# Interviews with male teenagers in Sirba, Ude, Ada’a wereda, East Shewa

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## Rich male teenager 13

### Personal

I live with my parents, and we have seven family members, I have one sister and four brothers. There is no one else living with us.

### Opportunities for 13 year old boys

Farming is our livelihood, my father mostly works on farming activities but male children including me help him in all farming activities including ploughing. We work on the weeding and harvesting. Our father is not supposed to work on the weeding, because it is left for children. Besides the farming activity, my father is employed for the community as a guard for the public water point, and he earns 1000 birr a month. There is no other work or income except the above mentioned. My household is a middle class family.

I am 13 years old and attending school at grade five at Denkaka School. Out of 54 students I came 19th in my class rank. I have never dropped out of school, but I missed class last year for a month, when I was sick.

In the past 12 months I ploughed with oxen, I worked on clearing the weeds, I looked after the livestock, I did the harvesting, I was involved in threshing, I fetched water, transported yield by loading a donkey from the field to the place where it is threshed, and I also assisted in taking the product to the market with my dad. My father decides who should work on what and when. The work given to me at all the times was easy for me and I didn’t complain. My friends help me in some of the works like weeding, and transporting the product to home. My father and my brothers help me in ploughing and other farm activities, but my father rarely works on weeding.

I worked on digging the ground for construction of a house for which I was paid 50 birr a day, I did this for a week and I earned 350 birr. I bought shoes and clothes with this money in the past 15 days. I did this work only once and never had such an income generating activity before. If such opportunities were there on weekends without affecting my school attendance, I would take them.

The income earning job didn’t affect my school because I worked on my semester break. The work was not that hard for me, affecting health, even though it is a tiresome work I liked it because the payment was good.

### Combining work and education

For me it is difficult to combine school and income earning jobs, because both need your time at the same time. I did the work mentioned above only because I was on my break. I will work only on breaks and weekends in the future too if there is the opportunity.

In my spare time I work on my family’s farm, I play with my friends mainly football, I look after my cattle and give grass or straw of *Teff.* I also study and do my homework.

I can’t draw pictures and I am not interested in it, but we sing with friends when we feel bored, and during holiday. I am an orthodox Christian and I follow my religion, I go to church on some occasions but not every Sunday. I am not involved in any church service. I am not interested in politics and I don’t have a concept of it. I play football but not any other sport except the running races in school. I am not a member of any youth organizations. Yes I spend time with my friends singing, playing football, running off one another etc. There are girls who play with us. I have a girlfriend that is special to me. I watch movies when I am at home by renting a CD from Udea village, I help my mother by fetching water, I buy her anything from the shop, I sometimes cook for her and for the family, I make coffee, and I wash clothes.

I plan to finish my studies and join some college to study Maths, and I want to teach Maths here in Sirba primary school. I want to establish a family and live in this same village, I am not interested to go and live elsewhere. Besides teaching, I want to have my own land and plough it here. My father gave me some land/half hectare even now, and besides I wish to get more land in the future. I don’t want to leave this community but if I have to leave, I would prefer Debrezeyet because I like it. I know relatives living there/my aunt. I don’t have plans to go there but I said if I have to, I will go. I am 13 now and I plan to marry when I am 25. My parents will not be involved in my decision to marry when, whom and how, because I don’t want that. It depends how I manage my life, if I have money I can decide at any time, they are not expected to influence my choice of whom to marry. I have a girlfriend and I think I will marry her. My girlfriend is my classmate in grade five, I don’t know if she is planning to finish her study or not.

I would like to have two kids not more than that. I don’t have a role model to mention. I hope that I would be a maths teacher, I would get married, and I will have land to plough and support my income in the future. I don’t have any worry about which I am concerned.

### Establishing an independent livelihood

There are many young men who do paid work and attend school. They are employed for the Chinese company for road construction, and they usually unload cement from the trucks. There are no hard and dangerous works. There are limited options here, except the Chinese company which is mainly carrying cement. I was not involved in any paid work except the one in which I dug holes for construction just recently. I want to work only on the weekends if I get a job in the community, not in the Chinese company. There are about 10 young girls and boys who are my age but are not able to attend school. Some of them couldn’t afford it and a few of them are sick including evil eye. There are some who dropped out of school. Although they have a work burden at home, this should not be enough to make them drop out.

 Farming is the main livelihood which helps people to establish an independent family, but trading of agricultural outputs could also help to do so.

There are many graduates of 10th grade and those graduated from colleges, who didn’t get a job here and are engaged in farming, and some are engaged in daily labour. There are no unemployed; everyone tries to get some job available in the village whatever it is.

I don’t know how hard it is for those who work and also attend school, but they sometimes are late to school, and they are absent sometimes.

Boys of my age drink Tej and Tella, and also a few drink Areke openly. The community never takes it as a problem or taboo, it is common and no one sees it as strange. Even older people buy drinks for us, and some say buy me or let me buy you one. Chat and smoking is not common here, and I don’t know anyone smoking or chewing chat.

### Getting married

The minimum age for boys to marry is 18, and for girls it is 17. Fewer men marry at the age of 18 and it is not common for boys even to marry at this age. This is the age for marrying appropriately here. I have no friend who has married. The disadvantage of marrying is when the couple has no land and money to live on, usually early age marriage has such risk, they may not have a job, land etc. There is no good thing that I can imagine in marrying. I said I will marry at the age of 25 because it should happen by, because it is the acceptable age in community. However, I am not saying that I should get married when I am 25 based on my knowledge of the advantages of marriage. The choice of who to marry is free for the couple, parents don’t influence it normally.

Those men from rich households have a chance to have money to lead their newly formed family easily, but the poor will suffer, and it is also easier for the rich to find a wife. The Kebele does not intervene if anyone marries under 18.

### Setting up an independent household

As I said it before setting up a family is difficult for poor people and rich ones can make it easily because they can get a big share of land, support from the family when they want to set up their family. The barrier for most young people I think is lack of land on which they can depend for their livelihood. Besides there are no other job opportunities than farming here. Some young men get land from family which is usually small and they try to get more by lease. Others work on daily labour or stone extraction to support their income, but I don’t know if there is something else they do to support their independent life. It is common to help each other between the parents and newly formed families.

### Migrating

Many young men commute to Nazret in search of work, to work in the new road project that connects Nazret to Addis Ababa. Those above age 18 tend to migrate there. The number of those who go to Nazret is increasing from time to time, but I don’t know what is happening at the place where they are going. They go early in the morning and they come back in the evening. I don’t know any migrants who left the area in search of work and remain away from the village. I think young men don’t migrate far because they can access jobs in the Chinese road construction here and in Nazret. I don’t have a plan to migrate at all.

### Living in the community

I like playing with my friends when I live in the community, I also enjoy being with my girlfriend. I like the village itself and my school. In addition I like ploughing more than other farm activities. There is nothing that I dislike while living in this community. I feel like this is a peaceful place to live and there is no threat here. I hope that internal roads will be constructed, but I don’t expect much change in other things.

Friendship is based on school/class, and through neighbourhood, there is no friendship on a religious basis or other. There was conflict among two young groups when one group wanted to force away another group keeping cattle in the area of the other’s group. The conflict caused some injuries on the face and body of some from both sides. There was no strike at all. My parents are not worried about me, because it is not that much of a big problem to worry them, and there is no other case. Sometimes I drink Tej and Tella and they don’t worry about it, they allowed me to drink.

I know that HIV is a disease, and I know it is transmitted through sharp things, through sexual intercourse with an infected person when it is done without protection, like condoms. I don’t know any further thing. There is a tendency for sexual activities among young men here. Usually it is with girlfriends but they might also do it with others in the village that are not girlfriends. I see that many young men have condoms in their pockets, sometimes they come out suddenly from their pocket. When adults see they criticize and shame the young, but among us it is easy to talk about it and show each other.

### The economy

I feel like the community has become wealthier than it was years ago, because they became hard workers now, and the market price also increased for outputs. There is a change in the farm outputs mainly because of hard work and the use of fertilizers. The crops produced are the same, there are high breed cows now, and there is a change in sowing wheat in lines that is new. There is no other change on the farming technology or in the way we do farming.

I didn’t notice the changes in livestock, but there are high breed cows bought by villagers. We have few sheep here. We don’t keep goats usually; there are only five or six households who keep goats. There are more sheep at this time than there were three years ago.

There is no difference in schools of the rich and the poor, they all attend one, but for those who failed to pay the school fee, which is 150 birr, they take a letter from the kebele as they are very poor and they will be allowed to join school for free. But with regards to facilities there is a change in school materials.

There is not much change in job opportunities except the road construction work in the past 3 years. There is also no skilled work like woodwork or others.

I don’t know about migrants but some young men go to Nazret and Debrezeyt. I can’t compare the number with the past. Inequality increased because some sections of the community became very rich, while the poor made less progress.

Children of my age vary in lifestyle, facility and care depending on the wealth status. Those from rich households have nice clothes, shoes, school materials, mobile phones, and they have a nice home. They also have enough time to study while their poor friends are working on various things like farm work, house chores, and even daily labour.

Poor young men couldn’t set up an independent family as they lack enough land. As a result they are not able to marry at the time they wish to, unlike those who are from rich families.

### Religion

There is not much emphasis to go to church every time, mostly the monks and a few people go to church regularly. But there are a few who are not interested in their religion at all. There is only one religion and it is Orthodox Christianity. Young people are now becoming more interested in attending church than before, I don’t know why. I am not becoming more interested. I don’t see young people going anywhere for religious purposes other than attending church in the community. I am not sure about the rules of religion becoming so strict or not.

I am not that much involved in church and I don’t know what extra things they do.

### Politics

There are peaceful relations between the Kebele administration and the youth here. I am not involved in any youth organizations and I don’t know any message from the kebele. I didn’t hear it from friends even, but none of my friends are members of the youth association, youth Federation, or league

There is no land given to the youth, no new sport or recreation place given by the government. Recently, there are generally less interventions for young men to the kebele. If don’t know any training given for youth, and the livelihood options are not there. The government could make a good football ground for us rather than playing here and there.

Young people are expected to contribute to the community by helping parents in every aspect of work both on the farm and indoors.

No one asked us to be party members, and I don’t think there is such pressure on other young people of my age, but I am not sure about the older ones.

I don’t have any idea whether party membership brings benefits or harm.

I am not sure if we have these youth organizations like association, league etc. in our Kebele

Young people live in agreement with the administration and there is no conflict or hatred of the government. Besides there are not opposition parties here to which you may say anybody is attracted, but I don’t know what older youth think, that may vary from my friends.

### Inter-generational relations

There are peaceful relations among the family and we never had tension. We respect each other.

There is a very good relationship in my family, we the children obey our parents and older siblings are respected.

The good thing is that usually the family sit and talk at night, we celebrate holidays together, we eat together, we respect and care for one another. I don’t see any problem in the relationship of our family.

In general, community members live in harmony, younger generations respect old people and any old man can send a boy/a girl to do something for him, but not farm work assistance for long hours. This happens only when the family cooperates with other households.

There is no tension among the community, I didn’t see anyone in serious conflict, but the moment that brings people together is holidays where celebrations take place at church and in every household.

## Middle-wealth male teenager 13

### Personal

I live with my parents, I have two brothers and two sisters, we have two of our servants living with us, one of which is a farm worker and the other is a maid. Our livelihood is based entirely on farming. My household is better off, we have 5 hectares of land, 8 oxen, 7 cows, many chickens, and I don’t know the number. But only two of our cows are hybrids. I am 13 years old and I attend school at grade 6. I never dropped out of school. I buy soap and other things from the shop; I clean up dishes with our maid, and take the calves outside and keep them for a while. I didn’t do any income earning jobs in my life. I play with my friends, I listen to music, I watch TV, and I study and talk with my brothers and sisters. I don’t sing but listen to music. I don’t know about any other art. I am not active in religion; I only go when there is a holy day. I don’t have any idea about politics. I play football, my friends are all girls, but I don’t have a special girlfriend. I study, listen to music and obey my mother if she orders me to do anything when I am at home.

In the future I wish to go to university and live in big towns but I don’t know where, maybe Addis Ababa, Nazret or any other. If I want to be a farmer my father might give me some land, but I don’t want to be. I plan to finish my study and be a doctor. I don’t know when to marry, I didn’t think of this yet. I am 13 now so I am left with many years to think about it. My father may say you can’t marry this or that girl but I don’t want to worry about it now. I only want two children when I am old enough to have children. I don’t have any role model, my worry is I don’t want to be a farmer, because I don’t like it. So if I am not able to become a doctor, I might end up being farmer, so this is my worry. My hope is I will become a doctor and live and work in other big towns and help my family.

### Opportunities for 13 year old boys

Here we have two schools one in Sirba and the other in Ude, so that is our opportunity to learn, but I don’t know other things that can help children of my age. We had no problem when we were growing up.

### Combining work and education

Most children of my age don’t work. There are a few children who are sick, who are less interested, or their parents are unable to send them to school. They drop out when they are sick or when their parents are sick only. Usually they re-join school when they are well, or when their parents have recovered. Of my age, no one lives apart from their families, but older ones start their own farms and get married to set up their own family. There are some who have completed 10th grade and who are not able to get jobs. I don’t know what they do, but they assist their families in farming. I know one guy who graduated from university and didn’t get a job for a year, he works with the Chinese. I don’t know about work and education because I don’t know anyone working and attending school. No one drinks, chews chat or smokes at my age.

### Establishing an independent livelihood

 How could I know who gets land after 5 or 6 years, things might change, but those families having enough land might share willingly at any time. I don’t have a friend wishing to be a farmer. But I see other children who are not my friends have expressing their interest in farming. I want to leave this community, but two of my friends want to work as a teacher here. God knows what work we all might end up with. Though it is not our desire, we might be farmers if we are not successful in education. No one wants to migrate now, but we all want to join college. I know 3 young men around 20 years of age, who earn money, one from the Chinese company, the other from stone production.

For poor people everything is difficult, they can marry if they want but the girl’s family don’t want to give their daughter to a poor man.

### Getting married

I don’t know youngest age but men usually marry around 23 or above. I am not sure how many people married at this age in the whole kebele. It is normal if you marry around 23 or 24. None of my friends married, my age is not appropriate for marriage. If you marry you may leave your beloved parents, especially when you have to live in another kebele. I know girls who have married and left the community to live with their husband’s in a faraway place. I don’t understand the details of advantages and disadvantages, sorry. Some parents decide for their children whom to marry, but the children usually choose by themselves. How could government affect marriage? The age of marriage is not decided by government.

### Setting up an independent household

For rich households it is easy when the man wants to do so, but poor families don’t have land to share, they can’t assist the man when he constructs a house, and daughters’ families are reluctant to give them to a poor young man. I don’t know how dependent newly married couples are.

### Migrating

It is not common that young men migrate, but I know two of the girls in my neighbourhood left to go to Arab countries. Women go when they are 18 or 20 like that. I never heard what job they got, if they had any problem in travelling or so. I don’t want to migrate anywhere.

### Living in the community

I like my home, my family, and friends. What I don’t like is our village in the summer season when the days are foggy, the roads are muddy. I usually sit at home watching TV, listening to music and talking with my mom in the kitchen. But when the rainy season ends, the village becomes beautiful. However I want to live in big towns, I became interested when I saw Addis Ababa where my aunt lives. I am not sure the community is changing, many things are the same. Yes it is a peaceful place to live. Friendship is by neighbourhood. But there is no conflict among groups. There is no risk of violence. If I stay out late at night my family worry because they say it is not safe as maybe hyenas will come and attack you. They try to control me by telling me what to do, where to go or I must inform them about where I am. I never chew, smoke, or drink alcohol. We were taught that HIV is a virus that gets into human blood when we have sexual intercourse with many people without a condom, and once we are infected there is no medicine. I don’t know anyone who has HIV in Sirba village. I don’t know whether young men here have a tendency for sexual activity.

### The economy

My family is getting better, and two of my neighbours bought more cattle and are able to produce more than ever, but I can’t talk about the whole community. The crops produced are Teff, wheat and chickpea, beans etc. There is no change in this regard. Now more improved seeds are used in my family. I see that there are more cattle now, even in our house. There are a few shoats here, chickens are there in large numbers, honey production is not common here. There is a new camp near here, where many young men go and work, which is a new opportunity. I don’t see new people coming here, and there is less of a trend of leaving this place by men. There are poor people and rich people here, the poor are not changing much, I can see from my friends’ family, but my family and others are also progressing having many cattle, and a big harvest. Some of my friends can’t afford to buy uniforms every year. I sometimes give them exercise books when I have extra and also pens, as they fail to buy when theirs are finished.

### Religion

I see some people going to church regularly but not the majority. I don’t think they are less interested, maybe they are busy. Only Orthodox Christianity is there. My family and other people go to churches in nearby kebele rarely. I don’t know if people come from other areas to preach here. Religious rules are not clear to me. The church I think has monks only to teach, they can’t engage in other government work/ development issues.

### Politics

Youth have a good relationship with the government; they don’t have any negative thing. But we didn’t receive any messages or training yet. I didn’t see any livelihood activities provided for the young in Sirba, no facilities for sport and there is no centre for youth. The kebele is not doing anything for us. We are obedient to do anything we have to do for our parents, or for the community, but for development I am not sure what to do. No one asked me to join the ruling party; none of my friends are members. We don’t know if party membership has any benefit. I didn’t hear about youth organizations here, and I am not a member to such bodies. We are not interested in politics of any kind, we don’t have any problem with the government though.

### Inter-generational relations

Our father is the most respected in my family, then my mother. We the children respect them and we respect each other, depending on sonority. We have very good relationship at home; our parents love us and care for us. There is no bad thing at all. All of us respect elders, but there are two boys who don’t obey old people, but most of us are not like these guys. The community gathers during epiphany, and Meskel holidays. There is no tension here, everything is peaceful.

## Poor male teenager 13

### Personal

I live with my parents; I have one brother who is 2 years old. My family’s livelihood is farming. I plough with my father; I cooperate with my mother and father to do the rest of farm work. We have 1 hectare of land and two oxen. My family is poor compared to others. I am 14 years old, attending grade 6, I didn’t drop out of school yet.

I did all the farm work, ploughing, weeding, harvesting, and transporting the harvest near to village. I sometimes cook for the family, I fetch water, and I wash clothes. The hardest work for me is ploughing. My parents order me regarding what to do and I obey them.

I never had any income earning job, but I sometimes receive money from water sales from the private water source for which my uncle is hired. For this he will give me some money to buy pens, exercise books etc. because I assist him in the work sometimes.

My other uncle is living in Beirut / Arab country, and he dug a water well and from the ground the water moves up into a tanker by electric power. He earns money from this business. And another uncle of mine is employed to collect the money from the water sales, and I assist him sometimes when I am free.

My plan next year is to continue my education. In my free time I play football, the other game is: we tie a rope on a tree and we sit on the rope and move on it, which relaxes us. I listen to music on my mobile phone, from radio at home.

I regularly go to church every Sunday, but I am not involved in church services. I don’t know if I am active in religion or not because it is difficult to rate myself. I am not involved in politics, youth associations, league or federation as well.

We talk with my friends when we are not playing football or rope pulling game in group. Usually we talk about school, about farming, about our families and other friends. I never talked about girls though my friends raise it sometimes. Two of my friends have lovers, but I don’t have one.

I want to complete my study and be a doctor, and I want to come back here to this area and work in Denkaka Health centre. I don’t want to be a farmer, because farming is a tiresome activity.

I feel like it is good to marry at the age of 35. I don’t know whom to marry in the future. With regards to the number of children, I think it is enough for me to have two children.

I didn’t think of a role model, and I don’t think I have one.

I wish to be a medical doctor and get rich by working as a doctor. I have nothing to worry about.

### Opportunities for 13 year old boys

There are schools, one in each in Sirba and Ude. So children, depending on their age, can attend school which is one opportunity. For all of us our parents help us though they are poor, so it is good to live here with their support. I don’t see other opportunity, for older ones they have begun to work with the Chinese, so it is good for them.

### Combining work and education

Yes many young boys of my age work on their parents’ farm but there are a few who are engaged in the Chinese camp work because they want older ones who can carry cement and are able to do hard work. Carrying heavy cement to unload from trucks is hard for less strong boys like me. There are no alternatives that young men can choose. I personally prefer to work on my study rather than spending time doing labour work because it is hard and takes much of your time in addition to the family farm work obligation. From class 4 students dropped out, but I am not sure what is going on in other classes and in the entire school. When some students are sick they stay away from school until they recover, but it is not common. If a student stays away from the school for more than 2 months he is not allowed to return to that class until the next academic year comes.

Farming is the main livelihood here both for the old and young people. To establish an independent family most young people take land from their parents and start ploughing it. Some try to engage in daily labour in farms to earn additional income. Others migrate to other towns and bring some money to help their newly established families.

There are students who didn’t pass grade 10 who stay here and work in daily labour with the Chinese company. I am not sure about the grade 12 graduates because they have to go to other towns/universities to study. I don’t know what kind of work they would have preferred. But the option is to assist the family in farming or the Chinese work. When young people who are poor want to study and work at the same time, they can’t have time to read their books and do their homework. I didn’t see anyone of my age chewing chat, smoking or drinking alcohol, but we drink *Tela,* sometimes which is not that much alcoholic.

### Establishing an independent livelihood

For example my parents have only one hectare of land that can’t be shared with me. You can imagine how those who have the same land size as my family find it difficult to share a piece of land with their children. But, the better off they may give their children half a hectare or so. I don’t think getting land is an easy thing for many young men, but I am afraid to give you proportions of people, because it is going to be after many years, and I don’t know how many young men we have in the kebele.

I don’t think all of my friends want to be farmers. Most of my friends want to stay here in this community but there is one who wants to live in Addis Ababa in the future, maybe because he has relatives there. He knows Addis Ababa from when he goes there for vacation.

I want to be a doctor after I complete my study, I will come and work for my community to treat them when they are sick. I hope to be hired in Denkaka health centre. But my friends want to be teachers, traders, and drivers. I am not sure where we all may end up but this is what we want. All of us want to go to college even the one who says he wants to be a driver.

I know three people in their 20s; they all work in farming but one of them also works in stone mining.

It is difficult for poor young men to set up a house of their own, because even they may not get land to build a house, let alone farmland, so they stay with family, but they may do labour of any kind.

### Getting married

I don’t know whether there is a limit of age for men to marry, but parents don’t allow it if you are 15 or 16. Young people here usually marry at 28 or so. I am not sure what number or proportion marries at this age but there are different ages. Some may marry a bit younger than this age, but usually at around 28, 29. I don’t have any friend who is married. I don’t know the advantage of marriage but it is good to have family at the right age, not for us. If you marry you will have children, and if you don’t have money, land or harvest you will be in a problem as you may not be able to feed your children very well.

Parents usually advise their children that they don’t decide for them whom to marry, but as they need their help they might decide when it should be. Poor households have nothing to give for their children in assisting their children to have land, house, and no one wants to marry the poor and landless.

### Setting up an independent household

I told you earlier, poor young men can’t share the land of their parents as they may not have enough, so it may take a long time for them to get land. If they don’t have land they can’t build a house and are not able to produce crops, therefore, how could these young men establish their own family? Those who married with the help of their parents get help in many things until they get strong. But I don’t know such people closely and I can’t tell you in detail how they help each other.

### Migrating

It is not that common for young men to migrate for work. I only know one young man who is 21 who went to Debrezeyt. I don’t know what he does, but I heard that he got a job there. He sometimes comes to visit his family. I don’t know any problem in travelling because it is near here, I don’t know anyone who had a problem in travelling. I don’t want to migrate anywhere, I just wait until I finish my study and I will go to college where I am given a place.

### Living in the community

I like my family, my friends, my school, and the village. I am not happy about the farm work which is tiresome, and we earn little as we have not enough land, so we don’t produce surpluses and there are some economic problems. I see mom and dad lack money to buy what we need for the family. My uncle supports me, he even buys me clothes. There is no big change in our village and I don’t expect too much change in five years. Maybe more houses will be built and there will be no huts that will have been replaced by iron sheet houses.

I like the village; it is peaceful place to live. I like it, I see now that friendship is based on neighbourhood, classmates. Some children who are in Sunday school have more contact and friendship because they meet frequently, but it doesn’t mean that they exclude others. There was no conflict between groups but just individuals might disagree and fight at school or in the village. But it is rare, schoolteachers and parents mediate to end hostility. There is no violence, and worries that my parents have. My parents don’t want me to stay out at night and they usually advise me in case I stay out with friends. This is because they want me to study not because they fear that something bad might happen to me. HIV is a virus that has no cure; it is transferred through unsafe sex, blood contact when one is wounded, and use of sharp materials. There is no one affected by HIV here in our village, I never heard such a thing at all. In my age no one has sexual relations, I don’t know, maybe the older ones. I don’t know about precautions they may use.

### The economy

Some people who have a lot of land and many oxen have progressed, but not poor people like my family, because we produce for consumption. Everyone uses fertilizer and some people plant seeds in lines, but I don’t know when it started. Crops produced are teff, wheat, chickpea etc. oxen are used, and fertilizer, planting in line and many people are engaged in farming.

I see that some people have a large number of livestock, and the big cows/*yeferenj lam* ‘improved ones’ and people are now buying chickens which are not local ones. I don’t think there is migration from here.

Yes, there are some people who are rich and there are also poor like us and even worse than us. I don’t remember how it was before to compare.

Rich families buy nice clothes, shoes, education materials, their uniforms are used only for school and therefore they are clean and new all the time. They don’t need to work on the farm for long hours because the family can hire labour. But for poor people life is the reverse. Rich may marry as fast they want, but young men from poor families should delay to establish their own family, because their parents are unable to help them in doing so. Land is scarce and there is no other job alternative.

### Religion

There are a few people who are committed to church and religious activities, but the majority go to church only when there is some sort of celebration. But there are some who regularly attend and some youth go to Sunday school, but not me. There is only orthodox Christianity. I don’t see young people getting more interested in religion. Sometimes monks come from Debrezeyt and preach here, but it is less common for people to go to other places to attend worship. I don’t know if church rules are becoming stricter, I didn’t observe that. There was no conflict related to religion and the church is not involved in other government development activities.

### Politics

There is no problem between the youth and the kebele administration, or the government. I don’t know any message transferred to youth here. There was no livelihood activity done for the youth, maybe I don’t know if there is, but as far as my knowledge is concerned, there is nothing. Land was not given to young people because it is not given but can be rented from individuals. The government could repair our road which is muddy during the rainy season, our school could be upgraded and we may not need to walk to Ude village when we pass grade 5. Young people can engage in different activities to help the community, like contributing labour for public works. No one asks youth my age to be party members, so I don’t expect there is pressure. I don’t see the benefit of being a party member. We don’t have a youth association/league. We are not involved in government activities, adults do so, and there is no opposition or interest to have it.

### Inter-generational relations

We respect each other and I am obedient to my parents. They love me and try to care for me as much as they can. We respect elders in the community. I hope all the children here do so. There is no problem in this regard. During holy days, weddings etc. old and young people gather though the respect puts younger generations in second place and treatment which is not bad. There is no tension in our community.

## Rich male teenager 16

### Personal

I live with my parents, I have three sisters and two brothers, and one farm worker is employed who lives with us. We entirely depend on farming. My family is better off compared to others. I am 16 years old, and I attend grade 9 at Ude high school. I never drop out of school. I usually support my family in farming activities, but when exam time approaches my father allows me much time to study, I also support the family by taking out the livestock and collecting them in the evening, getting them drinking water etc. I didn’t do any income generating work yet.

When I get free time, I play with my friends mainly football, I watch TV, I go to Debrezeyt to relax sometimes, and watch football. I am fan of Manchester united, but only when the match is in the daytime and when the family allowed me to go there. I listen to music but I don’t sing, I don’t have interest for other art. I am not active in religious activities. I am not a member of any youth association, league etc.

I spend time with friends playing and being together; we just talk and walk, sit and enjoy togetherness, listen to music on our mobiles. We don’t have girls in our group, and I don’t have a girlfriend, but one of our friends has one. I watch TV, listen to music, and help my sisters if I am asked to provide them with firewood, dung cakes or so on.

I want to remain here in this community in the future, but not as a farmer. I want to continue my education and but I don’t need to work while studying. I think it is fair to marry when I am 25. I want to be a nurse here in Sirba. I will have land from my father if I want to be a farmer, but I don’t want.

My parents will not choose me a wife, because it is me who must marry her, so I don’t think they want to be involved in this. I don’t know whom to marry yet. I didn’t think of when to have children and how many, but maybe 3 is enough. I don’t have a role model. I don’t have worries, but I hope I will complete my study and become a nurse, which will enable me to serve my community here.

### Opportunities for 16 year old boys

The main opportunity is school, you can learn but I don’t see other opportunities. Those who have land can plough, but at my age it is not common to have an independent life.

### Combining work and education

There are some at my age who work with this road company. I don’t know which work pays best, I never tried it. I don’t have a close friend who works so I can’t tell you details about the kind of work and other things. I don’t have any idea about income earning jobs here at all. In my class there are no drop outs this year. Last year one girl was sick seriously and she dropped out. Drop outs are not common. I know only 2 young men of my age who are no longer in school, they work on their parents’ farm.

Farming is the main livelihood here that young men can use to establish their own livelihood, and build up a family. There are a few people who have completed grade 10 who are jobless, working as farmers here.

I don’t know anyone from college who couldn’t find jobs. I think those who work in the road company are required to stay there a full day, they can’t combine work and education. Me and my friends drink Tela here and Draft when we go to Debrezeyt, but no one chews or smokes.

### Establishing an independent livelihood

I guess that maybe 30% of young men access land from parents and by contract rent. I see that only half of my friends want to be farmers, but we all want to stay here finally as a nurse, a teacher etc. No one wants to migrate for work, rather we want to go to colleges, and get formal jobs. I don’t know how many in this village earn money in their 20s but I know that there are about 4 around here. For poor young men, land is a problem in setting up an independent livelihood, because they can’t share with parents, the kebele don’t give them land, and they can’t rent as they don’t have money.

### Getting married

The youngest age at which to marry is 20; I know 2 who married at this age last year. But usually the common age is 26. None of my friends have married. The advantage of marriage is starting your own life and being the decision maker, and cooperating with your wife to progress. The disadvantage is that you can’t act irresponsibly as we do now, leaving every burden for our parents to worry about. Some have children at an early age without having a sufficient livelihood, and they suffer, that is another disadvantage. Parents are not involved in the choice of partner here, but they advise if they are not happy with your choice. There is no change for the poor or the rich in this regard. There is no government law affecting ages of marriage for men.

### Setting up an independent household

It is not easy for those who can’t access land to set up their own family. Parents help their sons to be independent, but some can’t do this as they are poor. If you are a teacher, DA, nurse, etc. you can support your life even though you don’t have land, otherwise it is not possible here. Those couples who got enough land to support their life, are usually independent of their parents help, otherwise still families should support each other.

### Migrating

Migration is not common; only two people have gone to Mojo or Debrezeyt in search of jobs. These guys are around 24 and 19 years old. I don’t know what work they got there. Migration is not increasing. I don’t know what problem there is in travel, but it is near and I don’t expect any. I am not planning to migrate anywhere.

### Living in the community

I like Sirba as a village, maybe because I am born and grew up here. I have good friends and I like the time I spend with them. There is no bad thing that I dislike. I don’t see any change here, but some people are buying hybrid cows.

It is a peaceful place to live, there is no conflict or bad thing here. Friendship is based on school and village. My parents do not worry; they know where I spend my time because I tell them. I don’t chew, smoke but I drink *Tela* and *Draft,* but not too much. I know that HIV/AIDS is a disease that has no medicine, HIV is the virus which can be transmitted into our blood during unsafe sex. We can prevent it by three ways; using condoms, abstinence, and being faithful to one partner. I didn’t hear that there is anybody in Sirba infected by HIV. A few young men are engaged in sexual activates including one of my friends, but all of them are with their girlfriends. My friend uses condoms, but I don’t know about the others.

### The economy

Some people are getting richer, I see that farm outputs are increasing, maybe because people now adopted improved seeds, and fertilizer as well. There is no change in the types of crops produced, but there is much change in the effort made in farm work because everyone is motivated with the market price now. People began to buy hybrid cows for more milk production, the number of cattle increased, but not shoats and bees. Chicken-keeping has not expanded but there are a few who keep hybrid ones. There is no change in off farm work opportunities. There is no migration here except the few that I mentioned earlier, and now new people are coming here, but only seasonally to harvest. Inequality is getting high because the poor are at the same level while rich households are growing better. Those from poor families also attend school with us, but the facility they have is limited. They can’t study for enough time as we do. The rich can marry at any time but for the poor it takes a long time, because of the lack of resources like money and land.

### Religion

People are not spending much time on religion; I think they are less interested. Only orthodox Christianity is here. No one goes to learn from other churches elsewhere but sometimes to celebrate holy days. I am not sure if other people come here to preach. The church does religious work and the kebele do government work. This is what I know.

### Politics

There are good relations with the government, but we are less involved. There is no reason why we have bad relations, because there is not much contact. There are no messages, no training and no livelihood opportunities, or leisure options given to young men here in Sirba. Land is scarce and the kebele can’t provide any to young men.

The kebele/government can provide us all the things mentioned above except land which is not available. We are ready to work in whatever good things come to the community and cooperate for its success, but at this stage we don’t have anything to do. In the future I hope we will serve, being professional in health, teaching etc. There is no pressure to be a member of party, no one asked me for it. I don’t think there is any benefit to being a party member, because my parents are members, but they didn’t get anything out of it. There are no youth associations here or other youth organizations. We are less interested in politics, and there are no opposition parties here, but still we are not interested.

### Inter-generational relations

In our home there is a good relationship between the family. My parents respect each other, and we the children respect them and have good relationship among ourselves. There is no bad thing at all. I see the community also has a good relationship. Elders are respected well. We come together on holy days and when there is cooperation in farm work. There is no tension in our village. It is a peaceful place where everyone lives in harmony.

## Middle-wealth male teenager 16

### Personal

I live with my parents, and I have two brothers and three sisters. My family’s livelihood is based on farming only. The ploughing is done by me and my father only, my elder brother is employed in the Chinese road construction camp, which contributes money for the household every month. My other brother is only 10 and can’t plough. On the weeding activity, everyone is involved including my mom and the 10 year old brother. I look after the cattle after or before school, depending on the shift change in school. I do harvesting, I also do the threshing with the family, I fetch water etc. I don’t do house chores because my sisters and my mother do all of it, and I am not demanded to do it. During weeding time I also weed for other people and they will do the weeding on our farm in return.

My sisters and my mother bake enjera, cook wot, wash clothes, they also fetch water if I am not at home.

My family is middle class when compared to the villagers. I am sixteen years old and I attend grade 7 and last year I stood 23 out of 50 students in the first semester, but I dropped out of school in the second semester, because my brother was sick of evil eye and I had to stay with him in the church around Mojo for him to get prayer and *Tsebel*/holy water. Now my brother is well and he is working with the Chinese. I also joined school in grade seven this year. I worked in all the above mentioned work in the past 12 months for my family.

I personally just began to work in an income earning job by unloading cement from trucks for the Chinese, and I earn 25 birr a day. Even yesterday I got 25 birr. I never had any other job yet. There are bosses assigned by the Chinese to select labourers among us and I was able to get the chance. They just see us and judge whether we can do the work or not. No one helped us to get this job. The work is not there everyday, we just stay there and if the cement comes, we get the chance to earn some money. Therefore I don’t have much savings; I have got 100 birr saved for my exercise books for the next year. The work didn’t affect my education because I do it after or before school. I can study if I want and I can work if I feel I have spare time, it is not employment. The work didn’t affect my health and it is not that hard. I am planning to keep attending grade 8 and move to high school.

I play football during my spare time as leisure, but there is no other thing I do for recreation or as an art activity. I don’t follow church regularly and I am not an active member. I didn’t go to church at all this year. I don’t have a concept of Politics, and I am not interested. I am not a member of any youth group.

I have friends in the neighbourhood only and also we go to school together. They are in grade 7 too. We play football, we do our homework together, we sit together outdoors in the village and chat. I personally have never had a girlfriend. What I know is my friends also have no girlfriends.

When I am at home, I fetch water, I assist in buying things from the shop, and I study and do my homework. I plan to complete my study and I want to be a language teacher for Oromifa. I don’t want to be a farmer, I want to do the teaching only. My wish is to work in Sirba School. I think I may marry at the age of 25 but I don’t know when my education will be over and my economy will be ready for it. I don’t have a girlfriend now. My parents may not be involved in my decision, but if they want to, I have to accept them because I have to abide by them. I think that it will be enough to have 3 children only. I don’t have a role model to mention.

### Opportunities for 16 year old boys

The opportunity here is education, there is nothing else except doing farming. The Chinese company came in the past two years allowing people here to do some work to earn income. There is no other option for the youth.

### Combining work and education

A few young men of my age work unloading from trucks, but there is no other work to be done for income. This job is not well paid but it is not hard or dangerous at all for those at my age. There is no option for jobs here for youth to engage, and I can’t compare any choices of jobs. I don’t know youths who are not attending school; there are no youths of my age dropping out of school in my village.

Farming allows most young men to establish their own family and get a livelihood. There are 10th grade students who didn’t pass to grade 11 and they are here without work, temporarily working for the Chinese road company as daily labourers. There are also a few who have graduated from college and are now working in the same Chinese company. I don’t know anyone who is unemployed and wandering around. There is no problem to organize work and education, because school is a half day and the work is also given for a half day. I don’t see any problem in managing the two. Youth here don’t drink except TELA, in their neighbours and friends’ houses, they don’t go to village bars at all. There is no smoking and chewing chat here at all.

###  Establishing an independent livelihood

At my age no one will have land because we are under the family. If the family shares part of their land, we may have a chance to access land. Otherwise I have no hope of getting land from the kebele administration or by purchasing, because here most of the land is occupied. Most of my friends are not interested in farming because it is tiresome work. However they want to live in this community by doing other work like teaching, health, or DA.

I don’t know anyone interested in migrating elsewhere for jobs or to live. All of them are interested in joining college. I know a few in their 20s who are working with the Chinese, but there is no other work opportunity for them too.

It is hard for poor young men to set up their own family, because their parents have small land to share with the family and they are unable to marry at the right age.

### Getting married

Mostly men marry at 25-30 years of age. For girls they marry between 20 and 25. The marriage age is changing to be older, because girls stay at school and families are now saying that under 18 for girls is too early to marry. I don’t have a friend who is married. Marrying has advantages because under family cooperation better progress in farming can be achieved, I don’t see any disadvantage of marrying. The challenge of marrying here is the lack of land and property. Unless parents help the young men to have land and some initial capital, it is difficult to set up one’s own family. Parents are not involved in their son’s choice of partner at all. It is a problem for poor young men to ask their lovers’ family to marry because they don’t give him the chance to marry her. The kebele at this time doesn’t allow someone to marry a young girl under 18. Families are also aware and they don’t allow this.

### Setting up an independent household

Unless parents help the young men to have land and some initial capital, it is difficult to set up one’s own family.

### Migrating

There are some who migrated to Nazret, Debrezeyt and Mojo also in search of jobs but I don’t know how many and whether this number is increasing or not. But it is not a common practice. Young men who are above 22, depending on their family economic status, tend to migrate. I am not sure what they face at their destination, we hear that they get some job. I don’t know what exactly. I didn’t hear that anyone had a problem in travelling. I don’t have a plan to migrate.

### Living in the community

I am attending school and I am living in a family where there is peace and respect, mutual respect, so I am happy about it. I also love my friends and siblings. The village is a nice place to live, playing with friends is entertaining. We have not much option for getting land and other income earning opportunities. People are now progressing in their farm production, the price is good and people are motivated to work harder. I hope there will be much change in this community but mainly for those who have enough land. Friendship is mainly by individual choice and attraction but school and neighbourhood allows a chance of association. There is no conflict among groups, we respect each other. There is no violence at all, and my parents have nothing to worry about me or any of my siblings. They know where we spend our time, and we usually stay around the village, school or with friends so they can control us.

I never drink, chew or smoke, except Tela sometimes with the family or with friends. I know that HIV is a sexually transmitted disease, a virus that has no cure yet. It can be prevented by using condoms, abstinence and by being faithful to a partner. But now there is medicine that allows you to live long. In my village no one is reported as affected by HIV. Youth at my age never engage in sexual activities, but older ones do, usually with their girlfriends. In a place where we work I hear older youths talking about buying or borrowing condoms, so I guess they use protection.

### The economy

I think there is some change in the lives of people here, but I don’t want to say that people became rich in the last 2 or 3 years. I don’t see much change in how people do farming but the effort they make has increased. Livestock production has increased in dairy farming and bull fattening but by those who can afford to do so. Shoats are less likely to be increased here, but there are chickens in large numbers and variety. But there is no beekeeping. Off farm job opportunities are limited except the flower farm, the Chinese company, and the stone production here at the edge of the kebele. There are a few carpenters who construct houses in Sirba. There is not much in-migration. Inequality increased because there are a few people who have become very rich, but there are also very poor people who fail to cover their food from their small farm. It is hard to be sure about the changes in many years but I see this difference.

Those who are from better off families have better facilities, they work less on farming, they have time to study, and there is nothing that forces them to miss class. With regard to establishing independent families, they can construct their own home at any time, either at 20 or 18 even, and they are able to marry at the age they want if their parents are happy about their decision when to marry.

### Religion

People here don’t spend much time at church, or engaged in religion. I don’t think people are less interested, but they are busy doing farm activities. There is only orthodox Christianity. Young people are less interested than old people, and there is no increase in interest. I don’t go to church regularly and I am not sure if preachers come from other places. Some people go to Debrezeyt, and Mojo when there is an annual celebration of churches there. I know that religious rules are strict even earlier, but we fail to follow them. The church is doing spiritual work only I think; I don’t see any other development activity by the church.

### Politics

We don’t have any relation with the government because, we just live, study and assist our parents in farming; we have nothing to do with the government. I didn’t hear any message from the government, or any training from the woreda. There is no provision of land, there is no sport or facility or youth centre. There are many things to be done, they can create jobs, and they can expand schools, TVET or any skill training, improve roads, and provide us with tap water.

We can contribute by being hard workers, if we are provided with work opportunities, because land is scarce and we will use any chance that might be given to us.

No one was pressured to be party member, I never been asked, and none of my friends are members. I am not sure what benefit it could bring. I am not a member of youth organizations, I don’t know if they exist or not, I don’t see any activity.

### Inter-generational relations

Me and my siblings are loyal and obedient to my parents. We among ourselves are respectful to each other, and we respect the elder ones more. There was no conflict ever in our family. If any of us wants our brothers and sisters to do something for us, no one says no, we help each other. Even when I ask my older brother to do something for me he doesn’t say you are my younger brother and I will not obey you. I like the way we interact, and help each other. The family works together on farming activities.

There is a good relationship among community members of different age groups, there was no complaint from old people saying that young people are not respecting us, or any other from families. I obey any old man who may send me to bring him something from the shop or if he wants me to tell a message to a faraway village I will go and tell what he told me. My family also appreciates this, they don’t say don’t go.

## Poor male teenager 16

### Personal

I live with my parents, I have five brothers and one sister. One of my sisters died. There is no relative or other person living with us. My family’s livelihood is based on farming but my father and three of my brothers are involved in a cooperative for stone production. My father and five of my brothers and me plough the land with oxen. My mother is weak and she is not involved in farming activities except some assistance during threshing. She mostly engages in house chores and she owns a local Tela house where TELA and beans with sauce is sold. My sister works on the weeding with us and my father also does the weeding. At harvest time, apart from my sister and mom, we all do the work, my sister also works in transporting the harvest to around the house. I would say that our family is middle class when compared with others here in Sirba.

I am 16 years old and I am attending school up to grade six. I dropped out of school three years ago, because my friend who dropped out of school earlier joined the Chinese road company. He insisted we work together. I was not interested but he asked me frequently and told me about the benefit so then I joined him. My parents were angry with me, but I continued by my decision. I work in metal processing or tying (stick iron with wire) for building road-side ditches for the new Addis-Nazret road. Before I dropped out of school, my class rank was 10th or so out of 65 students. I regret dropping out a lot and I want to go back to school next year.

I work in all farm activities and I also assist the family by fetching water, washing clothes. I assist mom by providing her with any material or kitchen utensils and wash them for her.

In the Chinese company I worked tying metal with wire and also I worked on welding. From both works I earn about 37 birr per day and I work from 7 in the morning to 6 in the evening. I just went to the company and I asked the Chinese to give me a job and he accepted me. The Chinese themselves assign us what work to do. With the money I earned so far, I rented ¾ of a hectare of land for this year. After I got this rented land, I stopped working with the Chinese and I am about to plough this land, by taking oxen from my family. I planned to sow Teff and I hope to get about 15 quintals.

The work I did affected my school and it caused me to drop out. The Chinese don’t allow attending school half day and working half day, so that is why I left school. My plan next year is to plough my rented farm and re-join school. When I was working with the Chinese I worked with them all days in the week from dawn to dusk, therefore I had no chance for recreation or other things. I stopped work last month and now I look after the cattle for my family, I fetch water, and help the family in everything. Now I play football with friends in the morning and in the evenings on other days.

I am not interested in Music or other art except football. I am not active in religion, I just go to church at times of holy days. I am not interested in politics. One of my friends has got a girlfriend but the rest of us don’t have one. I am not a member of any youth organizations. I spend time socializing with friends mostly this month and before I joined the Chinese. We meet with friends and we chat with them, we listen to music on our mobile phones, though mine is broken now. It is a Chinese Samsung mobile.

I feel that we may not get land in the future, because there is no land unoccupied. The kebele has nothing to give to young people, and to rent land is expensive. This is my major worry.

I am interested in farming and I will work on it. I would like to finish my study. I wish to become a physician. If I work hard on my study there is nothing that can’t be achieved and I hope I will be a doctor. If I am not able to succeed in my education and I am unable to become a doctor, I don’t mind being a farmer, because I also like farming. I think that land is not easily available these days. If I happened to be a farmer in the future I would want to stay in this community, I have no plans to leave this place unless through education. I will not go back to the Chinese work anymore. I will start school and keep on farming my own rented land. My wish is to marry after the age of 25. In my family, usually parents intervene in their son’s choice. Three of my brothers married and all of them were guided to choose their partners/wives. My brothers didn’t come up with their own choices and they didn’t refuse our parents’ suggestion.

I wish to have children and it would be fair for me to have four children. I have a role model. He is a farmer, a hard worker, he is rich and he owns a car and a shop at Denkaka. I have a plan to construct my own house in the coming 2 years and I planned to buy oxen and a plough for the future. For the future, however, my worry is the shortage of land and having limited access to set up my own family.

### Opportunities for 16 year old boys

Young men of my age also work in the Chinese company. There are about 15 and there are another 25 older than us, all from Sirba Kebele. There is no danger and hard work in the Chinese company. There are no other work opportunities for young men here in this kebele. There are about 20 that are my age who are not attending school and who don’t do any work, except farming during farm seasons. Those employed in the Chinese company at my age are drop outs. It is not common for young men to drop out for a while and return back. When it is harvesting time, the school is closed and students are understood to be permitted to be absent, which is not absenteeism or drop out.

Farming is the main source of income for those who establish an independent livelihood. Stone production and Chinese company employment are the other ones. Trade is not common though a few engage in grain trade.

There are about 10 boys who completed 10th grade and some who completed grade 12 who are now working with the Chinese road project. Some of them have nothing to do except assisting their family in farming. These young men gather with friends and spend time at one of the families by round, depending on friendship. It is hard for poor children to have facilities for school. Even it is difficult to buy school uniforms and other materials, school fees, etc. Besides they suffer in their attempt to work and attend school, they become late and even drop out. Youth who are my age drink TELA in this village and they also drink DRAFT in the neighbouring kebele called Beyo. There is no trend of chat or smoking for youth my age.

### Combining work and education

It is difficult to combine work and school that is why many youths employed in the Chinese company are drop outs. Those who are trying to do some temporary work in this company struggle to combine school and work, they will be late, and unable to study hard, because they are also expected to help their family in farming, and other works like fetching water, and looking after the cattle around the village.

### Establishing an independent livelihood

I hope that half of the children of my age will get land soon from their parents, but there are no options to get access from the kebele or other sources. Half of the young men of my age wish to be farmers. I am not saying only those who have hope to access land, others also who wish to get rented land in the future.

### Getting married

The age varies depending on the person’s plan to marry, his economic status and his parents’ support. It is common to marry after the age of 20 but it varies depending on the above mentioned factors. I don’t have any friend who is married. The advantage is, I think, you can work together to progress with your wife and you will have children at a young age and you can raise them while you are young. I see that some marry without having enough land and money to start a life. They suffer from economic problems that might be a problem. The challenge here is the land shortage, the only income source here is farm products. To have them you need land and unless you have access to it, you are unable to set up your own family and get married, because no parent wants to give you his daughter if they know you are landless. Some families prefer to get involved in their children’s choice of partner like mine, but mostly the community is not that strict on this. The government bans early marriage for girls, usually they say under 18 years of age, but I don’t see serious follow up and punishment for those who marry a bit earlier.

### Setting up an independent household

 Setting up a family is not easy. I told you that land is scarce here, so it is difficult for us to have our own family at the right age. Even most of us don’t have a chance to build our own home let alone getting farmland. The only way is renting land on which you can’t construct a home, it is just for the periodic production of crops. Newly married couples will be independent after two years or so, before that they usually need their parents help but some can be independent in the year they departed. These are those who are from rich parents who have enough land, and who got enough support/gifts at the wedding.

### Migrating

Migration is less common, a few young men went to Nazret to be employed in the Chinese road construction company in the last two years. There was no migration here before that, but women are now going to Arab states. There are about 4 whom I know. I don’t know what work they might get, but I hear that they are sending money. I don’t know any problems in travelling because I am not that close to any of them. I don’t have a plan to migrate, but if I have to, I would prefer Debrezeyt because it is a big town and I hope that there are alternatives for work. I don’t think I have to go in a group, but I don’t have a plan at all, I want to complete my study.

### Living in the community

I like the village itself, maybe because I am born and grew up here. I have a lovely family and beloved friends with whom I spend very good times, so I think it is a good place to live. There is nothing I dislike, but I wish we had other income earning options or enough land to plough. This is what I am dissatisfied with.

There is a change/progress in farming. People are using improved seeds, fertilizer and some are planting in lines, so it is good now. Some people have more cattle and also more oxen.

Friendship is based on age, class/school, neighbourhood etc.; I don’t see any friendship based on ethnicity and religion. There was no conflict among groups of friends. There is no violence or worry for my parents about me and my siblings; they know that there is no risky condition here at all. My parents give me work to be accomplished, I have to do it, but they don’t force me regarding what to do and not to do. For example, I joined the Chinese company to work despite the fact that they were unhappy.

There is no trend of chat chewing and smoking, but drinking Tela and rarely tej happens. I know that HIV is a virus causing an incurable disease which is AIDS. It can be prevented by using condoms, and by being loyal to one’s wife or girlfriend. At my age it is not common to have sexual relationships, and I don’t know about it. I never heard anyone did it. Most of us don’t engage in sexual activity and I hope that will prevent us from getting the disease.

### The economy

The economy is much better now, because Teff is becoming a high value crop. The price has reached 1600 while it was only 500 birr 7 years ago. Besides, the value of other crops has increased. Because of the use of fertilizer, we could harvest more and more. The Chinese gave big compensation for the land they have taken to set up the company and about 15 people could get big money and some bought cattle, others bought horse carts etc. which helped them. The money is big but at this time it can’t stay for long, it will become valueless. The land would have been more important actually than the compensation given to them.

Some people now have productive cows/hybrids, others buy improved chickens. I see that there is some improvement in farming and livestock production. There is no skilled work developed here, maybe in Denkaka town, not in Sirba at all. There are no people coming into the community, except those who come for harvesting and leave when the work is done. Inequality has grown because some are getting very rich and others remain the same as they were: poor. Rich youths of my age don’t need to be employed by the Chinese company or do too much work at home, because they have enough income, they have hired farmers at home. They might also have servants to take care of fetching water, cooking and other household chores. For poor people it is difficult to lead life, to attend school properly, to get time to study, etc. The poor are those who drop out of school due to various reasons like lack of facilities, income for the households, and also illness that can’t be treated timely. I mentioned earlier that land shortages delay the poor from getting married and set up their own family, unlike the rich who can make it at any time.

### Religion

I know that people give limited time for church. They are less interested to have serious follow up. There is only Orthodox Christianity. Young people are reluctant to go to church, except a few who are in Sunday school and girls mainly. Religious rules are not becoming strict, they are as they were before. I don’t know if the church is involved in development activities or not, I don’t see that actually.

### Politics

We young people are not involved with the government, because there is no reason we will have contact. The kebele works with adults, not with us. There is no message from any government body, I didn’t see any training, and no provision of livelihood options. Land is not expected to be distributed because all is occupied and there is no redistribution. For leisure, there is nothing done, we just play football in our free space in the village. Nothing is done for young people yet, but I hope. We need a recreation centre, we need livelihood alternatives. We can work hard if the government supports us in anything. There is no pressure to be a party member. I am not sure what the benefits of being party member are. We don’t have youth organizations here. We are not against the government and we are not involved, except doing our work and attending school. I don’t know anyone who is interested about having an opposition party. By the way we don’t talk about politics when we gather, we want to have fun, nothing else like this.

### Inter-generational relations

There is respect among my family members. We respect each other depending on age and we all obey our parents. This is a good thing; I don’t see any problem in inter-generational relations. During weddings, funerals, holy days, and for them when families cooperate in farming adults and children come together. There is no tension or conflict because youth are always obedient to adults and old people.

## Rich male teenager 19

### Personal

I live with my parents, I have three brothers and I don’t have a sister. No one lives with us like relatives, or servants etc. My family’s livelihood is farming and we have about 4 hectares of land. My father, me and my brother all do the ploughing, and weeding, the harvesting is done by employed labourers.

Besides the farming work I take the cattle to water points, I fetch water, I provide fodder to the cattle, and I wash clothes sometimes, including the family clothes.

My family is one of the better off in the villages. I am 20 years of age, and I completed grade 10 last year, though I couldn’t pass to grade 11. I never dropped out or repeated a class.

I am working in the Chinese company as an assistant to the Garage/lubricating the vehicles. I earn 1200 birr/month, I work a full day. I worked in this for the last 6 months, and I saved 5000 birr. I bought clothes and shoes, and spent money for tea with friends etc. My family promised to give me a piece of land and I am planning to construct a house, an iron roofed one. I didn’t do any other job yet, I just went to the Chinese and asked them to hire me and they gave me the chance.

The work is so easy and didn’t cause any problem for my health. I like the work because it is easy, and the payment is good.

I spend time with my friends during free times, and we will have tea or coffee around Debrezeyt town, though we don’t stay late at night. We watch football - European champion’s league - though I am not a fan of a club. We play football when we stay in the village. I listen to music by using my phone. I go to church when there is a holiday only and I am not active in it. I am not interested in politics or youth groups.

My friends all have girlfriends, and I have one since last year.

I want to work in this same community and I will be a farmer, and I hope my father will share me some land, but I don’t hope for any other source of land.

I am also planning to take the national exam again next year. If I can pass, I will keep on studying, I want to study auto mechanics.

I feel that I need at least four or five years before I marry at about 24 or 25. I want to have children and for me *two* is enough. I agreed with my girlfriend to get marry and I think she will be my wife. I don’t have any role model to mention.

### Opportunities for 19 year old boys

The opportunity is ploughing land even by renting from others as young people are strong. Otherwise I don’t see any opportunity, and lack of land is an issue for all the young men. I may get some from my parents but it is not enough.

### Combining work and education

Even though the opportunity is limited, most of the young men of my age work. Technical work in the Chinese company pays more than unloading cement or any farm labour which is done by a few poor young men. Carrying cement is not easy, though it is not dangerous. Building the ditches is one of the more preferred jobs, but my work is the best, easy, technical and highly paid. There are only three of us doing such a job. There are not enough job opportunities.

There are many who completed grade ten, but do not have other training or job opportunities. It is difficult to count them all. Dropping out is common when many young men want to join the company they quit school. A few returned after a year, but the rest want to keep on the job and extend their education.

Farming is the main source of livelihood, helping many young people to stay alone independently. Other jobs are temporary, you can’t count on them. Besides the 10th grade graduates I mentioned earlier, there are college graduates who still don’t have jobs, 3 of them work here with us. I think there are others also helping their parents. Chat, and smoking is not common. Only one guy smokes but secretly, not in public. We all drink Tej, and Tella but not too much until we get drunk.

### Establishing an independent livelihood

Maybe about 30 young men including me might be able to access their own land from parents, but there are friends whose parents’ have a small area of land that can’t be shared. Friends are less interested to be farmers, but it is a last choice. All my friends want to stay here. Me, I want to be a mechanic, others want to be a wood worker, trader etc., but they don’t have the capital, and they end up having to work in farming. I want to go to college but the rest of my friends gave up, I can’t tell you the number because I know only about my friends.

I know some of the young men who work in this company with me, others plough their own rented land, and some are engaged in stone production cooperatives and earn some money. Establishing an independent family is hard for everyone, because you need to build a house, plough land/own or rent it, and spend much on the wedding, though parents are also highly involved. I see how hard it is for young people who are from poor families. They don’t have land, they can’t build a house and it takes them a long time to reach a point where they can marry, therefore they delay from the right age which is about 25.

### Getting married

A man can get married at 19, 20 or so. Less than this age is not accepted by parents. Now a few people are able to marry at this age. 25 or 26 is the normal age to marry these days. My friends have girlfriends but they are not married yet. The advantage of being married is you can decide what to do on your own, you can have your beloved one with you every day and life will be much better I think. I don’t see any disadvantage of marriage, but when there is no family planning, children can’t be raised well, and parents also suffer. The challenge I think is being responsible for everything, unlike while you live with your parents. Parents are less likely to influence our choice of partner, but they can decide when we should be married as they are expected to assist us in the process. It is the same for poor or rich families, the government didn’t put an age limit for men to marry.

### Setting up an independent household

Setting up a family is not easy because many young people can’t get land. Either the family gives a share of land, or they rent. Otherwise there is no way that land can be accessed and one can be able to set up independent family. After marriage it is common to help each other between parents and children, but the kind of help depends on the capacity of the households, and the needs of the newly formed family.

### Migrating

Migration is not common here, we try to live and work here. I know only 3 young people who went to Debrezeyt and Mojo in search of jobs, but it is just recently. I can’t say it is increasing because it is a small number. None of them had problems in travelling. I don’t have a plan to migrate, unless I get an opportunity for education in auto mechanics.

### Living in the community

I like my family, friends, and also relatives living here; it is good to live here with them.

What I dislike is that we don’t have recreation options here. We go to Debrezeyt as it is a good town. The community is changing because now you can sell crops with a good price and this enabled many families to expand their farm, buy more livestock and even hybrids. It is a peaceful place to live, there is no problem in our village, friendship is based on neighbourhood and attraction, and I have never see any fight or conflict, violence etc. My parents have no worry about me, they can control what I do but they trust me and leave me when I go to towns and stay with friends in the community. They know that I don’t do any wrong thing. I don’t chew, or smoke but I sometimes drink draft and Tela or Tej, but not frequently.

I know that HIV is a virus and AIDS is caused by HIV, so it is clear. It is caused by unsafe sex, prevented by using condom. Young men have sexual relations with their girlfriends, but my girlfriend said let us wait some time, even though I want to try it. My friends use condoms, and it is common to use them.

### The economy

There is progress but I can say people became rich in three years. There are some households who became richer that can be seen easily by their cattle and what they produce. Yes, farming is getting productive because of the use of improved seeds and fertilizer. The crops produced are the same, livestock are increasing in number, and people are now working hard maybe because DAs advise them to do so and they are also motivated to produce more due to improved market values. There are hybrids of cows and chickens. There are no off farm opportunities except with the company I work in. Out-migration is less common except women who go to the Arab world, in-migration is almost none. Inequality was there before, I can’t say it has increased.

Poor friends might even fail to complete grade ten, and they don’t have a chance to share land. They work for long hours with their parents, because labourers are not employed for the farm. It is also difficult for them to marry and set up a family because of the lack of access to land.

### Religion

I don’t go to church regularly and many people go during holidays, but my mother goes to the church at least once in two weeks. I don’t think it is a lack of interest, but people are accustomed to go to church when there are annual holy days. There is only Orthodox Christianity here. Young people are not getting more interested in religion than before, it is the same. During holy days, preachers come from other places, I don’t know from where. People go to other churches in neighbouring kebeles on special holy days of those churches, but not many people go to there. Religious rules are strict for young people because we can’t keep them all. We want something to do and that may be against the religious rules. There was no conflict in regard to religion. The church is less likely to engage in any development work, it is doing just religious activities. I don’t think they have something that I don’t know. Maybe, but what I know is they don’t.

### Politics

There are good relations between us and the kebele administration, though we don’t have frequent contact with them. If they order public works, we assist our parents and we take part in it, otherwise there is not much issue between the administration and us. I didn’t hear any message from the government and I have never known any training, or livelihood opportunity provided to youth in this kebele. There is no land distributed by the kebele, there is no sport facility or other leisure, etc. I don’t know what the kebele can do for us, maybe recreation and a sports centre, vocational training and job opportunities. We will contribute to the community by supporting adults, and work hard to change our lives here. There is no pressure to join the political party. There is no benefit from being a member of the party. Our parents are members. I don’t see they are getting any benefit other than going for frequent meetings. We don’t have youth organizations here in Sirba. Generally young people are not interested in politics, and they even don’t want to talk about it, but they are not against the government. There is no interest in the opposition or government party politics in general.

### Inter-generational relations

We the children respect our parents, and the teens respect older siblings, so the relationship in our family is a good one. Respecting and caring for each other and being obedient to parents and elders is a good thing here. In many households I know personally, there is no bad thing. Different generations come together when there are public holidays, and other celebrations like weddings. Tension is not common here, rarely people quarrel over farmland borders but it is not serious as such.

## Middle-wealth male teenager 19

### Personal

I live with my parents, I have two brothers and one sister, and I am the second child in the house, having one older brother. The only livelihood of our family is farming. My older brother usually does the ploughing and I and my father also assist him sometimes. Everyone in the family is involved in other farm activities like weeding, harvesting, transporting, grinding etc. My mother is also involved in these activities. Besides the farm work I fetch water, I go to the mills, I buy anything to be purchased, I am sometimes told by my parents to wash clothes and I wash everyone’s clothes.

I am 19 years old, and I am attending school at grade 9. I have never repeated class or dropped out. I am ranked 22nd out of 54 students.

I have never been involved in income generating activities.

I study when there is nothing to be done, and when the study is over, I play football, I listen to music on my mobile, and sometimes I spend time with my friends talking about class, about life, about girls, about any event in the village.

I go to church at least twice a week, and every Sunday is essential. I play drums in the church for the singers group. I am not interested in politics, I don’t have the idea and I am not thinking about it at all.

I am not a member of any youth association or league. I heard recently some youth group is organized but I don’t know where and who those people are.

None of my friends have girlfriends and we don’t think that we should have one at this age.

My wish is to finish my study and work somewhere other than in this village. If possible I wish to get work in Addis Ababa, because it is a big city and I feel like there are a lot of opportunities. I don’t want to be a farmer and remain here in this village, because there is an acute land shortage and it is hard to find a piece of land. My family have 1 hectare only and we rent land from others to get more product to sustain ourselves.

I would like to get married around 22, if I can complete my study by then, and the ideal number of children for me is only two. I don’t expect my parents to intervene in my choice of partner.

I wish to be educated and to be a civil servant rather than being a farmer. I don’t have a role model to mention.

I want to be medical doctor and my hope is achieving this, and I don’t have any worry in my future.

### Opportunities for 19 year old boys

The opportunity for youths who are my age is just attending school, and trying to achieve in education to join college and be professional in various sectors. The problem I think is you have to travel to Ude when you pass grade 4 and you need to go to Debrezyet/Bishoftu to attend 11 and 12 grade, so this causes too much burden on us and our family. The other problem is we don’t have land to plough, so being a farmer, though not desired, is not easily possible.

### Combining work and education

Not most of the youth but some work. Half of them drop out of school and others try to combine work and school. I am not sure which work pays best. Strong young men are engaged in various works so I don’t think it is hard or dangerous for them. There is not enough work for the youth here, because there are many who want to do some work that allows them to earn money but there is limited access. I know at least 7 youths who quit school but I can’t tell you the number in the whole community. When students are sick they drop out for a year and re-join school but only when the sickness is serious. Those who drop out due to economic problems, it may take them long to return to school, and after three years, they feel like they are sitting with small children and don’t like to do it, even though their problem is over. Farming is the main work that helps to establish a family and an independent home. There are many who have completed 10th grade and college graduates who don’t have jobs. They usually assist their parents in farming activities, they sit with each other and talk maybe they enjoy being together in a group. The only work here is the Chinese camp work, which doesn’t allow half day work, so those who carry goods from trucks can work a half day or farm labour which is less available. My friends and others of my age drink Tela, but I don’t know anyone chewing and smoking.

### Establishing an independent livelihood

I don’t think 1/3 of us will get land because the only way you get land is by sharing your parents’ land. For example my parents can’t share their 1 hectare of land. Farming is hard work, besides, life is better when you are a civil servant. I think that may be only 10% want to be farmers. If there were opportunities, we might wish to stay here, but here chances are limited and even as a farmer you can’t have land. So I don’t think anyone wants to stay but those who may prefer to be a farmer and are able to get land in some way, they may stay here. Everyone wants to be a doctor, teacher, office worker but I am not sure who exactly wants to be what. One who studies hard can achieve any of these wishes, but others may become farmers, the rest might be labours on others’ farms as land is scarce or they may stay a long time with their parents. There is no one who says ‘I want to migrate’, but most of my friends want to go for college and at this time there will be a chance to leave. I just know one friend who is working in the Chinese camp but I didn’t ask his work exactly, he doesn’t attend school. Young men from poor families always suffer in every aspect; they do more work at home and on the farm, they may not have money or land to set up their own family.

### Getting married

The youngest age to marry for men is 19 and it is 18 for women. Maybe 5% of young men marry at this age. 19-29 is normal but less and above this might be a bit uncommon. None of my friends is married. The advantage of marrying is getting children, and cooperation. The disadvantage is the big responsibility and raising children if you don’t have enough resources. There is no challenge of being married except the responsibility. Parents are not dictators in choosing partners for their children. Parents of the poor or the rich are the same in this regard, but the rich can facilitate everything for their sons, unlike the poor who can’t be able to do so. Government didn’t decide on the age when men should marry.

### Setting up an independent household

Setting up a family is difficult because of land and money shortages. Here as I told you land is scarce, those who can get a share of land and who are able to build a house can set up an independent family. Before marrying, there is no form of independence, unless you leave the village. Newly married couples are independent. If they have land and gifts from families, they can continue their life but mostly they build houses near the man’s parents and there is mutual support. Poor people are less likely to marry at the right time, and families are unable to help them after they set up their own family, unless minor things like sharing food during holy days.

### Migrating

Some young men migrate to Dukem and Nazret in search of work, mainly daily labour with Chinese industries and other. This is increasing though the number is not big. There was no migration before. I don’t know anyone who faced problems during travel. I am not planning to migrate, I want to finish up my study, but if I have to go I want to go to Addis Ababa, I don’t need to go in a group.

### Living in the community

I like my friends, my family, playing within the village, and also my school. I also enjoy church services. I like to work as a drummer with church singers. What I don’t like is that the village has no recreation for youth. This is a peaceful place to live. Friendship is based on village /hamlets and school. I didn’t see any conflict among groups. There is no worry that takes the attention of my parents, but they always want to know where I go and what I want to do. I never chew or smoke but I drink Tela during holy days and occasionally.

HIV is a disease that has no medicine, but I think now there is a drug that allows prolonged life. We can control it by not having sex before marriage and by being faithful to our wife. I never heard that there are HIV patients here, I don’t know if anyone my age wants to do sexual activity, my friends don’t think about it, they are against it.

### The economy

The villagers are now having better lives because the market price is increasing and they can earn a lot more from their products than before. I wouldn’t say that our farm production amount increased.

The community is changing because many people are becoming rich, people are hard workers here. If every household had enough land, they could have progressed more than what they are doing now. But many farmers have less than 2 hectares of land. In the coming five years livestock production, chickens, also might increase.

### Religion

There are households who spend time in church regularly but the majority is not doing so. Some people are less interested to spend much time for prayer or church service, because they prefer to give all their time for other things like work, visiting relatives and friends, drinking and chat etc. There is only Orthodox Christianity here. Young people in general are not interested but there are some who are serious about it, and some of us serve in various things at church. We don’t go anywhere to learn about religion, but we celebrate holy days of other churches. Monks and singers come from Debrezeyt and serve our church rarely but sometimes, mainly during holidays. Our church supports young people to be decent and well behaved, besides this it doesn’t get involved in government programs.

### Politics

There are good relations with the kebele leader; I can’t talk about the government at large. There was no message to young men, but for the family there are health messages and also about farming technology like planting in lines, to which I listened and clarified to my parents. There was no training at all, or any livelihood opportunity provided. The kebele was not able to distribute land to young men, because here there is no land. There is no leisure or sports facility given to this village, they could have provided all what you have mentioned, like training for different income generating activities, support for livelihood options, and sport facilities. We don’t have anything to do, just attending our education very well, behaving properly, respecting elders, and helping parents in their effort to support the family. I don’t know if there is pressure on young people to join the ruling party. I can’t tell you anything about the party, or party benefits etc., because I am less knowledgeable about this. I am not a member and I don’t really know how it works well here. Young people are not interested in politics and even in religion, they just study, listen to music, play football, watch football etc. I am not sure about opposition politics, no one talks about such a thing, I don’t know if there are those who are interested in politics.

### Inter-generational relations

We respect each other, but my father is most respected, then my mother, between my siblings it depends on age. There is discussion between children and parents about any family issues and decisions. The good thing is our family listen to our ideas and if anyone brings convincing ideas, they accept it. I don’t know any problem in the relationship, everyone here in Sirba respects elders and parents. Usually elder people are respected and treated separately from the young generation, but during holy days we spend time together like in Meskel, Epiphany etc. There is no tension or conflict here.

## Poor male teenager 19

### Personal

I live with my parents, and I have three brothers and a sister. I am the oldest. Our livelihood is based on farming, and my father is a guard for the Chinese company. During farming season I do most of the ploughing and my father helps me sometimes. The rest of my siblings aren’t involved in farming because one is 9 and the other is 7 and the rest are even younger. I do all the farming because we have only one hectare of land and I cover all the farming activities on this farm, I plough, and my father sows the crop because he is better at it than me, and I do the weeding, I do the harvesting but my father also assists me in this. I don’t know how much my father earns from his employment with the Chinese. My family is poor compared to others.

I began school at the age of 8 and I studied up to grade 7 until 2010 but dropped out of school in the past two years, because I wanted to take care of the farming as there is no one to do it when my father decided to take the Chinese camp employment.

I did all the farming work mentioned above in detail, in addition I fetched water, I washed clothes and I take the cattle to the water point but I didn’t do any other household chores for the family, they don’t expect me to do it.

I didn’t do any independent work to earn income ever.

I play football when there is no job to be done. I join my friends and talk about football in Ethiopian and English premier league. I am fan of Arsenal. I go to Debrezet to watch Arsenal’s matches when my friends pay for the transport, and the 5 birr fee to watch it. This year I had no chance to go there, because I couldn’t afford it and my friends had no extra money to pay for me. I am interested to listen to music but I don’t sing. I don’t have other art interests, except football playing and watching. I am not a member of a youth association. When we meet with friends we play football, we talk about it, besides we talk about farming, about holidays where farming is not allowed. Some friends talk about the labour opportunity for the Chinese company and some of my friends work there. I wish to work with them but my father is there and if I go there the house will not have anyone to plough the land. I discussed with my father but he said I better do the company work and you drop out from school and take care of the farm work, I had to agree and I did so.

Among my friends only one of them has got a girlfriend, the rest of us never had one at all. We talk about girls sometimes and we feel like we should have girlfriends soon.

When I am at home I listen to the radio, I talk with mom and my brothers and sister.

I wish to live in this same village in the future. I feel like my father might give me ¼ of a hectare and I will be a farmer. Besides if I can save some money I may take land by contract and I can have additional land. I feel like when I am 25 I will marry and set up my own family. Parents in this area don’t oppose their sons’ choice of marriage, and I don’t expect my family to do so. I wish to pursue my study but I don’t know whether it could be possible or not. I think that I should have children and four is a good number of children for me. I wish to be rich like any of the rich people in the village by working hard whether through farming or by completing my study. But I can’t mention anyone who is a role model for me.

### Opportunities for 19 year old boys

The opportunity here is farming and education. But if you are in a poor family like me, you may not be able to attend school up to the level you wish.

### Combining work and education

Most of my friends from middle and poor families either work long hours on their parents’ farm or go for Chinese employment, but it is not common for young men from rich families. The road company pays different amounts for different works. Permanent workers earn more than temporary labourers. I don’t have knowledge about details of the works there. The work available is not enough for the young people here. There are about 9 young men of my age who dropped out of school whom I know personally, but I can’t talk about the whole kebele.

Farming is the only livelihood that helps people to set up independent households which is sustainable. There are people who completed grade 10 having no job. They work in the road company and assist their parents. Some of them just wander around. I don’t know college graduates here. Young people here don’t chew, I didn’t see anyone smoking, and drinking is not common.

### Establishing an independent livelihood

Getting land is difficult, I don’t know how many of us will be lucky to have it, maybe half. Only one of my friends wants to be a farmer out of 4 of my friends. We want to stay here, though we wish to work in something else after finishing our study. Maybe teaching, DA, nursing etc. could be a chance for those who could continue and finish school, but for the rest of us the only option is farming. None of my friends want to migrate, we all wish to go to college. Some at my age will be given a piece of land for themselves and they sell what they produce from it. Others look for employment in the Chinese project, in the brick factory in Ude village and also on others’ farm as farm labourers. Establishing an independent livelihood is a bit difficult. Here land is scarce, and the employment is just temporary income sources, you can’t rely on them.

### Getting married

There is no age limit for men, but I didn’t see anyone married under 18. Only a few young men were able to marry at 19 and 20. It is normal to marry after the age of 18. None of my friends are married, but I know one young man of my age who lives in the neighbourhood who married at the age of 22. He is not my close friend but we know each other well. I don’t know the advantage of marrying. How can you tell without experiencing it? Also it depends on how you handled it. Some argue and suffer from economic problems, but for others it is a joyful life, so it depends. Parents are not dictators to choose wife for us, whether you are poor or not. There is no government regulation on men’s marriage but it is not allowed for girls to marry under 18.

### Setting up an independent household

It is not easy, you know you should have land, house, and oxen at least to have your independent household. Most of us lack access to it, so it is difficult. If your parents have big land to share with you, if you can rent land, if you are a civil servant like the teachers, DAs etc. here, you can establish your life. Otherwise, there is no possibility. I am not sure really whether newly married ones are independent from parents’ support, I am not close to any of these people.

### Migrating

Migration for work is not common here, many young men joined the Chinese Company because the camp is set up here near our village. I don’t know what happens if this company was a bit far. I don’t know any migrants and it is difficult for me to tell you whether it is increasing or not. I don’t have a plan to migrate at all, my plan is to live in Sirba.

### Living in the community

I like everything here; the village itself, my family, my friends and the time I spend with them. I like also the season when crops cover the farmland. It is beautiful here. I play football and sometimes I watch Arsenal’s matches when I am helped by my dear friends at Debrezeyt. What I don’t like is being alone on the farm work which is tiresome.

I don’t see much change in the community, but some people are getting rich. I don’t know in the future. Others might also become rich, if God helps them. There is more effort by the people in farming, maybe this will bring some change. It is a peaceful place, I like it. There is grouping but based on village, and school only. There is no conflict at all. My parents have nothing to worry about. They don’t try to control what I do, because they feel like I am mature. HIV is a virus causing a disease called AIDS. It can’t be cured, but can be prevented by condom use. There are no HIV patients in our village. I know that some young men have sexual activity with their girlfriends, but I am not sure whether they use condoms or not.

### The economy

There are some who became rich in the past 3 or 4 years, but it is not the majority. There is change in the way farming is done because now everyone uses improved seeds, and fertilizers, planting in lines is being adopted and output has increased as a result. The crops produced are the same, but people are working hard. Some want to expand their farm by renting land, but only those who have enough money to buy additional oxen and pay for the rent. Livestock production has changed because now people have more cattle, and some buy hybrid ones for milk production. With regard to chickens, some were able to adopt hybrid chickens, while the majority keep local ones in small numbers. Off farm opportunities are limited here. There is no change in migration because people usually stay here, and no newcomers are here because land is not available. Inequality increased because some sections of the community are getting richer. Can you believe if I tell you someone here has a car, while you see how we live? It is not only a car, you can see refrigerators, sofas and TVs in the rich house while our hut is decorated only with animal dung and kitchen items. The difference is wide. Children from poor families may drop out of school, work full time in the farm, and have little money to buy clothes, shoes or anything desired. To establish your own house it is hardly possible because of the cases I told you i.e. land shortage.

### Religion

The community here doesn’t spend much time in church/religious activities. They are less interested except for a few old people. There is only Orthodox here. No one goes to learn about religion from other places, but they go for NIGS/church festivals in other kebeles. Religious rules are not becoming strict, I don’t know, maybe those who follow well may tell you about this better. I didn’t see any development activity by the church.

### Politics

We don’t have any contact with the government but our parents are more involved than young people. No message, no training, no livelihood opportunity at all from the kebele or the woreda for young people in Sirba. Land is not distributed by the kebele, leisure facilities are not provided at all. I don’t know what they can do for us. The kebele may not have power, but the government or wereda can provide support for us to be able to attend school, mainly for poor families. We have nothing to do for the community at this stage, but if we could complete our study and become a doctor, teacher etc., we could serve our people in the future. No one forces us to be party members, there is no benefit to being a political party member, and most adults become member. We don’t have youth organizations here. We are not interested in either the ruling party or opposition.

### Inter-generational relations

The relationship between our family is peaceful. I obey what my parents say, and they also listen to us. They don’t underestimate because we are their children. There is no problem at all, the respect is common to all households I know. Therefore it is a good relation among generations. We come together at times of public gathering like weddings, and holydays.