# Personal stories of male transitions to adulthood in Shumsheha, Lalibela City Administration, North Wollo

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## Rich young man 30s

### Your household

He is 31, grade 3 drop out. He lives with his 25 year old wife, 5 year old daughter, and 10 month old baby son.

### Youth in the community

He argued that there was no problem to get a wife during his teenage time, but it has become difficult now to marry whom they wanted and at any time they choose because of the government’s obligatory age examination. He complained that parents’ role became only bearing and raising children and it was the government that decided over their marriages, wrongly rejecting them as under age and leading many girls to pregnancy out of wedlock. He mentioned the experience of a girl relative whose marriage was decided to take place last year so she went to Lalibela for age inspection, but the doctors decided she was under marriage age; he noted the decision was laughable as the girl had sexual affairs, and had already willingly lost her virginity to the would-be spouse.

He argued that the age limit was good as such but, the method of inspection was not accurate, causing breakage to marriages at inception. He regretted that his parents forced him to drop out of school in order get married to his first wife when she was 14, and argued that he could have completed his education if the obligatory marriage age inspection had been introduced a bit earlier than he was married.

He insisted that the age examination was good, especially for girls, preventing them from dropping out of school due to marriage. He said now young boys/girls are not being forced into early marriages/child bearing. Previously, fewer boys/girls had education access and many of them were forced to drop out at certain grades, but now all are encouraged/supported by parents and the government to attend school; there was better family land access for the young to form their own households, but it has become too scarce, rather the present youth were engaged in many different activities to generate their own incomes, trading in consumer goods, grain, vegetables/fruits, and group beekeeping, which was not common in his youth. Many girls were married as early as 10-14 years of age, some of them getting their fragile genital organs torn (Yizentelalu; equivalent to fistula experience) when penetrated. Many gave birth at 15. He argued that few girls now become pregnant/give birth at 14 or 15 before marriage and only those who had sexual affairs on own decision and not as the result of parentally arranged marriages; in his time girls had farm and domestic work burdens including grinding grain at night, even those who were attending school had such workload. He insisted that both boys and girls are now more religious participants than in the past; they participate in committees, village saving associations, beekeeping cooperatives, and public meetings more than in his time.

### Your life story

He was born at Tisho got, Shumsheha; he started herding at 5. He started farming at 15; started daily labour at 20 when he migrated to Raya and hired as a herder for 20 birr/month. He noted that he left because he was bored with work routines at his parents’ home so wanted to get a job and save money, but it was the herding business that awaited him; he worked for a year and returned to his parents earnestly pleading for their forgiveness; he stayed with them and started school in 1991 EC, until he dropped out and got married in 1995 EC; 5 months later, his 14 year old first wife left him after she went to her parents, pretending to visit them and come back; he was not interested in this family arranged marriage either so decided to continue his education and registered in grade 4, but stopped attending when a daily labour work opportunity came; he worked on terracing at 10 birr/day for two months until the project work terminated and went to continue his education, but the school rejected him saying the time had passed. Then he decided to marry the girl who was doing daily labour on the terracing project he where worked. She was a divorcee like him when they started loving each other while they were working as daily labourers.

He had a serious suspected malaria illness immediately after he married (1995 EC) which lasted for 3 months; he was treated and cured at the health centre.

He was engaged in herding from 5-14 years of age; he was fully engaged in parents’ farm work activity after 15; at the age of 20, he started trading in goats, grain, and doing daily labour for himself. He reported that he had the first interest in girls after he went to school in 1991 EC, but didn’t have any sexual intercourse until his first marriage; he first had sex with his 14 year old wife after repeated failed attempts to penetrate her as she resisted crying and parents came to stop him whenever they heard her screaming; after 4 such attempts he had penetrated her one day when his parents went to a friend’s feast ceremony; she was moaning and unable to move for two days. Now he has two children from the second wife, a 5 month old baby son and 5 year old daughter. He described himself as a devout Orthodox Christian; he closely interacts with parents, siblings and his wife’s parents in seeking advice, labour sharing, and borrowing.

### Government interventions which have played a role in your life

He insisted that even the little education he had could help him to understand DA advice and implement it to improve his crop productivity and irrigated vegetables grown on rented land. He reported that even though he did not have his own land, he was able to improve his income by using fertilisers and irrigation as a sharecropper so that the kebele selected him as a model farmer. He has been involved in community development work as secretary of a development team.

He has 2 Timad of land obtained from parents; he has been living in his parents’ compound, but the kebele allocated him land for building his own house which he has completed constructing, but didn’t enter yet; he has created about 1 Timad of farm land by encroaching from the edge of this allotted plot upon the immediate communal land. He paid 30 birr tax for his own land from parents (the land is still in his parents’ name as tax payers so he gives the money to them), and contributed 3 birr sport fee.

### Aspirations and plans for the future

He noted that he always wished to continue his education but his wife would not like it; she said who else would raise his children if he starts school against her will; he insisted he would try to complete grade 10 if she agrees. He said that if his parent had not forced him to drop out and marry, he would never have stopped before completing grade 10. He noted irrigation use and trade could be a good source of development for the community

## Middle wealth young man 30s

### Your household

He is 35, grade 6 drop out. He lives with 8 his year old son and 23 year old wife.

### Youth in the community

He described shortage of land as the common serious problem young boys/girls are facing, especially when they want to form their own households after they fail/complete their education. He stressed that especially those who had many children didn’t have enough land to give to each child so that many of them remained living with parents, even though they wanted to marry and form own households. In his time, especially boys with rich parents used to get married as early as 16 years of age. Now, it was only rarely that boys could marry under 20 as they commonly get married late at 20-30 years of age, since the law made it impossible to marry any girl even above 18 as the government inspectors would judge them below 18. He insisted that in the past the marriages of young couples were long lasting, whereas now young couples divorce sooner as they face food shortages to support themselves. He argued that the current youth were actively participating in community/kebele affairs as committee members, in meetings and cooperatives; they frequently attend religious ceremonies, church education/prayers, and strictly practice fasting. He argued that both boys and girls have better education access due to increased willing support of parents and government supervision. But, he said girls could not easily find husbands because they would have little chance of being asked for marriage once their expected marriage age was over and they became suspected of promiscuous sexual relations; formerly girls had more workload including fetching water and firewood from far distances, grinding grain and weeding whereas currently most of the girls have less workload to give them time for their education.

### Your life story

He was born at Shumsheha got in 1969 EC and lived with his parents until they divorced in 1985 EC. He started herding at 6. When his parents divorced, he moved and lived with his mother at the current place in Shumsheha; in 1990 EC, he formed his own household in the same compound of his mother and has lived there ever since. He has a long-term ear illness that started in childhood; he reported that once in his childhood when he was swimming in the river he suddenly got strong pain in both ears and his hearing has been affected since then; he does not suffer serious pain but feels shut off and hears poorly; he went to Addis Ababa for treatment but returned without getting any help as he was asked to pay 8000 birr for a surgical operation and could not afford it. He started going school in 1977 EC, but his parents forced him to drop out from grade 6 as there was a critical shortage of animal herders. He plans to continue and complete his education and especially wished night education to open at the school so that he will work in the day and attend classes at night up to grade 8.

He said he started going with grown up herders at around 5, but was independently herding after 6; started farming at 12; started having interest in girls when he was around 17 and had first sex with his first wife when they were friends; they had their first sex in the field where she lost her virginity to him, but she didn’t suffer pain as she was taller to endure; they had continued as love friends until they got married in 1990 EC, but later she became quarrelsome, entering in to conflicts with him over trivial issues; she went to her relatives in Addis/ divorced after 3 years leaving their 1 year old baby son with him; after 2 years in Addis she came back home and they lived together for 2 years until she left him once again, quarrelling with him as usual; he said she had legally gone to an Arab country for work, and was still living there ; 8 months ago, he was remarried to the current second wife and his first/only child remained with him. He described himself as Orthodox faith follower; his brother working as lecturer in Bahir Dar university was his important source of financial and moral support.

### Government interventions which have played a role in your life

He began quitting farming after he was employed as a carpenter on the airport construction project, then as a grain mill operator during which he could get the opportunity to obtain skills of installing and repairing mills so that he was able to save good money by receiving up to 1000 birr for installation and 7-8000 birr for repairing. Finally his lecturer brother added some money and he bought his own woodworking machine. He is involved in buying timber and producing beds, chairs, gate/house doors, and windows mainly for individuals at Shumsheha. Nevertheless, he also sells semi-processed lumber to customers from Lalibela town. He reported that the business was profitable but lack of transportation/absence of road to Lalibela and shortage of timber prevented him from producing at full capacity.

He stressed the coming of electricity was very important for his life, without which he would not have started his furniture production business. He doesn’t have his own land so no tax, but has been paying trade tax for his woodwork of 980 birr in this year and 760 birr before, 8 birr party membership fee, and 200-400 birr a month for electricity

### Aspirations and plans for the future

He insisted that absence of a road to Lalibela has greatly discouraged him from continuing the furniture production business and he was contemplating leaving the area and working in towns; he argued that had there been transportation, all these young boys we find every day at Tela Bet (drink houses) could have every chance to travel and work/trade.

## Poor young man 30s

### Your household

He is 35, grade 3 dropout. He lives with his 10 year old grade 3 son, 5 year old grade 1 daughter and 34 year old wife.

### Youth in the community

He insisted that the young have now better opportunity to create own income generating activities as they could engage in grain/vegetable trading, group beekeeping, sand/cobblestone production whereas in his time they often did not engage in their own income generating activities other than farming and herding for parents. In his time, many of the poor family young were given as hired herders/farmers, some others were forced to drop out of school to help the family. Generally, parents had less awareness about education so that many of the youth in his time couldn’t go to school or dropped out sooner. As the government has been teaching and made it obligatory, parents are now initiating their children to go to school so that there was not any problem of education access except a few who refused to go or quit school by their own decision. He insisted such youth in the past did not obtain land from the kebele, but now they could receive allocated Mote-keda land and a place for house building. Formerly it was possible for the young to get married and form their own households easily and earlier but; it has become difficult for boys to get married with whom and when they wanted as government would prevent them through marriage age assessment. He argued that the age of 30 has now became the earliest marriage age for young peoples’ first marriage. He also argued the number of young females living alone has greatly increased as their marriage age passed, because no one would want to marry them once they lost their virginity and had multiple sex partners. But he argued that girls at present could get better education access than before when they were rather getting married/bearing children at early ages. He insisted that girls are now involved in the same domestic and farm work activities as before.

He reported that the present youth are more actively participating in community meetings, celebrations, and family problem discussions; they are stricter in practicing their religious faith, fasting and attending church services, participating in teaching or as singers.

### Your life story

He was born in the same Shumsheha got; he started herding at 6 or 7 and lived with his parents until he left to get married in 1991 EC. He started school when he was 14 or so but dropped out from grade 3 due to shortage of farm labour in his parents’ household. He started having interest in girls around 19 or 20 years of age, but did not have sexual affairs until he first married. He said that he did marry his first wife by his own choice, in mutual agreement with her and approved by both parents. He lives with his first wife and their two children, a 10 years old son attending grade 3 and 5 years old daughter, grade 1. He insisted his first wife was the first girl he had first sexual affair with. He described himself as a devoted follower of Orthodox Christianity. He said his parents and siblings were the main source of support between each other in providing labour/grain assistance, but he also sought help from kebele officials in getting daily labour work opportunities.

### Government interventions which have played a role in your life - NA

### Aspirations and plans for the future - NA

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## Rich young man mid-20s

### Your household

He is 25, grade 10 complete, young household head living with his 18 year old grade 6 drop out wife.

### Youth in the community

The problems he mentioned were: lack of access to land because there wasn’t any more land redistribution so that their parents have no land even for themselves, let alone to give to their children; lack of employment for those who completed/failed high school education; too many students used to fail after grade 10 became end of high school education and return back home as they couldn’t get job; those who go to Lalibela for attending their education after grade 8 were exposed to bad habits, alcohol drinks, Khat chewing, stealing; especially the girls would involve in sexual affairs and get pregnant leading to their drop out of school.

Regarding differences from his time, the present youth have much more access to education as parents have well understood the advantages of teaching children; the young are now willing to attend education to the possible higher level but in his time many of them dropped out around the beginning; now government gives them the opportunity to take loans and run group businesses; in his time, there was shortage of seats, classrooms, and teachers but now schools are far better for students to get good education; there was better land access for young people in his time than now. Rather, they now have better work opportunities as they engage in trading, vegetable production on rented land, and seasonal work in Metema, Humera, and Raya. In his time, they used to get married when parents decided and selected for them and such marriages were good and long lasting; now many of them marry own choices, informing their parents for approval or even without parents’ consent. He insisted that getting spouses/own households and children was easier for both girls and boys in his time. Nowadays, the chances of many girls were being spoiled as their parent-arranged marriages were postponed by government interference for being underage, leading to pregnancy from other sexual partners, which in turn forced many to remain unmarried for long, because there could be no one who would want to marry such women and face problems. He reported that boys in his time (especially the rich) used to marry after 15 or 16 and stay for few years with parents, then form their own household. Now, 23/24 and above has become the common age boys get married. Formerly, the young could get children at earlier ages. Now, many of them can use birth control, they would have children only when they wanted. The present youth have less social participation with adults. Because they look on down the existing customs as backward, the young now prefer to interact youth to youth in labour sharing, starting group saving, beekeeping cooperatives, and borrowing goods/tools. The religious participation of young boys/girls is now higher as they often attend Sunday and other holy day church prayers in greater number than adults.

### Your life story

He was born as the first child to his parents in Abaregay got; his actual birth occurred in Lalibela town the day his mother went for Saturday market and caught in surprise delivery illness, then she went to her aunt’s house and gave birth; she took him back home to Abaregay after 3 weeks. He started going to and staying in the fields with herders from the age of 6 and properly started herding after 9. He started school in 1990 EC and completed grade 10 in 2001 EC, but decided not to join TVET as he considered it less important and below matching his capacity as he was expecting to go to university. While living with parents he used to participate in agricultural work after school and fully engaged in farming only after completing his education. His grandmother (father’s mother) died in 1993 EC and two of his parents’ 3 oxen died consecutively 5 or 6 years ago. In 2002 EC, he went to Dire Dawa to find work and stayed for a year working as a construction daily labourer (45 birr/day), then returned when his parents called him back promising to give him land. He is living with his first wife; their relationship started when he was attending grade 10 while she lived with her grandmother in the neighbourhood; when he completed they agreed to have their first sex; one day when her grandmother left to visit her son he went and they had sex, she lost her virginity to him. His parents refused to approve his marriage because she was from a poor family so he took her and ran away to Dire Dawa; when his parents accepted his marriage and promised to give him land, he came back and has built his own house in his parents compound and manages his own household using a cow and the 2 Timad of land they gave him; he is engaged in the production of irrigated vegetables, onions and tomatoes.

### Government interventions which have played a role in your life

He described fertilisers and irrigation use as important contributors for his life improvement; he has been producing and selling irrigated tomatoes, onions, and spinach on a quarter of his 2 Timad of land received from his parents. He insisted that education did not help him in getting jobs, but argued it will help him to efficiently manage business/trading he plans to engage in the future. He complained that has been selling his tomato produce only at Shumsheha due to lack of transportation to take it to Lalibela and other nearby towns for better price. He takes and retail it daily or some customers go and buy at the farm. He said even though he was landless/non-tax payer he has been paying all other contributions asked for by the kebele; 3 birr sport fee, 8 birr party membership fee, 10 birr for guard wage, 20 birr for ALMA , 10 birr for Abay dam, 30 for Weldiya stadium; he participated in the 60 days community work, 15 days FFW; he participates as party and youth league member.

He argued that government education policy was effective in forcing parents to send each child to school and every boy/girl in the kebele could get some education, but he complained that grade 10 policy as the end of high school was producing mass failures and joblessness, preventing many from passing to university. He also appreciated the existence of the health centre for them to get treatments, especially preventing malaria, but complained that the shortage of experienced workers and medicine prevented the community from getting better services.

### Aspirations and plans for the future

He argued that due to critical shortage of land farming was no more a means of livelihood for the young so that himself has decided to abandon it and engage in trading and honey production

He wished to save enough money through his irrigated vegetable production and plans to engage in wholesale trade including sale of clothing. He insisted he did not have any idea whether to continue education or not

## Middle wealth young man mid-20s

### Your household

He is 24, grade 4 drop out. He lives with his wife (20) and 5 year old daughter.

### Youth in the community

He indicated that boys in late teen ages have multiple affairs and enter into conflicts usually involving stick fights, inflicting injuries on each other; they start to defy orders of their parents and enter into open disagreement. He argued that such of their behaviours continue until they get be married where the heavy household responsibility would cool them down. He reported that they have education opportunity; the majority of them could attend up to grade 8 in Shumsheha. He noted that almost every boy in the community has some education; either attending school or dropped out from grade 3-8. He argued that all parents were willing to support their boys’ education, but many of those who attended school came back failed or completed as they couldn’t get any job; so they criticise themselves for becoming burdens rather than helping their poor parents, who had spent from what little they had on their education; they were asking themselves if it was fair for them to complete/fail and come back to parents once again as dependent burdens at last, when they were expected to repay their parents. He argued that some of them took their lives by hanging, some left, and others got mental illness. He reported that most of the boys in that age used to generate their own incomes by raising sheep/goats, beekeeping, and planting their own crops, commonly renting land. He argued that access to parental land became impossible because most of these boys are children of landless people who were under age during land distribution to receive their own land. He argued that being a party member has become an important criterion for students to get jobs so that young people are now expected to be EPRDF member or get nothing; he said that not only parental land access but also getting land through renting/share cropping has already become a rare opportunity so that he plans to abandon farming and engage in business including beekeeping.

### Your life story

He was born and grew up at Enkoy Beret got, Shumsheha. He started independently herding at 7, school at 13. When he was in grade 3, he dropped out of school in order to manage the family farm work because his father had a serious illness that incapacitated him for 4 months; he noted that was the first time he got farming experience working independently. His parents arranged a fiancé for him when he was 18 and he took Buche (bread gift to fiancé during the celebration at the end of 16 days fasting in August ) for two years until he was married at the age of 20; he formed his own household in his parents’ compound.

He said he started having interest in girls when he was 17, but had first sex only when got married to his first wife; he noted that as a boy of rich parents he was married at 20 to a 12 or 13 year old girl and the marriage age inspection was introduced in the next year. He said he took her virginity after taming her for 3-4 months, she slept with his mother for a month, then with him without sexual threats until he finally took her virginity; she suffered illness for 3 days. He has remained with her to date.

He described himself as a strict Orthodox Christianity follower; he mentioned his parents as main sources of support/advice.

### Government interventions which have played a role in your life

He described irrigation as an important means of cash income so that he had obtained 2000 birr in the last year by selling irrigated green pepper. He appreciated the intervention against HTP and, he did not get his daughter circumcised but because circumcision of male or female children was a taboo in his mother’s father’s line of decent. He has 2 Timads of his own land and obtained 1 Timad from his wife’s parents and another one from his parents and the tax was paid in the name of the parents so far; he said although he was a non-tax payer, he has been paying all kinds of contributions the kebele asked for, 30 birr for Weldiya stadium, 10 birr for Abay electro-dam, and 14 birr party fee. He is a party member, 1 to 5 leader, beekeeping cooperative member, and village saving member together with wife and daughter.

He appreciated that government policy to provide credit to organised youth cooperatives was helping them in increasing incomes. He also reported that the DAs’ advice about irrigation use and HEWs’ education on health care/disease prevention helped him/the community to understand the advantages.

### Aspirations and plans for the future

He reported that he plans to keep his 5 years daughter attending her kindergarten education until her 7th year, and then would take her to start formal schooling. He said he would try to save by growing irrigated crops, trading, and start his education around 2006 EC or after.

## Poor young man mid-20s

### Your household

He is 23, a BA graduate in English language. He is living with his mother, 3 brothers, and a sister

### Youth in the community

He argued teenagers in the past could engage in farming when they failed/dropped out from school, but now they would stay idle going to towns rather than involving in farming; they had little opportunity to create their own job other than working for parents whereas now the young could involve in trades or group business; girls were not daring to travel alone without being raped, but now fear of rape has decreased due to strong law enforcement; boys/girls were more successful in their education as they were not exposed to any addictive alcohol drinks, cigarette, or khat, but now many are less attentive to their education and fail repeatedly. Previously, they had less education access due to parents’ resistance to send them, but now most of them could go to school through parents’ push; they used to marry at early ages through parental arrangement whereas most of them now get married in their late 20s or early 30s due to marriage age limitation, lack of land to form own households, or attending school; they used to bear children starting at early ages whereas now most have delayed it by using contraceptives or marrying lately; previously they could have better access to parents’/rented land whereas the unemployed young now have less interest to engage in farming, rather preferring to migrate for seasonal daily labour when they fail/drop out or while attending school. He argued the young are now more religious participants than before; they were active church attendants even more than adults.

### Your life story

He was born in Shumsheha got. He said he was never involved in herding/farming. After his father died he continued living with his stepmother. After his stepmother died in 1989 EC, he came and lived with his mother. In 1992 EC, their house caught in fire and 11 sheep were burned to death; during his childhood, he had a long term stomach-ache that was cured through Tsebel (holy water) treatment and he didn’t have any serious illness ever since in his young life. He started school in 1987 EC and graduated with BA from Dessie university in 2003 EC. He said he started having interest in girls when he joined the university, had his first sex with the college first girlfriend. He noted that he was too eager for having sexual intercourse, but considered it as an ordinary experience after he did it with the first girlfriend. He described himself as a good Orthodox Christian faith follower; he considers his mother as the most important source of support.

### Government interventions which have played a role in your life

He insisted that even though he was not able to get any job, his education helped him to be knowledgeable and he hoped it would help him in the future. He noted the coming of electricity helped much in his studies, and for the family to get light; presence of the water points helped them to avoid the common diseases they suffered when drinking river/spring water. He argued that as a child he had experienced uvula cutting, but his younger siblings avoided it due to anti-HTP policy.

He appreciated that expansion of education access was very good in changing community attitude; DAs’ extension service helped farmers in improving their productivity; government NRM work enabled the kebele to improve in forest/soil conservation and protect their farm land from erosion.

### Aspirations and plans for the future

He insisted that he decided never to wait for a government job opportunity, rather he plans to open an English language training school after saving some money. At the time of the interview, he was about to go to Gambela to be employed as a teacher. He said his friend there had told him to go and start teaching at a high school.

## Rich young man in late teens

### Your household

He is 19, attending grade 10. He lives with father (46), mother (34), sister (7) attending grade 1, and 2 brothers (14 and 16) attending grades 6 and 8 respectively

### Youth in the community

He reported that boys/girls now have good access to education, but absence of public transport made it difficult for them to continue education after grade 8 going to Lalibela; they also face great problems to find any job after completing or when they fail from high school; many of them could not engage in farming either as they would lose interest in/forget the skills of farm work during their stays in the school. He argued that almost all children have education access, but absence of grades 9 and 10 prevented many from continuing beyond grade 8. He noted that many boys whose parents have irrigable land could produce cash crops and obtain their own incomes, but the majority didn’t have any land access so that some were seasonally going to Metema, Humera, and Raya for daily labour farm work. He said the existence of tap water, electricity, grain mills, the health centre, and the airport were important for community development. He argued that early marriage has stopped, particularly in Shumsheha got, so that girls no more drop out from school to get married; girls are now facing fewer rape problems, but they have fewer job opportunities as most of the time the male could win in advertised vacant post competitions. He reported that young Muslims were average in religious participation because they are small in number and there was no mosque, whereas women/girls among Christians were regular churchgoers.

### Your life story

He was born at Shumsheha, 1985 EC and lived with parents ever since. He never worked as a full time herder except herding his grandparents’ livestock when he went to stay with them during Kiremit (Ethiopian winter) for 2 -3 months until school opened; his parents gave their land for share croppers back in their place of origin and didn’t keep any animals; their main occupation in Shumsheha was trade so that he was not involved in farm work except in selling at their shop. He insisted he didn’t have any serious illness since childhood. He described himself as a Muslim and has received religious education by going to a religious school (Madresa) in another area (in Mersa). His parents and siblings were the important people he depended on so far. He insisted he did not start any sexual affairs with girls yet, as he has to wait until his parents choose for him.

### Government interventions which have played a role in your life

He said that the majority of the young in the community could get education due to government school expansion and parents’ improved understanding about advantages of education; he argued that elementary education was fully accessed by the community, but absence of grades 9 and 10 forced some to drop out after grade 8. The presence of grain mills, electricity, and piped water was important in improving the community.

He said the health centre saved them the time and labour they would have required going to Lalibela for medical treatment. He insisted the anti-HTP policy was working effectively, as he believed female circumcision and uvula cutting have completely stopped.

### Aspirations and plans for the future

He said he would like to complete his education and his plan is to be engaged in business/trade activities and live a good life.

## Middle wealth young man in late teens

### Your household

He is 19, grade 9 drop out. He lives with his 50 year old mother, 2 brothers 24 and 16 years old both attending grade 10; a 22 year old sister who dropped out from grade 6 due to recurring illness caused by Jin (demons)/ Serategna Beltuwat (a craft worker ate her; attacked by an evil eye spirit).

### Youth in the community

He insisted teenagers are now more involved in alcohol drinks, fights over girls or puberty driven trivial things, parents were initiating them to attend their education, but the young now had less interest in education, and devoted less time/energy to study their education. He argued that shortage of land was not that much a critical problem except for those whose land was taken by the airport; and insisted it was because only a few were trying to create work for themselves such as trade and group cooperative businesses. He mentioned that there were some young who obtained their own incomes by working on individual/project construction, weeding/harvesting daily labour, and trading by taking loans through parents’ assets guarantee. He said it is now difficult for the young to get a wife/husband when they need and they commonly bear children late as many use contraceptives and get married after 20. He argued that especially girls going to Lalibela after grade 8 were exposed to sexual engagement or rape; he mentioned that the day before the interview, a girl was raped by a discharged soldier as she was returning home from Lalibela/school. He noted that both boys and girls were regular church attendants and become more devoted to fasting and church prayers.

### Your life story

He was born at Shumsheha got in 1985 EC. He lived with his parents and started independently herding at 7 and farming at 12, working for the household. In 1999 EC, their house was burned down together with all property/assets in it and nearby, including grain; the kebele administration provided them 5 quintals of wheat food aid. His grandmother died in 2001 EC; he had a serious malaria illness for a month in 2003 EC resulting in his absence from school and work. He started school in 1990 EC and dropped out in 2000 EC due to malaria illness that forced him stay in bed more than a month. In this year, he applied to register, but the school rejected him saying the time had expired to continue his education from where he stopped as he had passed 4 years away; first he told them he had stopped only for two years so that they registered him at first, but later on they checked and found out that he didn’t register for 4 consecutive years and removed him from the school threatening him with charges of cheating. He has been involved in all types of household work, mainly farm work. He said his education helped him to improve his life by improving farming/productivity; it has brought him mental satisfaction. He insisted his interest in girls clearly started in the last year after his parents arranged a fiancée for him; his mother and brother were taking Mugera (big bread) gift for the girl during the 16 days fasting end celebration. He wanted to prepare the wedding ceremony to take place this year as he has got a good harvest, but his would-be parent-in-laws advised to postpone it to next year because they had a crop failure due to pest attack. He described his faith as Orthodox Christian; he described his mother and siblings as his important supporters.

### Government interventions which have played a role in your life

He appreciated the health centre for helping the community in malaria treatment, and his family members has been receiving vaccination, treatment, and medicinal services.

He used fertilisers and improved seed and obtained good produce; they have good access to tap water, grain mills, and electric light. They paid 66 birr tax land, 40 birr for Weldiya stadium, 3 birr sport fee, 40 birr ALMA (Amhara development and rehabilitation association), and 4 family members participated in 60 days’ community development work; he paid 3 birr youth association membership fee.

### Aspirations and plans for the future

He said he plans to save good money for some time by renting irrigable land and to shift to trading as the main means of income for his own household in the future.

## Poor young man in late teens

### Your household

He is 19, grade 6 drop out. He lives with his 52 year old mother and 21 year old, grade 10 sister.

### Youth in the community

He reported that a lack of land and jobs were common problems for those who failed or completed grade 10 and above; girls now are better protected from rape and abduction as people fear/know the law will punish them severely if they commit rape against women, especially underage girls; but girls had unemployment problems when they completed/failed their education so were forced to engage in alcohol selling leading to pregnancy/child bearing out of wedlock. He argued that girls in the past were commonly getting married at 14-15, but as they legally could marry after 18, girls now bear children later, after 20s. He insisted the work pattern of teenagers remained the same as before; girls have been involved in both domestic and farm activities, even the students and boys are engaged in farm work along with their education.

### Your life story

He was born in Shumsheha in 1982EC. At the age of 6, he started going to the fields following herders and independently herded animals after 7. Of the shocks he mentioned were: his mother and father divorced and he remained with his mother ever since; the death of his uncle (mother’s brother) 6 years ago; the death of an ox this year. During most of his childhood, he lived together with his parents; since the divorce he has been living with his mother. He insisted he hadn’t any serious illness ever since childhood; he started going to school at the age of 8 and dropped out from grade 6 in order to manage his mother’s household farm work. He reported that he was not involved in farming until l8 when he dropped out of school to help his weak mother; for the last 2 years, he has also been working as delala for his own income.

He said it was in this year that he started having interests in girls and insisted even this didn’t go beyond feeling/thinking about it and he never had sexual experiences yet nor has any particular girlfriend.

### Government interventions which have played a role in your life

He noted his education helped him to plan his work, use mobile / letters to communicate with traders/truck drivers to arrange and do business.

His mother’s household paid 30 birr land tax, 8 birr for community guards’ wage, sport fee 3 birr; his sister also paid 8 or 12 birr party membership fee. He was involved in cutting green grass for spreading on the floor of the kebele meeting hall to host a 5 day party members’/development team leaders’ training; he participated in the construction of a community police office and in collecting/cutting of fodder planted at the FTC.

He appreciated that the health centre has been important for the family and the community in malaria and other disease treatment; the 4 water points at Shumsheha were very useful for them to stop different stomach diseases common when they used river/spring water.

### Aspirations and plans for the future

He said he will try to continue his education starting from 2005 EC and complete if possible or he will start his own business/trading if he fails.