as noted elsewhere in this chapter, the two young women who had male friends when they were studying (in Mekelle and Wukro respectively) said they have stopped this now that they are back in Harresaw – to avoid even more community gossip, as the 18-year old said.

Migration – Four of the poorer young people (18- and 20-year old poor young women, 25- and 27-year old poor young men) and the 29-year old richer young man explained that migration prompts disagreement and even quarrels between parents, and children wanting money to migrate. See the **Migration** chapter, and especially **p.153** and **p.157** for more on this.

Parental control – The two young women in their late 20s pointed that the extent of parental control that young people/young men accept has seriously reduced. For the 28-year old poor young woman, parents no longer have “*full rights of involving in their children’s issues*” such as education and migration, and when they try this creates disagreement.

For the 27-year old middle-wealth young woman, this is particularly the case for late teen boys who “*do no longer allow their parents to decide on their future; they want to decide on their own life independently*” and this, she said, leads to disagreement and bad relationship. However according to the 18-year old middle-wealth young woman (who went to Mekelle to try to study at college level and work at the same time), this desire to escape parental control is not restricted to young men; she explained that she has (female) friends who dropped out from school “*for no reason, just because they wanted to be free and move here and there and be free from their parents’ control*”.

Youth policies and programmes

Wereda level

Wereda youth support structures

According to a representative from the *wereda* youth affairs’ office, with regard to strengthening youth livelihoods the office work together with the micro and small enterprise office for urban areas,

and with the social affairs and agriculture offices for rural areas. They also collaborate with the water resource and mining office, and with the *wereda* land desk with regard to some of the options for rural youth. There is no new youth livelihood support position in rural *kebeles* and at *wereda* level, because youth livelihood support is more a matter of integrated work between many sectors.

So, there are two *wereda* committees responsible for youth livelihood support in rural *kebeles*, at steering and technical levels respectively and comprising members from agriculture, women affairs, water and mining, land, social affairs and micro finance and small enterprise offices. The steering committee is chaired by the *wereda* administrator. It holds evaluation meetings (*gemgema*) every month and sectors report and evaluated on what they have done in relation to youth livelihood support. The technical committee provides technical support through following up the various sectors' progress and challenges in their activities focusing on youth livelihoods.

It works as follows – If there are young people who want to be involved in irrigation in a *kebele*, organizing those people is the work of the youth affairs office; people from the *wereda* water and mining office go to the *kebele* to study the technical aspects of the proposal. The committees also go to the *kebele* to help create trust between the community, the youth and the *kebele* administration. Then, the technical committee starts to follow up the progress by the youth involved in the activity.

Wereda data on young people's unemployment

In the records of the youth affairs office there are 6,823 unemployed youth in the *wereda*. Out of them 4,634 are rural youth. The *wereda* official said that the data is disaggregated by gender, educational level and age, although he could not get the data at the time of the interview. He explained that the data is used to create jobs by identifying rural and urban activities such as mining, coble stone works etc. and getting young people involved in different activities according to their age, gender and education levels.

Wereda interventions

The *wereda* youth affairs official mentioned the following interventions implemented in the *wereda* and focusing on strengthening youth livelihoods:

- Allocation of 'government' **farmland** to landless youth (land from persons deceased without eligible heir); allocation of **residential plots** to homeless youth.
- **Youth Revolving Fund**, although it is underperforming and underspending (see box below). By early 2018, more than 3 million *Birr* of the 5.8 million *Birr* allocated to Atsbi-Wemberta *wereda* was not used, and the Regional Government had decided to transfer some of the unused funds to another *wereda*.
- For **agriculture cooperatives**, urban agriculture is coordinated by the micro finance and small enterprise office; rural agriculture (including irrigation, nurseries, and animal resources) is coordinated by the agriculture office. Another official mentioned cooperatives established in Dera town and Ruba Felege *kebele*, organised by youth and providing apple seedlings and chickens to Dera cluster residents.
- Most of the **non-agricultural production cooperatives** are in the mining sector, producing sand, stone and a special kind of soil in different *kebeles*.
- **Landless youth** are organised in **small groups** and given rehabilitated hillside land by the *kebele* administration ('*gobo mekelo*') for different activities such as beekeeping, eucalyptus planting and shoat fattening. He mentioned youth groups in the following *kebeles*: Ruba Feleg (beekeeping, stone mining, selling incubated chickens), Hayelom (sand production and sale), Eara (101 young people engaged in stone mining), Kelisha (stone mining too).

But there is a problem with Harresaw: the *kebele* leader is not active and effective in collaborating with the *wereda*, they failed to report on the situation of the youth and the

resources available in the *kebele*. For instance, the *kebele* is suitable for beekeeping thanks to its wide forested area, but the *wereda* could not intervene there effectively because of the low performance of the *kebele* leader.

Box 40. Underperformance of the Youth Revolving Fund

The main reasons for the Youth Revolving Fund to underperform are the difficult criteria and long process for applicants to get the funds. “Young people get bored having to fulfil all the criteria and waiting a long time to take the revolving fund money”.

There are ten criteria, including 1) having a *kebele* ID card, 2) having a court paper stating one’s status as unemployed, 3) not having any other loan, 4) having the *kebele* support (in writing), 5) 10% savings, 5) being organized in a group of at least five people, legally established, and 6) having secured land from the *kebele* administration. It is the *wereda* which gives final approval.

In Harresaw, five groups got organized to be involved in grinding mill and beekeeping activities, but they stopped the process on the way because they got bored. Another example is a group of 13 university graduates in Ruba Feleg *kebele* who wanted to get a crusher to start stone production on a larger scale, collaborating with two (Ethiopian and Chinese) construction companies. They applied and were granted a loan of 650,000 *Birr*, as they did even manage to save the 65,000 *Birr* required. However, one year after taking the money from the Revolving Fund they did not start production so far because of lack of trust among the members.

According to the respondent, there is **no support for individual young people** as such. They can take loans with 15% interest from Dedit, although in his opinion this is not advisable because of the high interest rate. In 2009 EC the *wereda* provided 18 million *Birr* of lending capital for young people to engage in different activities, with a more advantageous 8% interest rate. This is supposed to include support to individual young people. However, most of this money is taken by youth groups, some of which are taking loans of up to 60,000 *Birr*.

Wereda officials also mentioned **support to Saudi returnees** in the form of training and credit so that they can involve in income generating activities. Entrepreneurship awareness creation training was given in four centres in the *wereda* (Atsbi, Hayek Meshal, Habes and Dera). In 2009 EC, the *wereda* tried to work with and through the youth coalition. However, young people were dissatisfied and some of them migrated again to Saudi. One official blamed the youth for taking the training and the credit was ready for them and yet they migrated again. Another explained that training was provided but the provision of loans has not yet started. The reason is that the *wereda* decided to focus first on awareness-raising, seeing that even Saudi returnees who come back with a lot of money lack awareness and knowledge to engage in any type of business. For instance, one woman from Eara *kebele* who returned back from Saudi with 200,000 *Birr* came to the *wereda* and asked advice on what to invest in. So, they first want to create awareness for the three types of returnees, those with a lot of money, those with a little money and those with nothing.

NGO activity - A project called Bee Lieve (spelling?), active in four *kebeles*, is supporting 600 young people in collaboration with the Tigray Development Association (TDA), focusing on beekeeping. It started this year and it is at awareness creation stage as well as providing material support for those young people.

Mainstreaming youth livelihood support - According to the youth affairs official, there is support for young people under the PSNP, focusing mainly on young women, physically impaired young people and Saudi returnees. The *wereda* agriculture office is in charge, collaborating with the youth affairs office. He could not explain what this should consist of and said it is not actually implemented at *kebele* level.

Beneficiaries

The *wereda* official in the youth affairs office highlighted that the support to **youth in rural areas** is separate and differs from that to **youth in urban areas**. For youth in urban areas, the support is mainly focused on small and micro enterprises; in rural areas the main focus is on farming activities, depending on the resources available in a specific area. He believes the *wereda* is focusing more on the support to youth in rural areas, as there are only three urban *kebeles* but nineteen rural *kebeles* in the *wereda* so that unemployed young people are more numerous in the rural *kebeles*. But, he added, rural youth should not access youth livelihood support in nearby urban *kebeles*; they should only access support through the rural interventions, and urban youth should also access only youth livelihood support provided for urban youth.

With regard to **gender**, the focus is equally on young women and young men. There are no specific interventions for young women, but they have equal opportunity to be involved in all interventions supporting young people. In addition, the women affairs office follows up specifically on the support provided for young women. For instance, there are strong beekeeping interventions in *kebeles* such as Barka, Hayelom, Michael Amba and Kal Amin, in which young women are involved. The issue is that many young women do not really engage, because of lack of interest or of their domestic and household responsibilities. For instance, he knows a group of 15 young people in Ruba Feleg *kebele*, involved in beekeeping, and including five young women members. But the women are not involved in the activity; they are represented by their husbands to do the work as they are busy at home.

Lack of awareness of the youth livelihood support interventions can also be a reason: there is a difference between young men and young women in this respect. However, generally in the *wereda* **educated young people** are generally more aware of and interested in the interventions, he said.

Meanwhile, another *wereda* official (but who was not very specific) said that there is more emphasis on packages for women, because “*they are thought to be stable and that they will live in the kebele more than young men*”. So, he said, the loan service is more open for women.

The *wereda* youth affairs respondent mentioned that there are a few young people in the *wereda* who became successful without government support; either they brought money back from Saudi “*by involving in illegal jobs*”, or they got remittances, or they got a large plot of land from their parents, or they were successful in irrigation farming.

Youth livelihood support interventions in Harresaw kebele

Youth livelihood support structure at kebele level

Wereda officials stated that there is no new youth livelihood support position in rural *kebeles*. The *kebele* administration team explained that the *kebele* cabinet, youth affairs and association, women affairs and association, and land administration are responsible for organising support to young people’s livelihoods at the *kebele* level.

Youth unemployment data

The data of the *kebele* administration show that there are 699 young men and 725 young women, 18-year old or more, who are unemployed in the community. A study was conducted by the *kebele* youth and women affairs and associations in 2010 EC to identify them. Out of them, 121 have completed formal education up to grade 10 and above. Most of these young people are landless as well. *Kebele* officials said that this data has been sent to the *wereda*.

The Research Officers observed that most young people in the *kebele* seemed unemployed, and a good number of them belong to this group of ‘drifting’ young men described earlier (see p.267). There are many people who spend their time walking here and there in the centre of the *kebele* and drinking beers and traditional alcohol. Some of them are returnees from Saudi and some are grade ten dropouts. These young people (men) are also involved in bad habits such as drinking alcohols,

smoking as well as gambling. They also disturb and refuse to pay for the drinks they consume in drink houses as well as fighting each other.

Interventions

Wereda and kebele officials

Wereda officials were not extremely well informed on which youth livelihood support interventions specifically were implemented in Harresaw *kebele*. Several officials interviewed separately all agreed that Harresaw is a poorly performing *kebele* in this respect, due to the 'lack of good governance' and 'carelessness' of the *kebele* administration and the 'personal problem' of the *kebele* leader (who was replaced by the end of the fieldwork). They knew that there are groups of young people involved in eucalyptus production, stone mining and shoat fattening. One of them said there are 12 associations; but they are not "effective as such", because of the *kebele* administration weakness according to some officials, and because of the drought and lack of tools, land and capital, for others. The Youth Revolving Fund is not active in Harresaw (see [Box 40](#) above).

One official mentioned the SURE and Green Diversity NGOs/projects, both active in the *kebele*, even though they are not focusing specifically on young people. He also mentioned the sketch plan town project, which, he says, should also be considered as a youth livelihood support intervention; the idea being that young people will be able to engage in different kinds of small businesses in these emerging towns in the rural *kebeles*, thereby reducing rural youth unemployment and rural-urban migration. However, as noted elsewhere in this report, the sketch plan town project is also underperforming in Harresaw due to the way it was handled by the *kebele* leader (see [Box 1](#)).

So, *wereda* officials were of the opinion that "young people have given up on the effectiveness of the interventions because they wait for so long before being able to start; they complain that they only have expenses without gaining any benefit from the interventions because of delayed access to credit and the disorganization of the *kebele* officials". The community may not even be well aware of the possibilities of support due to the *kebele* administration weakness.

Kebele officials and civil servants talking about youth livelihood support interventions mentioned the (re-)allocation of farmland and of residential plots to landless and homeless people. As seen in the [Land use and urbanisation](#) chapter, it is not clear how many young people in total benefitted from these activities in Harresaw. They also mentioned the sketch plan town and the youth employment idea associated with it, although at the time of the fieldwork the decision of where to locate it was mired in conflict and resentment.

The main other form of support is the allocation of (hillside) land and support to youth groups to get involved in different activities. The *kebele* manager said there are 12 associations with a total of 126 members⁴⁷ (73 young men and 53 young women) to engage in irrigation, fattening, beekeeping, dairy production, eucalyptus production, poultry, quarrying and similar activities. These groups were each given 2,500 m² of rehabilitated hillside (communal) land. As the DA NRM explained, the work done by the community on watershed development has benefitted the young people who got this land and can engage in e.g. beekeeping and production of permanent trees; although he also warned that youth groups should not believe that this land can be used for 'anything' and it has to be used for what it is allocated for (see [p.222](#)). However, the *kebele* manager added that none of the associations has started working yet⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ The HEW talked about 12 groups of between 12 and 25 members; in reality the groups have an average membership of 10-11 young people.

⁴⁸ As will be seen below, this is not entirely correct as two stone/sand production groups have started their activity and at least one eucalyptus production group has planted trees.

In relation to any links with the PSNP, he said the support he just described is not under the PSNP although there can be young people benefitting from PSNP and from this support. The criteria to select the young people is that they should be landless, organized in a group, and able to carry out the activity they selected.

The HEW and the *kebele* leader also mentioned three/a few groups involved in barber shops, restaurants and billiard houses, though it is not clear how active these are as most of the businesses run in the *kebele* centre seemed to be privately owned.

Sometimes between 2012 and 2018 GC, there were young people organized in a group to produce and sell potatoes on irrigated land, using trucks to transport their production to Dera and Atsbi markets; but they stopped working with the lack of rain and the drying up of the lake of the dam.

The HEW also heard about an NGO which intends to build a meteorological station in the *kebele* and groups of youth would be organized to produce sand and stone for the construction, but this has not started yet. She did not know about the Youth Revolving Fund, and the *kebele* manager also did not mention it.

Youth groups in Harresaw

Building on the data across modules, this section briefly presents the youth groups that one or another community respondent mentioned and the information she/he gave on it, by type of activity. This is followed by an overview of what the twelve young people interviewed in depth on youth issues knew about the youth groups.

Stone mining 1 – A young woman mentioned she is member of a stone mining group. The initiative started in 2009 EC. They were organized by the *kebele* in a group of 26 and presented their application letter as unemployed young people to the *kebele*; their names were taken to the *wereda* and their issue was seen there. The *kushet*, *kebele* and *wereda* land administrations also saw the issue and decided about land to be given to young people. Ten young people left before they started working and so, they are now seven young women and nine young men. They allocate different tasks to men and women: men are involved in mining and crushing the stones, women members collect them and prepare them in piles to be taken by truck by their customers. They have their own pad of receipts (which they bought for 300 *Birr*) and use receipts to sell the stones. She finds the work difficult, especially for women; but she has a small kid and it is difficult to find other alternatives even though in her view, the intervention is not successful as such.

Stone mining 2 - Another respondent, a 27-year old grade 4 dropout young man, married and father of two, talked about his association as follows. It was founded 8 months ago to quarry and sell construction stones. The leader is a grade 10 Saudi returnee, who was deported then married in the *kebele*. When the *kebele* manager announced that interested youth should organize in associations they formed one from their own initiative and gave him the list of members. This was sent to the *wereda* which approved and instructed the *kebele* to give them a plot of land. They got a 50mx50m (2500 m²) plot, which was previously rehabilitated and protected land. When they started they were 11 men and 14 women, but 7 of the women found the job difficult and opted to be organized in beekeeping and sheep fattening and left; so, there are now 18 members, 11 men and 7 women.

In his views, they are working well. They are selling the stones for the construction works taking place on an irrigation canal around Dera town, and the demand is high. They share the work as described by the young woman above. But they face a shortage of quarrying tools: the tools they are using are those that the community uses for soil and water conservation activities, so they will have to return them when these activities will start. The only support they got from the *kebele* or the *wereda* is the land, and the license. They will have exhausted the potential of their land in 6 months and have applied for another plot: the continuity of the association depends on this. He said his only income used to be as daily labourer in Afar and it is now the work at the quarry, and he wants it to continue so he keeps a job opportunity in his homeland.

Stone mining 3 - A young man leader of a stone mining group (possibly the same group as he also mentions selling the stones to the contractor doing the works on canals around Dera) said the group has 20 members of which 7 young women. They started exploitation 10 months ago, once they got the land from the *kebele*. They got the land because “*the wereda ordered the kebele LAC*” and it took several months. They share the income; last time they shared 320 *Birr* for each member (he did not say for how much work). He said as a member he is working more or less 5 hours a day 5 days a month although as a leader he is working every day as he is responsible to assign tasks, coordinate, negotiate with the contractor, sign papers etc. Like the young man above, he is worried about the fact that the group will soon have exhausted the exploitation capacity of the plot they were given, and members may quit if the land is not replaced. He wants the *kebele* to provide them with a letter to get credit, and business skill training opportunities.

Stone mining 4 - Another respondent, a young man, talked as member of a 25-member group (including 10 women) and a process of approval very similar to that described by the young woman. They produce sand. He said it took a whole year from initiating the process to get approval to start. Neither the *kebele* nor the *wereda* follow up their performance; they were never asked how they are doing. He thinks they are unsuccessful because they are not operating at full potential: each member works only 4 days per month, 6 hours a day. They also face market problems because buyers prefer buying from unlicensed people and from farmers. They have a shortage of tools so that they cannot produce sand of good quality and in quantity. They need a new plot of land, a loan and tools to extract sand, otherwise the members might quit the work due to frustration. Since their license is renewed annually they may quit the work unless the government give them extra land or change the land.

Beekeeping 1 – A 30-year old young woman, married with three children, also involved privately in chicken production and petty trade and whose husband has ½ *timad* land, is member of a beekeeping group of nine young men and two young women. She and the others organized into a group and got hillside land for beekeeping in December 2009 EC (2017 GC), after six months of process. Even though they were promised to get financial support, they did not receive it so far. They contributed their own money to build a house for a guard. They did not buy the bees and beehives so far because they are waiting for the loan support. But she is hoping they will get it soon, and that they will start benefitting after six months for a long period of time. She wants to continue with the group but, she said, she also needs to have her own business in addition.

Beekeeping 2 - Another young woman, also involved in small-scale crop trading and trading plastic shoes, explains that she is member of a group of 12 who want to invest in beekeeping (possibly the same as above). They have not started the activity yet because of a delay in getting the loan from the *wereda*. She also mentioned the building of the guard shed with their own money.

Beekeeping 3 - A young man, Saudi returnee, married with one child, explained that he decided to form a group with others because he repeatedly migrated to Saudi, but he could not see any change. They got the support because they are landless unemployed young people; it consists of a loan, land, advice on how to prepare a business plan, and training. They got the land from the land *kebele* administration, advice by the *wereda*, and training on beekeeping by an NGO, but not yet the loan service. The group comprises eight young men and four young women – as they were told by the *wereda* that they had to include women members to get the support. He is annoyed with the delay in getting the loan whilst in the meantime, they spent their own money to construct a shed for a guard (57,000 *Birr*) and buy their own stamp (1,270 *Birr*); they know where to procure the beehives but have not been able to do it because of the delay. However, he is hopeful that the intervention will be useful in future to improve their livelihood.

Eucalyptus production 1 - A 27-year old young woman, married with two sons and a daughter, and whose husband has a small piece of farmland (less than 1 *timad*) and is member of the *kebele* basic organization (*meseretawi aderejajet*) and cabinet, is member of a youth group formed last year.

They registered as landless unemployed young people and their case was seen by the *kebele* and the *wereda*. They got the land (approx. one timad of hillside land) after six months, to involve in eucalyptus tree production and shoat fattening. She said the group has an agreement to give part of the production from the land to the government, but she does not know how much; and they will benefit from the intervention for at least five years. They had a “*conflict with old people who were not willing to leave the mountain to be used by young people but the kebele convinced them and they finally left it*”. There are also other young people who appealed to the *kebele* administration as they also need land and were asking ‘why this group and not them’. The *kebele* told them to first organize in a group and present their application letter to the *kebele*.

She is content with the activity; they already planted the eucalyptus and are waiting for production after two years. However, they were not able to start the shoat fattening activity yet because of delay in getting the loan from the *wereda*. The youth group has 13 members including four women. They share the work equally; they planted the trees, terraced the land and take care of the trees together. Members also contribute 10 *Birr* per month as savings. They have penalties for members who are late or absent for the work.

Eucalyptus production 2 - A young man talked about a group he is member of, with 12 members, 7 men and 5 women, possibly the same as the young woman above, although he is talking about a much bigger plot of land. He said they got around 3 hectares of rehabilitated hillside communal land from the *kebele* land administration. They submitted their request to the *kebele* cabinet and LAC in 2008 EC. The process, from the time they applied to the *kebele* to when it was approved and the group was licensed by the *wereda*, took more than a year. They have already started to plant trees.

A group of respondents talking about farming in the community said that approximately 5 hectares of land were allocated to groups of young people to involve in eucalyptus production.

Shoat fattening – Another young man talked about the association he is member of. They founded it in 2009 EC to fatten shoats. They organized as a group of thirteen (8 men and 5 women) when the *kebele* officials announced to youth to form associations. However, after the assessment by the *kebele* LAC members and an expert from the *kebele* agricultural office, they refused to provide them the plot of land. They said that the land the association members requested is not appropriate for fattening (also see p.222). They appealed to the *kebele* youth affairs and to the *wereda* (indeed, it seems that at least some *wereda* officials know about the case, see p.87), but they did not get any feedback yet.

Apple production – The same group of respondents talking about farming mentioned a group of 15 young people organized by the youth association to grow apple, and they planted the trees, but they have not yet started producing and selling. Separately, they said, there are a few private individuals producing and selling small quantities of apple on the market. They planted the trees some years ago but it takes time to get a sizeable production.

None of the **twelve young people** interviewed in-depth on youth issues (see Box 37) was a member of a youth group. They generally knew about the existence of these groups, and several added that none had started work, whilst the two young women in their late 20s knew that the stone production groups worked and had some income. The 27-year old middle-wealth young woman who is also women’s league leader knew about as much as the *kebele* manager on the groups. She said she organized a group with some others like her and they requested land, but they were told that they are not eligible because they have farmland (she has one timad, ploughed by her father).

The 18-year old poor girl seemed to think that only young men are involved in these groups. The 20-year old poor and 23-year old middle-wealth young women said there are a few young women alongside young men. The women’s league leader said this is an opportunity generally available for young women, as long as they form groups with young men. However, the 28-year old poor young woman said that the young women involved in these groups are few. She explained:

“They (young women) are selected depending on their economic situation and landlessness by the kebele administration. Priority is also given to those groups who applied for the intervention first and only a few groups were selected based on the availability of hillside land. In addition, some women members left their group and excluded themselves from the intervention because of household responsibilities, child care, and delay in getting the loans so that they could not benefit from the intervention.”

The 17-year old poor boy knew about the groups but, he said, boys of his age, under 18, cannot apply for the intervention.

Other youth livelihood support interventions in Harresaw

Almost all respondents talking about youth livelihood support interventions in Harresaw mentioned the **group formation** and hillside land allocation and the **farmland reallocation and allocation of residential plots**, as well as highlighting various limitations (see *Other community members’ perspectives* below). Several of them had a child who got farmland or a residential plot. Very few had a child involved in one of the youth groups. One case is the former *kebele* leader whose son tried twice to migrate to Saudi and failed, and who, he said, is now involved in a beekeeping group.

The knowledgeable man talking about the non-farm sector in Harresaw said there are more youth productive associations than five years ago, though he added that even though most have received land from the *kebele*, most have not started work yet due to delay in accessing loans. He knew they are licensed and it took them a long time to get their license; they have not started paying tax yet.

None of the community respondents, adult or young and including the youth association and women association leaders, mentioned the Youth Revolving Fund.

A few other activities were mentioned, as follows:

- The *kebele* manager and the policeman talked about the **repatriation programme**, which was far from being a success (see *Box 20*).
- The 18-year old poor young woman said that some parents in Maekel *kushet* proposed **grazing land** to be given as **farmland for young people**, but other adults opposed the idea and this was not accepted.
- The 20-year old poor young woman explained that recently some 10 young women from the *kebele* centre were selected by the *kebele* for **training in Atsbi**, but she did not know what this was for.
- The 18-year old middle-wealth young woman mentioned a **loan service for young women two years ago** and some young women took 5,000 *Birr* each from the government.
- The blacksmith, graduated from PSNP then reintegrated under EFA during the drought and now reintegrated under PSNP PWs but who gets paid for guarding the forest near his house (see *p.198*), mentioned that **in the past**, a few **poor** young people were provided **money and sheep** under the *kebele* food security programme in order to improve their livelihood. This support was provided to two or three people from each *kushet*.

One young man was supported as a ‘young model farmer’ on an **individual basis**: after showing some good performance in irrigation, he was given apple tree seedlings and land outside of the land lottery system, as well as other benefits such as multiple training opportunities (see *Box 14*). This seemed to have taken place a couple of years ago, and no one else mentioned any other such case.

Perspectives on government interventions

Young people's perspectives

The data in this section comes from conversations with young people met informally or to talk about migration, the conversations with the twelve young people interviewed in-depth on youth issues, and the young people members of one or another youth group presented above.

The **twelve young people** had relatively little to say and were rather critical in what they said about government interventions to support young people's livelihoods. As seen above, the government lack of/insufficient activity in this area is one major cause of the general disaffection they noted with regard to the relationship between the government and the youth (see p.270); and generally young people do not think highly of the youth or women's organisations, just focusing on collecting membership fees and whose leadership is "sleeping in their home" (see p.48 and p.48).

They knew about the youth groups and hillside land allocation and the farmland reallocation and allocation of residential plots. Several young women noted that this benefits very few young women (poor 18, poor 20, poor 28, middle-wealth 23); young women are fewer than young men to benefit (poor 18, who also narrated the disagreement about the *kushet* grazing land, see above); those migrating do not get a chance, but even for those staying it is difficult (poor 28).

Several young women noted that there are no intervention supporting specifically young women's livelihoods, and this is a gap. In their views, the government should support young women's specifically, and separately from young men, with regard to land allocation, job creation and access to credit, so that they can 'become economically independent from men, get their own income and self-confidence and in this way, contribute to the development of their household and the community in general' (poor 18, poor 20, middle-wealth 23).

The 23-year old middle-wealth young woman, with college education, said there are no jobs in the community for educated young people and even to get jobs outside is difficult; and there are not enough jobs generally in the community for young women. She would consider being a member of a shoat or cattle fattening group, but it depends on the *kebele* selection and few young women are included in these groups according to her.

Young men highlighted the lack of activity by the government and 'false promises' (see p.270).

From the conversations with **young people members of a youth group** there seems to be a mix of 'organisation by the *kebele*' and self-organisation. The membership also seems to evolve over time (members quitting before the activity started because of the delay in getting any return, young women not interested or too busy with domestic responsibilities). Membership is restricted to young people 18-year old and above and the same is true for any other youth livelihood support activity; the 17-year old poor boy who raised this explained that young men of his age have no other option that education or migration. At least one respondent mentioned that female membership is not a choice but an obligation to get the support. It is noteworthy that some members, whilst they are landless, have a spouse with some farmland.

A number of respondents sounded uncertain about the duration/sustainability of the intervention: there seems to be a question on how long the land is allocated for to a specific group (see beekeeping and eucalyptus groups); for the mining associations, the question is whether the land will be replaced when they reach the limits of the mining potential of the plot they were given. In an informal conversation the Research Officers indeed heard that land is allocated for a finite period of time; the idea is that members of the groups currently exploiting the land should be able to build savings over a few years, so as to be able to invest independently, and so that the land is then given to other groups.

Yet, some of the insights given by group members suggest that this ambition (i.e. the groups providing to their members an income sufficient to do more than getting by) will be hard to fulfil. In

the first instance, most groups have not yet started working due to delayed loans (see below), and they have actually costed money to their members. For those which are working, the eucalyptus production groups have to wait several years that the trees grow to get some return; members of the mining groups worked relatively little of their time on the activity, and one woman suggested that they worked under capacity because of lack of tools (see below).

All group members interviewed highlighted the long time it took to get land and approval (between six months and more than a year, and that does not include getting the loan), and they were frustrated by the delay in getting the promised financial support (loans). More generally, all groups were constrained by their limited ability to invest in the working capital necessary to start (beehives), or to be able to continue more sustainably (sand mining association to have its own tools), or to be able to expand the activity and/or make it more beneficial. For instance, the young woman involved in one of the stone mining associations explained:

"I think the intervention is not as successful as it could be because the stones are too big to be crushed manually, and we do not have a crusher. We started working in June 2009 EC (June 2017) and we never managed to mine one full truck in a day. That is because of this problem. We think that we can still work for a year or so on the smaller stones but if it is to continue after that we need machinery to be able to exploit the bigger stones too."

One respondent mentioned that there is no follow-up by the *kebele* and *wereda*.

Among the nine young people members of a group, four were members of a stone/sand mining group (one woman, three men); three were members of a beekeeping group (two women, one man) and two were members of a eucalyptus production group (one man and one woman)⁴⁹. Four of them (two women and two men) were clear that they want to continue with the group: one was in stone mining, one in eucalyptus production, and two were in a beekeeping group and hoped for the future. One of them, a young woman, noted that she also needed to have her own business. For the woman in the stone mining group, it is more a necessity than a choice; she said she is a member because it is difficult to find anything else and she has a young kid to provide for. Two group members did not comment on whether or not they want to continue. Two young men members of a stone/ sand mining association did also not directly comment on this, but they sounded worried (by the uncertainty about the plot replacement) and frustrated (notably by the lack of own tools).

A **few other young people** gave opinions on government support to young people's livelihoods as follows. For the *kebele* youth affairs' leader (30, Saudi returnee and now living from daily labour), the main point is that addressing the issue seriously requires action by the federal and regional government, including in terms of industrialization/establishment of factories; what can be done at *kebele* and *wereda* level will never be sufficient (see [p.78](#) and [p.146](#)).

A 28-year old young woman, grade 10, married and whose husband is a repeat Saudi migrant, is particularly concerned by the lack of government action to help young people with some education:

"The government is not helping young people with some education in any way. They study but then the government is telling them to find jobs by themselves and this is very difficult, there aren't any jobs for educated people in the area. So, they migrate even though they know the risks and many die. The government is not paying attention to rural youth. It does not have a strategy for providing jobs for the more educated youth, and yet, they want to convince them to not migrate, that this is risky etc. But they don't have any alternative to offer them, so why should the youth listen to them? If they cannot have anything that brings them hope here (tesfa) then they will continue to migrate."

⁴⁹ The shoat fattening group did not get land, the information on the apple production group is not from a member.

In her views, the government should first, support students from poor families – to help them to continue but also “*give hope*” to the students, encouraging them to study more and staying at school; second, create jobs for those with some education. “*No need for highly paid jobs, something like 600 Birr/month would do*”. Again, she said, this would give students hope. Otherwise, it is not surprising that they continue to opt for migration.

Several young people talked about credit issues. Some said the maximum amount that they can take is too small. Others disagreed with this: they and those like them “*who have been there*” (meaning, on migration to Saudi), they said, believe that it is possible to do something with the currently maximum loan, but the government has prejudices against young people and especially, unmarried young people, which prevents them from getting loans. Several others highlighted that the biggest problem is the interest rate, way too high especially in a place like Harresaw (which the *kebele* manager agreed with). (See the section on [Access to credit](#) for more on this).

More generally, a group of young men in a focus group discussion on migration thought that the government needs to give special attention to difficult places like Harresaw.

As seen elsewhere (see [Perspectives on justice, nepotism and corruption](#)), there are widespread allegations of bias, lack of fairness, networking and even corruption, in the community in general. Several young people were among those who pointed to these issues, in relation to who has and who has not access to youth livelihood support interventions. They talked about rich people getting residential plots rather than homeless young people (see [p.229](#)), bias in who is getting on the lottery list to get farmland (see [p.224](#)), and *kebele* officials misusing at least part of the loan money for youth groups as the reason for there being so little of it (see [p.93](#)). One young woman said that land is given to model farmers instead of young people – possibly referring to the ‘young model farmer’ mentioned above who got land outside of the lottery system (see [p.285](#)).

Young people talked about false promises. As seen earlier, this was a major theme among the six young men interviewed in depth (promises of training and credit and nothing in practice). It also applied to the repatriation programme (see [Box 20](#)).

For one young woman, the main issue is that the *kebele* should “*practically implement the young people livelihood policy*” of organising youth in groups, providing them with a fair credit service and technical support. Currently, she said, this policy is not properly implemented in Harresaw. For one young man, even more fundamentally what is lacking is for the government to start by asking the youth about their problems, to genuinely empower them.

The data also reveals that there is one group of youth who are by design excluded from any opportunity and these are the out-of-school under-18 young men and women. They are not eligible to be a youth group member, or to inherit land or get reallocated land, and also cannot get credit. Their only opportunities are local daily labour jobs or daily labour jobs/work elsewhere; some do migrate to Afar or even Saudi, as shown by several cases of under-18 migration in our interviews.

Other community members’ perspectives

The views of other community respondents echoed those of the young people. Practically all those who talked about young people in Harresaw thought that not much or not enough is being done to support young people’s livelihoods. The (young himself) head teacher of Harresaw school talked about lots of studies and little action.

Even *kebele* officials and civil servants recognised that whilst there are interventions, in many cases they have not/not yet benefitted young people or only very few, because of implementation problems (e.g. too little loan capital available, see [p.62](#) why) and according to the *kebele* manager, because of the “*kebele lack of resources and lack of land*” (in relation to farmland, residential plots, and hillside land). The *kebele* leader for instance, talked about ‘too small quotas’ for the youth livelihood support interventions as one of the things that frustrated him. The policeman and the

kebele manager both acknowledged that the repatriation programme did not meet the promises made (see [p.151](#) and [p.152](#)), and they reckoned that this significantly contributed to young people's frustration and the continued migration flows to Saudi.

That said, *kebele* officials also emphasised that “government should give awareness creation trainings to change the young people's wrong perception about work, and training on job creation” – highlighting the examples of successful young people in the *kebele* who reached this success and improved their livelihoods without migration, without government support, and without waiting for it – involving in both farming and non-farming.

Several respondents evoked themes similar to the young people's concerns, including issues with the provision of credit (interest rate too high, selectivity in who got access), and with fairness in access to land, notably.

A priest thought that youth programmes are ineffective in terms of coverage, sustainability and implementation and gave several examples of why he thought so. He also thought that more is needed to address the young people's housing issue; and that migration should be legalised. The policeman, in addition to recognising the weaknesses of the repatriation-related activities, said that what is proposed for young people to do is not diversified enough (“rigidity in the programme”); moreover, the group-based loan provision does not work well, and young people need business development/ management advice and skill training. A teacher highlighted the slow processes and delays faced by young people when they decide to try to apply for government support, which discourages many who then give up and migrate (see [p.140](#) for more on these people's views).

With regard to the issue of legalisation of migration abroad, opinions were mixed. The priest said it should be legalised, but he also pointed that with the money needed for legal migration, young people could do something else (like starting a productive SME) if they could get skill training (see [p.142](#)). For an elderly, yet ‘modern’ and influential woman, this was not even a question: with so few other options, everything should be considered legal, she said. One younger woman, whose husband repeatedly migrates since years, said the government should either legalise migration, or completely and strictly ‘close the route’, instead of the mixed messages that, she said, are given now (as people listen to the brokers but also because of insufficiently strong crackdown by government) (see [Box 23](#)). Meanwhile, an influential man known as a wise orator (‘Kofi Anan’) thought that legalising migration abroad would not help much: it is too costly and as such it would not be feasible for most in the community (see [Box 19](#)).

Community members across a range of varied profiles talked about the lack of and need for government to support young people in establishing Small and Micro Enterprises, and/or expanding access to jobs in industries and factories, and/or establish factories in nearby areas. Specifically, factories were mentioned by a poor woman age 40, head of household and renting out her land; a young woman member of a youth group; a middle-wealth woman farmer; a poor woman farmer age 47; a destitute woman, age 41; a male small/middle crop trader, age 40; an elderly but ‘modern’ and influential woman (who added “*let alone factories, do you see any SME here?*”); the *kebele* youth affairs leader, age 30; adult men in a focus group discussion on migration; adult women in a focus group discussion on migration; the head teacher of Harresaw school; a fairly successful returnee migrant established in Atsbi (in his early 40s); and a reasonably successful returnee migrant with a shop in the *kebele* centre (in his late 20s/early 30s).

For three of these respondents calling for expanding industrialisation at one or another scale (two women and one man), this is indispensable “*rather than insisting on farming interventions that are not successful because of repeated drought*”; and to effectively tackle landlessness and offer options for the landless, considering that all currently offered options such as poultry, fattening, beekeeping and the youth groups all require land. So, “*because the area is vulnerable to drought and there is high level of landlessness, industrialisation is the best solution to improve the livelihood of the community.*”

Drought

Drought history in Harresaw

Until the Millennium drought

Harresaw faced the same history of drought and famine as other communities in Tigray⁵⁰:

- The Great Ethiopian Famine 1887-92 started with the outbreak of cattle disease in the north, followed by drought, and affected the whole country.
- The next period of famine, in the first decade of the 20th century, was reportedly due mostly to locust plagues and an infestation of caterpillars; these were followed by famines in 1913-14 and 1928-29, also caused by outbreaks of locusts.
- The 1935-41 period of Italian occupation was accompanied by famine caused by a combination of locusts, drought and war.
- The famine of 1950-51, caused by drought and exacerbated by subsequent outbreak of locusts and epidemics, inflicted immense damage in Tigray (estimate 100,000 deaths) and was comparable to the famine of 1889-92 (and to the later ones of 1973-74 and 1984-85). For the first time, however, relief assistance was provided.
- In 1958 another devastating famine occurred. Although grain aid was eventually sent to Tigray, it was too late and arrived after at least 100,000 people had died.
- Another famine occurred in 1965-67 when Tigray had hardly recovered from previous ones.
- The 1973-74 well-known drought and famine then concentrated in Wollo and Tigray.
- The 1980s started with a failure of rain in 1980 whilst farmers had hardly recovered from the 1974 famine, and grain reserves were nil; in the lowlands livestock died in mass numbers so that by 1981 more than half the livestock in the eastern lowlands had been destroyed.
- In 1982 the rains failed again and the size of the drought-affected area increased significantly. 1983 was no better and the number of people migrating in different direction from the region to escape from famine-death become like a "flood". The number of migrants rose astronomically from 40,000 by March 1981 to 400,000 by early 1983. These figures include only those who migrated west to the Sudan. The famine became devastating and by 1984 tens of thousands of people and hundreds of thousands of livestock had died. In 1985 which was the period of climax 1,500 people were dying each day in Tigray alone.

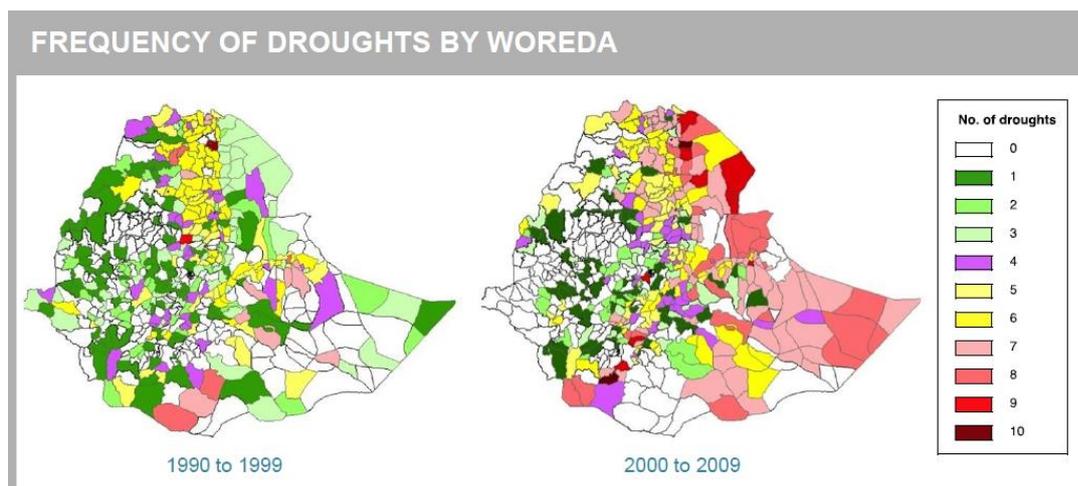
Tagel Gebrehiwot and Anne van der Veen (2013)⁵¹ and Kassa Teka et al. (2012)⁵² then outline the following series of 'bad weather years' in Eastern Tigray: 1986/87, 1990/91, 1998-2001, 2002/03, 2004/05 and the Millennium drought of 2007/08 (2000EC)⁵³. The graph below also suggests that in Harresaw (as is the case for most of Eastern Tigray) the frequency of droughts increased in the 2000-2010 decade compared to the 1990-2000 decade.

⁵⁰ See WIDE1 Harresaw Village Profile, 1995.

⁵¹ Tagel Gebrehiwot and Anne van der Veen (2013) *Climate change vulnerability in Ethiopia: disaggregation of Tigray Region*, Journal of Eastern African Studies, 7 :4, 607-629, DOI : 10.1080/17531055.2013.817162.

⁵² Kassa Teka et al. (2012), *Impact of Climate Change on Small-holder Farming: A Case of Eastern Tigray, Northern Ethiopia*. African Crop Science Journal, January 2012.

⁵³ In all the 'pairs' of years, the first indicates the year of planting, the second the year of food shortage consecutive to poor harvest.



Source: 'Planning and implementing the Ethiopian Climate Resilient Green Economy, CRGE Strategy'⁵⁴

Looking at the past two decades up until 2010 and using a range of socioeconomic and biophysical indicators, Tagel Gebrehiwot and Anne van der Veen (2013) show that Atsbi-Womberta in 2010 was characterized by a high level of overall vulnerability to climate change⁵⁵, due to factors including a large proportion of landless population, the dominance of small-scale subsistence farming in the local economy, and comparatively low irrigation and infrastructure development and limited access to alternative sources of income.

In the same study, qualitative data revealed that farmers were concerned not only by dry weather spells but also by changes in seasonality and in the regularity of rainfall distribution. Elders indicated that the changes became more noticeable after the 1984/85 GC major drought; the *belg* season had failed since then; and they thought the main rainy (*kremt*) season was gradually shortening, starting later and ceasing earlier than it used to, which was vindicated by the rainfall data from national meteorological records. Farmers noted a subsequent tendency to shift towards fewer crop varieties and a shorter planting season. Overall, there was a general perception among rural households that crop production and land productivity had declined in the past 20 years or so. Moreover, livestock ownership also declined, with the exception of pack animals as farmers tended to shift towards off-farm activities such as trade and transport of salt, grain, sand, stone, firewood and charcoal.

In the last eight-ten years

Generally, the weather in Harresaw is quite harsh (see [p.15](#)). In late 2011, the most recent Millennium drought and food shortage was still in everyone's mind. The *kremt* rains of 2000EC completely failed and there was no rain at all until February 2001EC. A significant number of people were affected by famine: reportedly, about thirty people, vulnerable because of old-age or illness, died due to hunger. The drought lasted two consecutive years with no production at all. It also resulted in mass livestock losses: 1,500 cattle and 2,000 sheep and goats died; many households, who had taken them on credit, sometimes under pressure through the government livestock package, fell into debt. There was mass migration of youth aged 18-30 to Afar and Saudi Arabia – and as explained earlier, irregular migration to Saudi continued to increase after this and whilst the ban on overseas employment in 2013 somewhat curtailed it, many are still going, and this type of migration has become an entrenched component of Harresaw's trajectory. Some younger orphans

⁵⁴ Ministry of Environment and Forest (MEF) at Climate Vulnerability Forum, May 2015, Addis Ababa.

⁵⁵ In their study, vulnerability to climate change is characterized as a function of exposure and sensitivity to, and adaptive capacity with regard to climate change. A number of likely important indicators were omitted from the analysis given the lack of *wereda* level data, such as surface and underground water availability.

migrated to the nearest towns like Atsbi and ended up in the streets, and female children got employed as servants in tea rooms and mill houses in these towns.

The government took some measures. It used different channels to get food handouts to people (PSNP and emergency food aid) and brought husk and straw for livestock. However, the support came in February 2001 EC, which was very late. And there was no waiving of loan repayment.

In 2001 EC there was also a pest invasion in caulis and onions (grown with irrigation) due to the lack of water, which prevented the vegetables from growing and destroyed them. There was delay in treating the pest as people were expected to get organized in groups to get the treatment from the *wereda* rural development office. Some people said that the treatment was not available at the time when it would have been possible to do something. In 2003 EC there was an instance of continuous rain for four hours which led to flood. It did not harm people and animals but destroyed crops and terraces made by PSNP public works.

In early 2018, almost everyone noted the severe weather conditions in the *kebele* over the past five years. People talked about recurrent drought, with only one relatively better year in the period. In 2007/08 EC (2015/16 GC) the drought was severe again, with no production at all; landholders did not even get straw for their cattle. Yet, it was said to be not as bad as the Millennium drought because a) it lasted only one year and there was some production the year after; b) emergency food aid (EFA) and other assistance was timely and although not sufficient, it helped; c) especially, there was water and fodder assistance, and this made a difference for people and livestock. After that there was one relatively good harvest end 2016/early 2017 (GC). But the production season just preceding the last fieldwork (2009/10 EC; 2017/18 GC) was again very poor. The only difference was that at least farmers had straw. However, in contrast with the 'recognised' 2015/16 drought, the PSNP support was very late and no emergency food aid was being provided (see [p.196](#)).

Government measures to address drought

The chapters above outline a range of measures taken by the government in Harresaw to help coping with drought since 2011/12. These include:

- The expansion of PSNP in 2015/16, although coverage has since then been reduced to even fewer beneficiaries than in 2010
- The provision of emergency food aid in addition to PSNP, although this seemed to have completely stopped in 2017/18 GC even though people considered it a drought year
- The provision of drinking water during the peak of the 2015/16 drought, trucked and stored in big plastic tanks brought by the government in several places of the *kebele*
- The provision of fodder at the same time, although it was insufficient, and many people had to sell some of their livestock at very low prices to be able to buy fodder for those they kept
- The implementation of a school feeding programme in the *kebele* and neighbouring *kebele* primary schools (see [Box 41](#) below), which lasted only a few months and was not prominent in respondents' interviews on effects of and measures against the drought.

Box 41. School feeding programme in the small Harresaw school – Headteacher interview

There was school feeding during the drought year. However, unlike in the neighbouring *kebele* schools where it was available even before the drought and where it was therefore timely, in this school the food came very late, in April 2016, after the drought had hit and students had already been exposed to hunger and parents had let their children drop out. Moreover, it only lasted a few months, until the end of the academic year. The food was porridge prepared at the school by women assigned by the *kebele* who did this instead of PSNP PWs, and peanuts and beans that students took home. It was enough for all students, no need of prioritization.

At the end of the academic year, as there remained food that would be expired by the time the school would reopen, it was decided to share the remaining food between students. But since

then, no more food was provided. The school was not informed in advance that the programme would stop; this happened suddenly, when the food items that came to the school at once were distributed to students at the end of the academic year because of the expiry date. The school has asked but received no explanation about the stop.

In the headteacher's view, the school feeding programme had a positive effect on students' attendance and parents' willingness to send their children to school even though it started late and there had already been some dropouts. Many parents were happy to send their children to school as they lacked food at their home. Students were happy to come to school because of the food.

Now pupils and parents were unhappy and asking the school why the programme stopped. However, he believes that the termination of school feeding had no effect on pupils' dropout because it was provided for a very short period of time. In the school there are always many dropouts due to other reasons, so that it is not possible to single out the school feeding termination as the reason for pupils' dropout.

Beyond these immediately protective measures, people noted a number of preventive and promotive measures as follows:

- Regional investment in water infrastructure development, although as explained in the first chapter, this has been marred with numerous issues and is clearly not helping the community as much as should have been the case
- The provision of improved seeds for free to female-headed households, for the 2016/17 season
- The provision of seeds to regenerate the grass on the communal grazing land, which had mixed results because of the subsequent poor rains one year later
- The supply of improved seeds said to be drought-resilient, although there were mixed indications with regard to their effectiveness (see *p.110*).

The chairman of the multiservice cooperative also explained that the supply of basic goods at subsidised prices by the cooperative helped to somewhat stabilise prices, although this was not mentioned by anyone else. There was an indication that farmers keeping bees were given priority to get subsidised sugar to feed their bees.

The longstanding activities focused on environmental rehabilitation (through PSNP PWs and the annual 'voluntary community labour' campaign) and the more recent campaign focusing on the development of alternative water sources for irrigation could also be counted as promotive activities.

However generally, a number of respondents of different backgrounds expressed a strong sense not just that not enough was being done, but not the 'right things'. There were suggestions of the need for solutions that would take into account the recurrent drought and land scarcity, and for the government to reorient its focus instead of 'insisting' on farming which, in the area, would never be 'sufficient'. Yet, a number of policies seemed to signal an inability on the side of the government to fundamentally reconsider how a place like Harresaw could develop over the long term. In particular, the lack of government support to nonfarm activities in which youth groups and individual young people could and would like to engage, and the negative discourse and constraining practices around outmigration for work, led to more pressure on land and water resources – whereas it was clear to many community respondents that what was needed is exactly the opposite⁵⁶.

⁵⁶ Tagel Gebrehiwot and Anne van der Veen (2013) highlight indeed that besides measures to develop irrigation, interventions that would "ensure access to alternative sources of income" as well as "(r)educing the pressure on natural resources and improving environmental rehabilitation programmes" would help to "strengthen the adaptive capacity of the farming community".

Effects of drought

This section covers people's perceptions of the effects of the drought both during and after the drought. It is important to recall here that most people when talking about drought did not focus exclusively on the 2015/16 drought, as most consider that Harresaw was affected by recurrent drought over the past few years.

On the community as a whole

The effects of the recurrent drought on the community as a whole are outlined all along the previous chapters in this report. In summary, most respondents thought that drought had impoverished the community as a whole, and that the community was more, not less dependent, on government support (and migration) than five-six years before; a few others thought that although the community was a bit better-off on the whole, drought had hindered this progress.

Effects of the drought were perceived to include:

- A strong contraction of the farming sector, especially crop growing; the quasi-disappearance of irrigated agriculture as all water reservoirs and sources dried up or considerably reduced; and constraints on livestock production, even though it might be a more promising activity, due to lack of water and fodder (see [p.110](#) and [p.111](#) for more on the effects of drought on crop production and on livestock production). As a consequence, for several years there were no 'model farmer' awards; and DAs were said to be inactive except continuing to push farmers to take fertiliser.
- A resulting strong reduction in local daily labour opportunities as there was little to nothing to harvest, almost no irrigation, and people could not afford hiring others – the lack of opportunities was also true for jobs as shepherds, which farmers could no longer afford to hire and also, they had sold a lot of livestock so the need was lower.
- A relative shift towards non-farm activities although this is constrained by lack of capital for many, and the limited size of local demand for services and goods, especially at times of drought and reduced farming incomes (see [p.124](#) for more on the impact of drought on non-farming activities).
- Concurrently, an increase in migration for daily labour to Afar as a substitute for local daily labour. Moreover, because of drought and the lack of alternatives irregular migration to Saudi continued to be perceived as a key option, especially by young people, in spite of the much higher risks and much lower chances of success in the past few years. For some respondents, drought was the main cause for the trend of rising migration by women to Afar and Saudi – and even priests and deacons migrated.

There were different opinions on the effects on trade of agricultural products, with some saying that it decreased because there was very little to sell, and others saying that people had to sell to buy other items. It is likely that whilst many did indeed have to sell 'something', the volumes traded were smaller than in years of good harvest. Some of the small traders explained that during the 2015/16 drought they hardly made any profit. For instance, a woman buying grain in Atsbi and selling it locally said that as market prices were high and demand was low, most of the time she was forced to sell the crops at the price she bought it. She even had to stop for two months as the income from her trade did not cover the costs of buying the crops.

So, crop and food prices increased (though there were different views on that – including that the effects of drought were also compounded by general inflation of prices), livestock prices strongly dropped for a while they rebounded, and wage rates decreased but by early 2018 seemed to also have rebounded (see [p.28](#) on inflation). Generally, it was harder for many to afford the various contributions expected from them, including the payment of the CBHI premium and of the mass association fees. One iddir leader also explained that the iddir is constrained in the support it offers to members, because members cannot contribute more.

One specific issue which several respondents mentioned was the pressure on farmers to purchase fertiliser even though with drought this was useless. As explained earlier, there were allegations that in 2015/16 *kebele* leaders even delayed the provision of emergency food aid until all farmers had bought their 'quota' of fertiliser. And yet, as one of them explained:

Because of the effect of the drought households are then compelled to sell their livestock and rent-out their farmland to pay for the loan they have taken to buy fertiliser.

Some respondents noted the negative impact of recurrent drought on women's participation in economic activities, which might well have resulted from the reduction in local daily labour opportunities whereas it remains more difficult for women than for men to substitute this with migration to Afar or Saudi; and water scarcity curtailing irrigated horticulture, which in 2011/12 was emerging as an activity in which women were quite involved, producing and/or trading irrigated vegetables. Several female respondents mentioned indeed that they stopped cultivating vegetables and getting a much useful income from this.

There was some debate as to whom among the 'rural' or the 'urban' residents in Harresaw were most affected (that is, those mainly farming vs those relying mostly on other activities, often because of being landless or having a very small farmland). Generally, people thought that urban residents were also badly affected because they had to buy all their food, and food was very expensive.

Drought was also perceived to have had an effect on inequality in the community, although there were contrasted views on this (see p.177). On one side were those who thought drought had 'flattened' inequality because it hit hardest those with a larger land and more livestock, and at the same time poorer households got more support from government. On the other side, the majority thought that drought had increased inequality or left it as large as previously, because the richer households remained better able to diversify and rebound. Many also highlighted that drought led to a more individualistic attitude and reduced support among community members, except among relatives (see p.188).

On households

Several respondents acknowledged the importance of the government support for their households to cope, although some added that they did not like this dependency:

PSNP helps the household and the community at large to halt migration for food and avoid starvation. If PSNP transfers stopped, most of them would die or migrate. I don't have any other support than PSNP. But I don't feel comfortable as we are always waiting for food or cash support (woman PSNP beneficiary).

Late or insufficient support, or lack of support for the households not getting either PSNP transfers or EFA (quite many in 2017/18 in spite of it reportedly being a bad year) meant that households relied on 'negative' coping strategies such as selling assets, renting-out their land or taking loans just to buy food. Livestock losses and selling livestock were mentioned very often, with people trying to juggle, selling some to keep others like a man who sold cattle and kept shoats because the selling prices for cattle were "a bit better than for shoats"; whereas another kept cattle because the fodder supplied by the government was only for cattle, and many respondents mentioned that sheep were least resistant to drought so needed to be sold first.

Hunger was frequently evoked, and several women noted that this was harder to cope with for children. "Adult people can eat once a day but it is difficult for children", as one of them said. Several women mentioned various diet-related coping strategies including reducing the variety of food eaten, reducing quantities and the number of meals, giving priority to children whilst the mother would eat only once a day, selling some of the food received from the government to be able to buy more of some cheaper one etc. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

Urban households were forced to reduce the variety of food they used to eat. For instance, they prepared stew without edible oil, onions or tomatoes, or they only prepared shiro and no vegetables because these were too expensive. Whereas farming households reduced the amount of food and number of meals per day, eating once a day, or a smaller amount of food at every meal.

I coped by giving smaller amounts of food to my children but feeding them so they could continue to go to school.

We fed only with the sorghum provided by the government. This affected household members' activity because they were eating small amount of food per day and only similar kind of food.

There was a change in the type of food that the household ate. We could not eat tihilo as usual as there was no barley. Instead, we ate kita and porridge using the wheat provided by the government, as well as what we bought from the Afar region.

We shifted from eating barley and wheat to eating maize which is cheaper; we sold sheep as well as the wheat given by the government to buy the maize.

Access to water was another oft-mentioned big problem, as also reflected in these quotes:

There was conflict among individuals as well as among sub-kebeles due to access for drinking water. There was shortage of water so that community members were arguing with each other over access to drinking water from water points as well as from the water tankers (woman urban resident).

People, both rich and poor, were going very far to access water; they had to wait long queues and spend much time to get drinking water... They also were going to another kebele to get water for washing (woman water point manager).

Taking loans and renting-out land were also frequently mentioned, and many respondents also highlighted the negative long-term effects that this could have for those who were not able to repay the loan or had rented-out their land for several years. A relatively wealthier woman, urban resident with farmland, coped by taking a 10,000 birr loan at 9% interest from the government to buy food, which her son repaid at once by migrating to Saudi; and in addition, selling an ox, two sheep and a donkey to buy additional fodder for the rest of the livestock. But as she explained, those with less or no asset rented out their farmland in the year after the drought to repay the loans they had to take to cope with it, and in this way lose their main asset, some for several years, which has a “*strong negative effect on their economic situation*”.

Long term effects

A number of respondents highlighted long term effects of drought as being the most detrimental – beyond the temporary food shortage. These were felt at both community and household level, and included a) the much lower level of water resources in the area, with no certainty as to whether and how long it might take for water to replenish; b) livestock destocking or losses; c) for a number of households, loss of their farmland for several years.