



## Rural modernisation and increasing economic inequalities

### WIDE Bridge Discussion Brief No. 5 of 7<sup>1</sup>

---

#### Key messages from the WIDE evidence

- Accelerating globally-linked rural modernisation processes are constructing new sources of incipient rural class formation, and contributing to big changes in the lives of rural people who occupy different positions of economic and political dis/advantage, and the social relations among them. These processes are playing out differently in different rural contexts contributing to increasing inequalities and competition among rural communities.
- Within rural communities a number of modernisation processes are contributing to the disruption of long-standing household wealth distributions and relations, and transforming gender and inter-generational relations. Agricultural modernisation, improved roads, urbanisation, industrialisation, and increasing migration for work are working together to generate economic growth, economic restructuring, increasing inequalities, changing lifestyles and rising aspirations.
- Increased educational opportunities, increased migration for work, and the spread of access to Information and Communication Technologies are changing the experiences and aspirations of young men and women and also children, though poor young people face many challenges.
- The WIDE evidence demonstrates that rural development models, ideas and concepts are lagging behind the rapidly changing realities of modernising rural communities. In particular conceptualisations of rural people and rural places need updating. Thinking of rural residents as ‘peasants’ is inappropriate; in the WIDE Bridge sites in 2018 they included rich, middle-wealth and poor males and females of different ages engaged in complex mixes of rural and urban livelihood activities. At the same time, due to internal urbanisation, these rural places could no longer be viewed as self-contained communities of farming households.
  - A conversation about appropriate conceptual frameworks for understanding all aspects of rapid change in rural areas needs to be conducted among academics and policy thinkers.
- A second major conclusion is that recognition of the ways in which modernising changes are increasing inequalities in wealth, income and lifestyles, and contributing to alienation and demands for political change, has not been incorporated into development policy thinking and action. Furthermore unintended consequences of development policies can increase wealth, gender and inter-generational inequalities and damage inter- and intra- community relations.
- If future development is to be pro-poor, and gender- and youth- friendly, then government action is required to counter ‘inequality traps’. Left to themselves, economic, political and social inequalities reproduce themselves over time and across generations and, during periods of rapid modernisation, such inequalities are prone to increase. People (mostly male) in elite economic and political positions can seize economic opportunities and exclude others from competing for them. A suggestion is to introduce inequality mainstreaming:
  - Assess all policies, programmes and projects for potential increases in wealth, gender, and generational inequalities, and potential harm to intra-community relations.

- If necessary propose and execute ameliorating activities.
- Modern agricultural practices depend on access to land, to cash or credit for the modern inputs, and to the inputs themselves, all of which were much more available for richer farmers. Agricultural extension services target richer farming heads of households, but our data show they no longer needed persuading of the advantages of modern inputs. Consider
  - Rethinking the design of the agricultural extension services to focus on middle-wealth and poor farmers and women;
  - Launching local consultation processes with them to establish how the services could best support them;
  - Extending the agricultural extension services to farmers still involved in agriculture in recently designated new urban areas.
  - Given the regular failure of agricultural crops in drought-recurrent areas review how government farm and non-farm policies working together could best promote development in particular local contexts.
- Low industrial wages for rural commuters and migrants contributed to poverty and economic inequality. While low wages may be seen as attractive to investors, they also attract less efficient workers, generate high labour turnover, and are associated with lower productivity. There may be a case for a minimum wage to reduce industrial poverty. Ideas include:
  - A review of the costs and benefits of the government's promotion of Ethiopia as a country with cheap labour
  - A review of the national wage structure; this is also relevant for the salaries of kebele civil servants' (teachers, kebele managers, and agricultural and health extension workers) which are considerably lower than the incomes of wealthier rural residents.
- The health of industrial workers from two communities had been damaged by industrial hazards.
  - Enforcing existing occupational health and safety regulations and services would improve the working environments and health and wellbeing of industrial workers.
  - Trade unions can be effective in negotiating health rights and better wages for employees and should be encouraged.
- Geographical remoteness is a source of inequality: people living near to urbanising areas and main roads can more easily exploit opportunities arising from rural modernisation.
  - Investment in all-weather internal roads and non-grid electricity – solar and wind power and micro-hydels – would increase the access of people living in remote areas to aspects of rural modernisation improving wellbeing and reducing spatial inequalities.
- Female participation in politics was restricted to Health Extension Workers, a few Development Agents, a kebele manager in one site, and a few women with voluntary kebele/party posts such as the Women Affairs Cabinet member. Poor men and young people also had little participation in kebele structures. Women and Youth Associations were generally seen as irrelevant.
  - Consider a review of kebele governance structures with a view to making them more attractive to women, poor men, and young people.
- Some young men and women were taking advantage of related economic opportunities, some were getting by, and some were 'falling by the wayside' in various ways
  - Recognise the need for more complex responses to young people's problems.

## Introduction

Accelerating globally-linked rural modernisation processes are generating new sources of incipient rural class formation, and contributing to big changes in the lives of rural people who occupy different positions of economic and political dis/advantage, and the social relations among them. These processes are playing out differently in different rural contexts contributing to increasing inequalities among rural communities.

Positional dis/advantage refers to the unequal economic, political and socio-cultural roles occupied and played by different kinds of people. Few women and young men hold highly advantaged economic, political or cultural positions in these communities in their own right, but wives and sons and daughters of men in such positions benefit from the elite status and networks of the household head. Adult men and women, including those heading households, are found at all levels of local wealth and income hierarchies, as are young men and women in transition to adulthood, and children.

In the Series II Discussion Brief on Inequalities and Differentiation (DBII:02) which was based on WIDE3 evidence from twenty rural communities between 2010 and 2013, Pankhurst described how wealthier households had been forming elites, middle-wealth households had experienced improvements in living standards, and poorer households had benefitted, though less, while destitute people were barely surviving on charity and food aid. Sources of differentiation identified then included increased agricultural and livestock production, irrigation and new technologies, trade, better roads and transport, involvement in non-farm activities and remittances.

Since then modernisation processes have brought more changes to rural communities. Those with major consequences for inequalities in the WIDE Bridge communities included:

1. agricultural modernisation;
2. improved roads;
3. urbanisation;
4. industrialisation;
5. migration for work;
6. increasing education opportunities; and
7. the spread of access to Information and Communication Technologies.

These processes contributed to local economic growth, economic re-structuring, increasing inequalities, changing lifestyles, and rising aspirations, though in [Harresaw](#) climate shocks reduced their overall impact. This brief describes how these modernisation processes, co-evolving differently in each Bridge community, had affected:

1. inequalities among rural communities;
2. inequalities among different places within communities;
3. sources of class-based interests and potential class formation
4. distributions of household wealth and income;
5. inequalities in household consumption and individual lifestyles;
6. balances of power among community elites;
7. rural demands for political changes;
8. gender relations; and
9. inter-generational relations.

Recognition of the ways in which modernising changes are increasing inequalities and contributing to new forms of poverty and dependency, and alienation and demands for political change, has not yet been adequately incorporated into development policy thinking and language.

## Modernisation processes in the four WIDE Bridge communities in 2018

### Agricultural modernisation

In three of the communities the agricultural modernisation processes visible in WIDE3, had accelerated, boosted by increasing urban demand for grain, pulses, vegetables, fruit, meat, dairy products, eggs, and wood (DBIII:02 Modernising smallholder farming). Farmers in the *teff*-producing sites used improved seeds, fertiliser (adapted to different soils in *Sirba/Ude*), pesticides, and weedkillers, had increased production of pulses in response to higher prices, and sold irrigated vegetables. Farmers in coffee-producing *Aze Debo* produced much less grain but used modern inputs, and they sold more irrigated vegetables than in 2011; coffee disease attributed to climate change had reduced production while eucalyptus planting had increased. Livestock fattening and dairy production had increased in all sites, though *Harresaw's* droughts in two out of the three previous years had led to crop failure and livestock-rearing problems.

There is a case for a review of agricultural extension services. Modern agricultural practices depend on access to land, cash or credit for the modern inputs, and the inputs themselves, all of which were much more available for richer farmers. Agricultural extension services mainly target richer farming heads of households, even though the WIDE Bridge data shows that they no longer needed persuading about the advantages of modern inputs, so long as there was sufficient rain.

- Rethink the design of agricultural extension service to focus on middle-wealth and poor farmers and women?
- Launch local consultation processes with them to establish how the service could best support them?

Farmers in *Yetmen* had had no extension services since rural *Yetmen* was incorporated into *Yetmen* municipality in 2016, though farming had not been disrupted as the physical process of urbanisation had been delayed due to rural opposition.

- Extend the agricultural extension service to farmers still involved in agriculture in recently designated new urban areas?

Farmers in *Harresaw* had been unable to benefit from modern inputs in two out of the last three years due to drought.

- Given the regular failure of agricultural crops in drought-recurrent areas there is a case for a review of how, in these areas, government farm and non-farm policies working together could best promote resilience and development.

### Improved roads and urbanisation

New and upgraded external roads had improved rural-urban links everywhere. Work on internal roads in *Aze Debo* had also improved links for some of those not near the main road, but there were many complaints about internal roads in *Sirba/Ude* and *Harresaw* which were especially problematic during rainy seasons.

- Investment in allweather roads inside kebeles improves rural-urban links

Internal urbanisation had taken place in all communities: in *Sirba/Ude* and *Aze Debo* along the main roads passing through; in *Yetmen* through the (slow) expansion of the urban part; and in *Harresaw* through the growth of the very small town at the kebele centre and two small settlements of small houses for young people. In *Harresaw* there was conflict over the siting of a 'sketch-plan town' designed and proposed by higher government levels (more below). In *Sirba/Ude* urbanisation was accompanied by industrialisation.

Urbanisation from outside: in both *Sirba/Ude* and *Yetmen* municipalities had incorporated

significant pieces of rural land (urban grab) while *Aze Debo* and *Harresaw* had lost small pieces (urban creep). In *Yetmen* rural residents had resisted the plan for a larger municipality in 2016 (more below) and were still blocking attempts by the municipality to implement the plan.

External and internal urbanisation had led to increased demand for agricultural outputs and created new non-farm opportunities for richer and poorer households (DBIII:03 Nonfarm livelihoods) within communities and in nearby towns.

### Industrialisation

Only *Ude* and *Aze Debo* had experienced internal industrialisation *Ude* being host to a flower farm, and textile, plastic, and furniture factories and *Aze Debo* to two flour factories and two seasonal coffee-processing plants. A number of young people, mostly women, were, or had been, employed by the *Ude* flower farm. Turnover was high, attributed to wages described as very low and skin damage associated with the use of chemicals. Without informing kebele officials (more below) Zone and wereda officials had visited an area in *Aze Debo* opposite the kebele offices, and surveyed it using a drone and household questionnaire with a view to considering it for the location of an industrial area.

Migration for factory work in Dukem was reported from *Sirba/Ude* and *Aze Debo*. Young men from *Aze Debo* also migrated to work in sugar factories in Fincha, Dubti, and Metahara and a few had recently migrated to Addis Ababa to look for cobblestone, flower farm and factory work and to Hawassa Industrial Park where a respondent said that they had failed to find work since priority was given to Sidama people. From *Yetmen* young men migrated to Metahara, Hawasa, Shashemene, Gode, Harar and Shakiso to look for factory or mining work.

Low industrial wages for rural commuters and migrants contributed to poverty and economic inequality. While low wages may be seen as attractive to investors, they also attract less efficient workers, generate high labour turnover, and are associated with lower productivity. The Ethiopian Investment Commission reported that the average wage of workers in leather factories in Ethiopia was US\$45 per month while the minimum wage in Guangdong was about US\$300 a month (Nicolas, 2017: 18). There might be a case for a minimum wage which would reduce economic inequality.

- Consider a review of the costs and benefits of the government's promotion of Ethiopia as a country with cheap labour in order to attract Foreign Direct Investment.

Uncontrolled use of chemicals in the *Ude* flower farm, were harmful to health. Also in WIDE3 chest problems associated with working in a flour factory were reported and a young man from *Harresaw* who had worked for a few months in a pharmaceutical production factory in Adigrat had related health issues.

- Addressing the challenges of implementing the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health policy would improve the working environments and health of industrial workers;
- Trade unions can be effective in negotiating safety rights and better wages for employees and should be encouraged.

There were no industries in the vicinity of *Harresaw* and no mention of industrial migration. A number of respondents suggested, perhaps unrealistically, that the solution to youth unemployment would be to open factories nearby.

### Migration for work

The discussion brief on 'Moving for work 2010-13' (DBII: 08) documented increasing migration for work by males and females. By 2018 there had been further increases. There were opportunities for nearby urban and industrial migration for work from *Sirba/Ude*. From *Yetmen* women migrated to Dejen, Bichena, Debre Markos, Bahr Dar with most going to Addis Ababa. Males went to a number of

places for industrial work (see above) and to Addis Ababa for urban work. In addition to the industrial migration described above males from *Aze Debo*, as well as females, migrated for urban work in Hawassa and Addis Ababa. Males from *Harresaw* migrated to Humera for agricultural work, though this had decreased, and males and females went to Dera, Atsbi, Mekelle, and Wukro for urban work, and intermittently but regularly, and increasingly, to Kuneba in Afar.

Younger females migrated to the Gulf from all the sites. Nine had gone from *Yetmen* with most currently returned, some from *Aze Debo* and many from *Sirba/Ude*. Young men in *Ude* had started to investigate migrating to the Gulf. Many males migrated frequently to Saudi Arabia from *Harresaw* although there were fewer than there had been in 2011 and since then the numbers of female migrants had been increasing. Young men from *Aze Debo* migrated to South Africa for work and some young women migrated to marry them.

Differences in the work migrants went in search of depended on whether the migration was seasonal or long-term, the local community migration networks, and individual mixes of gender, education, skills, and wealth. Opportunities to migrate, especially internationally, were lower for people from poorer households without cash, resources to sell, or access to credit to cover costs. Poor less educated urban migrants found jobs at the bottom of the gendered urban social class system, while the more affluent could invest in businesses and if successful become upwardly mobile. A few educated migrants found white collar jobs in government or the private sector. Industrial migrants joined the ‘working class’. Most international migrants to Saudi Arabia became domestic or agricultural servants.

Sending households benefitted to varying degrees from migrants’ remittances and savings. Many female migrants to the Gulf and male migrants to South Africa sent remittances and brought back savings increasing household incomes and wealth. Households of failed illegal migrants from *Harresaw* to Saudi Arabia did not recoup the costs of the journey leaving some with large debts. Migrants returning with savings and work experience could potentially be upwardly mobile.

*Ude* and *Yetmen* both attracted in-migrants, some rich, some middle-wealth, and some poor. Investors, people wanting residences, agricultural and urban labourers, and beggars were going to *Ude*. Agricultural labourers went to *Yetmen* for seasonal work while many *Yetmen* town residents had come from surrounding rural kebeles.

#### Increasing education opportunities

The availability of nearby primary and secondary schools had improved since WIDE3 (DBII:05 Education). All the communities had at least one primary school and *Ude* and *Yetmen* had Grade 9-10 schools and Grades 11-12 within commuting distance. *Aze Debo* had Grades 9-12 within commuting distance while G11-12 students from *Harresaw* had to stay in Atsbi but could walk for G9-10 in Dera.

Increased access to public education opened opportunities for upward mobility for poor young people with ability and interest in education, although many were hampered by the need to work to support the household and lack of funds for schooling and college costs. Rich households could pay the living costs of students at schools and colleges too far for commuting, and in some cases for private nursery, primary, secondary and/or college education and prioritised education over work for the household.

#### The spread of access to Information and Communication Technologies

The story was similar in all the communities. Mobile reception had first appeared in parts of three of the kebeles in 2007/8 and earlier everywhere in *Sirba/Ude* and had become widespread everywhere by 2015 with remote *Harresaw* the last to achieve this. They were widely used to contact relatives and friends and to compare prices, and by government officials. In 2018 many young people in all



the communities, predominantly males, had smart phones and, except when the Government turned off mobile data, had used them for social media, mainly Facebook. In *Sirba* young people had used Facebook to follow the page of the then-exiled Oromo activist Jawar Mohammed. The development of ICTs had increased inter-generational inequalities.

TV was available in bars in or near all four communities. Richer households with electricity had TVs, and some had satellite TV which were introduced in 2014. Available channels included EBC, JTV, EBS, Kana, DSTV (football and movies) and in *Aze Debo* spiritual healing and miracle channels and in *Harresaw* Eritrean TV. In *Yetmen* young men watched EBC and Amhara TV in the urban part during ‘the political instability’.

### Inequalities among rural communities

Differences and inequalities among communities depend on geography, history and political connections. *Sirba/Ude* and *Aze Debo* were close to large towns and were thriving economically. The rural part of *Yetmen* was doing well through its trade links with Addis Ababa but urban development had mostly stalled (DBIII:01 Land). Due to its relative remoteness from large cities urban demand for agricultural products from *Harresaw* was less than in the other communities and farmers were also struggling with recurrent drought.

There are richer and poorer kebeles in all weredas and they are engaged in struggles to access limited wereda resources, while weredas struggle for zone resources and zones struggle for Regional resources. In two communities there were allegations that lower level officials had inflated positive achievements and failed to report problems to higher levels to prove they were efficient and win favour with higher levels (DBIII:07 Local government).

*...‘false reporting’ had emerged as a new dimension in the wereda-kebele-community relationship with regard to targets and accountability. In addition to the false reporting on CBHI mentioned above, the HEW said there is false reporting about the number of students in 0-classes and about adult education in the kebele. Meanwhile, it was also a ‘hot issue’ more generally: many respondents mentioned it informally or whilst talking about other topics, giving examples of how this practice is infiltrating all government levels and results in a false picture of what is really happening (and not) on the ground (Harresaw, 2018).*

*Zones having small land want to compete with highly productive ones having wider farm land per household, so that they push weredas to bring false and exaggerated reports as much as possible, then the fabricator of these unrealistic reports are DAs including me. Because if the DA gives a real but small figure report, he will be denied promotion, education opportunity or even will be relocated to far inner rural places away from his/her family. So to avoid these problem, sending satisfactory report became trend than working satisfactorily. Everyone in the government layer is working on false reports with harmony in order to get praise and promotion (Aze Debo, 2018).*

- Review the consequences of unrealistic performance targets for government employees?
- Promote awareness at all levels of government of the importance of equity in the distribution of government resources across all rural communities?

### Inequalities among different places within communities

Sub-communities within kebeles also compete for resources. In *Harresaw* competition between 2 sub-kebeles for the ‘sketch-plan’ town proposed for the kebele by higher authorities contributed to the removal of the kebele chair (who was said to be favouring his sub-kebele) from his kebele leadership position (DBIII:01 Land), and conflicts among young people from the different sub-kebeles. In *Yetmen* rural and urban residents were in disagreement over the future use of the rural land which had been incorporated into the expanding municipality. It was not clear that higher

authorities had anticipated these unintended consequences of their urbanising decisions and there seemed to be no plan in place to manage the transitions as smoothly and peacefully as possible. In both *Aze Debo* and *Harresaw* there had been conflicts over water.

- Assess all policies, programmes and projects for potential harm to intra-community relations?
- If necessary propose and execute ameliorating activities

Households near to urbanising areas and roads can more easily exploit rural modernisation opportunities; remoteness is a source of inequality (DBII:02 Urbanisation; DBII:06 Maternal and infant wellbeing).

- Investment in all-weather internal roads and non-grid electricity – solar and wind power and micro-hydels – could increase the access of people living in remote areas to aspects of rural modernisation, improving their wellbeing and reducing spatial inequalities

### **Emerging new class interests but little class formation as yet**

In classic accounts of capital income accrues to people either from productive capital (the means of production), labour, or rents. People can own and use productive capital, get income from their labour, or use property rights to get an income from rents without contributing anything to society. In industrial societies this division leads to class formation where capitalists and the working class (the proletariat) are in a productive relationship in which capitalists exploit workers while rentiers sit back and enjoy the fruits of their rent-seeking.

The classic account of farmers in Ethiopia has been that they are ‘peasants’ working with household labour on land leased from the state for which they pay tax. (e.g. Dessalegn 2008) Changes arising particularly from agricultural modernisation and urbanisation mean that this model is no longer applicable in most rural areas.

There is rural and urban productive capital. The rural means of production are farmland, oxen and other livestock, equipment and inputs. The urban means of production are urban land with buildings, machinery, other equipment and inputs.

Rural labour is undertaken by ‘peasant households’ on their own smallholder land, farmers renting or share-cropping land in, and employee and daily agricultural labour. Urban labour involves self-employment in trade, construction, manufacturing and services, non-farm regular employment including the civil service, and casual labour. There is also migration labour which is manifest in the community in the form of remittances and savings.

There are three major sources of rents. Farmland is rented or share-cropped out by poor farmland holders and those shifting to non-farm activities. Owners of urban land and houses can rent them out. And there are the rents related to political/bureaucratic office.

However these new class-based interests have not yet led to consolidated class formation in the WIDE Bridge sites. The household livelihood diversification strategies described in the next section show that many get their income from a mix of capital, labour, and/or rents, though at one end there is an emerging ‘working class’ with nothing to sell but their labour and at the other a few rich ‘capitalists’ holding both rural and urban land and employing agricultural and non-farm labour.

### **Continuities and changes in sources of household wealth and income**

Households are key to the organisation of livelihoods in rural Ethiopia. Households move through cycles and at any point in time a community has a mix of ‘standard households’ – man, wife and



children (of different ages) and maybe elderly parents and ‘off-track’ households which do not conform to this norm, including female-headed households, men without wives, siblings living together, elderly couples alone, and men or women living alone. A survey in *Yetmen* in 2004 found that 35% of households fell into the off-track category (Bevan 2010: 2). Many off-track households are found at the lower end of wealth and income distributions.

Under modernisation pressures the organisation of rural livelihoods at household level has become much more complex. In the WIDE Bridge communities we identified nine types of household livelihood strategy depending on their land, capital and labour assets:

1. Economic elites – the emerging capitalists - (mostly male) – rich households with heads involved in one or a combination of farming, trade, other business, and kebele leadership; other family members may have independent economic activities
2. Middle-wealth landed farming households (male and female) – maybe renting in more land – maybe also with members involved in non-farm activities
3. Poor landed households farming their land, with members also involved in non-farm activities including PSNP in some places (DBIII:06 Social protection)
4. Landholding households renting land out – some with heads who are female or too poor, old or sick to farm; some rich households in the process of abandoning farming and adopting fully non-farm livelihoods; some renting land out temporarily to repay a debt or while involved in more or less successful non-farm activities including migration
5. Households renting farmland in: some with land seeking more land to farm; some landless including young men unable to get land from parents; members maybe also be involved in more or less successful non-farm activities
6. Landless households involved in mixes of relatively successful non-farm activities (male and female) – small businesses, trade, full-time employment, daily labour in the community, and migration
7. Poor landless households with a portfolio of livelihood activities – maybe daily labour, wood/grass/dung-selling, petty trade, seasonal migration, PSNP in some places – maybe un(der)employed
8. Landless full-time farmworkers/domestic servants
9. Destitute people – no land, often no house, dependent on others

Relations between people of different positional dis/advantage may involve (mixes of) exploitation, exclusion, conflict, co-operation, support and charity.

### **Changes in inequalities in household wealth, income, consumption and lifestyles**

While there are links between livelihood strategies and the levels of income they generate they do not match directly; for example there are rich landless households and poor households with land.

Richer households were taking advantage of modernisation processes and getting richer by mixes of renting in farmland, employing daily labour, diversifying for investment in trade and business, renting out urban houses, remittances and savings from international migration, educating children privately thereby qualifying them for better-paid work, and establishing rural-urban family networks of economic co-operation.

Middle-wealth households and better-off poor households were on average slightly better-off than in WIDE3 except maybe in *Harresaw*. Civil servants - Development Agents, Health Extension Workers and teachers - were earning considerably less than rich households involved in farming, trade, and other business, contributing to dis-satisfaction, turnover and incentives to seek rents. There were examples of an ex-DA investing in a chicken shed (*Sirba/Ude*), teachers from *Harresaw* migrating to

Saudi Arabia, and a number of Health Extension Workers following private accounting courses.

- It may be a good time to review the national wage structure

Poorer rural households were diversifying, often for survival, including renting farmland out and using portfolios of income-generating activities. In *Sirba* not everyone could cope with the changes and complexities associated with rapid urbanisation. In *Yetmen* there were differences between the activities and identities of poor people in the rural and urban parts. In *Harresaw* and *Aze Debo* the PSNP raised the incomes of beneficiaries.

Very poor households had small, infertile or no land, no or few small livestock, and no support from adult children. In some households most members were involved in daily labour as there was no money to invest in income-generating activities. In others some or all members were old or sick and unable to work. Again in *Harresaw* and *Aze Debo* the PSNP raised the incomes of beneficiaries.

Destitute people faced problems even to get food; and shelter in some places.

Economic well-being is dependent on housing quality, household assets, income, lifestyle, and access to modern services. In all communities there were differing lifestyles among the very rich, rich, middle-wealth, poor and destitute.

*Harresaw*: "...a few rich people who live differently from the rest of the community; they eat differently, dress differently, and have modern houses and social connection with the rest of the community. Some rich people are able to get anything they want because they have good connections. For instance, the kebele give them loans easily comparing to others because they are trusted to repay it back" (very poor divorcée, *Harresaw*)

"there are people from *Harresaw* who are lawyers, doctors and even a pilot. However, my students believe that these people reach where they are because they were from rich families who could support them" (head teacher of *Harresaw* school).

"Very poor people on the other hand do not have any livestock and their farm land is small and infertile. They rent out or sharecrop their land to get a small share of production because they do not have oxen. Therefore, they are dependent on government food aid. Destitute people are those who are landless and have no livestock even a chicken" (very poor woman from *Harresaw*).

### Changing balances of power among economic, political and social elites

Elite positions were dominated by (often older) men. Among the political elites there had been a decline in the power and influence of party/government officials in relation to farming, which was particularly marked in the surplus-producing communities. In the two PSNP sites kebele officials played important roles in the allocation of transfers. In urbanising areas there were new advantages for municipality and wereda officials associated with government regulation of access to land for urban businesses and houses, and decisions about amounts of taxation applicable to individual businesses (DBIII:01 Land).

In all communities many of the economic elites had diversified into trade and/or business activities with some leaving farming altogether. In *Yetmen* farmers and urban business elites had strongly conflicting interests in relation to the use of the rural land in the process of becoming urbanised, while in both *Yetmen* and *Aze Debo* there were well-established rural-urban networks involving economic co-operation and exchanges with families bridging rural and urban economies in Addis Ababa and South Africa respectively. In all the communities the number of families bridging rural and urban economies had increased.

Elders, and leaders of *iddir* and religious and local customary groups comprised the socio-cultural elites in the communities and were still very important for conflict resolution and community social

integration.

Sometimes the interests of the different kinds of elite competed but there were also connections among the elites through individuals who occupied positions in more than one elite area and through networks of social relations. Recently those in both economic and political elites had been prioritising their economic activities and it was notable that there were no elite traders/businessmen in political positions in any of the communities. Socio-cultural elites tended not to hold elite political positions and many were of middle-wealth.

### Rural demands for political changes

There were histories of opposition to governments in the Kambata (*Aze Debo*) and East Gojjam (*Yetmen*) sites and in 2005 both communities voted for opposition parties. In *Sirba/Ude* there were 'tensions and some confusion' then the EPRDF was declared the winner while in *Harresaw*, the East Tigray site, the EPRDF won without opposition.

Urbanisation had led to community discontent or resistance in relation to land-related decisions in all the sites (DBIII:01 Land). In *Yetmen* a group of farmers had organised a rural petition against the urban integration announced in 2016 which had reached Regional level. On their return the petitioners were imprisoned for two months but rural resistance was still hindering the implementation of the municipality plan in 2018. In *Harresaw* there was an ongoing dispute between two sub-kebeles about the location of the 'sketch-plan town' which had been designed at Regional level. There had also been a conflict around the piece of *Harresaw* land taken by Dera municipality. Some farmland had been allocated to a new livestock market which had begun before any compensation was agreed, and during the resulting conflict several of the landowners were imprisoned.

Potential industrialisation had led to community resentment in *Aze Debo*. Officials from Kambata Zone with local wereda officials had visited an area containing grazing land, a PSNP-constructed pond for irrigating vegetables, and some farming homesteads, to survey the land (using a drone) and the households, with a view to identifying whether it would be suitable for an industrial area. They had not informed kebele officials of their visit or its purpose which had caused considerable anger.

In *Ude* there were still many complaints and active appeals relating to amounts of compensation for land taken for various purposes by the government in the past.

Education and use of ICTs had fuelled youth critiques of the older generation and the government in all the communities. In *Yetmen* a number of young respondents described the older generation as 'backward and illiterate' and this was partially supported by data on the ages and education of men perceived as influential in the community. The average age was 60 and, of the 10 who provided information about their education, three had no education and three could read and write, while the others had completed Grade 3, Grade 5 and Grade 7 (2). Young men were interested in national politics and there was a report that most young men went to urban *Yetmen* to watch EBC and Amhara TV during 'the political instability'.

Young people in *Harresaw* kebele felt that the 'government has forgotten us' while in *Aze Debo* the feeling was expressed that 'everyone wants us to migrate away, even the administrators, because we are burden to them'. Young people in *Ude* described themselves as seeking political change while older people 'need stability'. Some of them had been 'following' the then-exiled Oromo activist Jawar Mohammed on Facebook.

### Modernisations and gender relations

Some positive changes to gender relations were reported in the 2010-13 Discussion Briefs notably in women's land rights, girls' education, mother and infant healthcare, and harmful traditional

practices (DBII:06 Women's economic participation; DBII:05 Maternal and infant wellbeing). These changes had been sustained and there had been some further improvements in these areas by 2018.

Urbanisation had led to a concentration of poor female-headed households in urban *Yetmen*. There was also a concentration of female-headed households in *Harresaw*; there had been around 50% in 2011, due to a mix of migration and involvement in the fight against the Derg and the 1998-2000 war with Eritrea. By 2018 the proportion had reportedly increased to 60% most likely attributable to male migration.

Although there was still considerable gender discrimination in access to some economic opportunities, modernisation had brought increasing economic independence for females. Agricultural modernisation had increased opportunities for trade and in richer households generated resources for females to invest in businesses and private education leading to formal employment. The use of weedkillers in all communities but *Harresaw* had reduced female agricultural labour releasing time for other economic activities by farming wives and daughters, although also bringing health risks of which people were not aware. Urbanisation, industrialisation and internal migration for work meant more non-farm opportunities for females of all wealth levels in trade, shops, hotels, teashops, beauty salons, local drink production and sale and flower farms, factories, and cobblestones. Savings from migration, especially migration to the Gulf, had been invested in businesses, usually in urban areas. As well as increasing women's economic independence these activities contributed to household economies. In addition many daughters and wives working in the Middle East sent remittances to their households; in some cases this was vital for household survival.

ICTs had less impact on young women than men. Females used mobile phones and Facebook much less and satellite TV was only available in richer households with electricity and cafes and bars not used by women in *Harresaw* and *Yetmen*. Men in both *Yetmen* and *Sirba/Ude* claimed that availability of satellite TV soaps (especially Kana) in richer households was leading to laziness and pre-marital pregnancies.

Participation in politics was restricted to Health Extension Workers, a few female Development Agents, a kebele manager in one site, and a few women with voluntary kebele/party posts such as the Women Affairs Cabinet member. There were 3 men and 3 women appointed to the social court in *Harresaw* although there was no information on how much the women participated. In a separate interview a male respondent strongly disapproved of wives attending public kebele meetings. Although female Development Teams and 1-5s were more active than the male equivalents, activities were patchy and focused on women's health. There were few effective development interventions for women outside health and little interest expressed in national politics.

Customary organisations and public spaces were dominated by men, one example being a Meskel association in *Harresaw*. The leader described it as follows:

*"The members of the Meskel group are women, men and youth but contributions are made only by people who are married and have set up an independent household. Under-18 dependent youth do not contribute but attend the feast. Women contribute money and prepare the feast but eating and drinking is reserved for male members"*

There was much more social interaction between young males and females than in the past: at school, in churches, and 'in the woods'.

### [Inter-generational relations](#)

#### [The impact of modernisations](#)

Agricultural modernisation: many young men worked sporadically on household farms but there

were not many males in their twenties with land of their own; in two communities there were estimates of about 20%. Some poor young men worked as employees or daily labourers on farms in the community and some migrated for work on farms elsewhere. In *Yetmen* and *Harresaw* some adults opposed the giving of land to youth co-operatives for agricultural activities.

Urbanisation and industrialisation had produced more non-farm opportunities and many young men said they had no interest in farming. In three of the communities young women were said to prefer not to marry farmers; though in *Harresaw* some young women were said to be willing to marry even older farmers for the economic security.

Many young women who migrated for work to the Middle East from all the sites, and young men who migrated to South Africa from *Aze Debo*, sent regular remittances to their parents' households. It was harder for young women to settle back into the communities on their return due to cultural attitudes and controls in relation to women.

Earlier parental expectations of education had been too high and, while there were more educational institutions in 2018, the supply of educated people was greater than the supply of suitable jobs. Disappointment in the outcomes of education combined with new work opportunities had reduced some young people's expectations and hopes of what might be achieved through education.

For more on these issues see DBIII:04 Young people's economic experiences.

ICTs: While adults were happy to use mobile phones for communication and watch TV when it was available there was strong condemnation of Facebook from some and some adults disapproved of hair and clothes styles copied from TV programmes.

The responses of young men to rural modernisation varied. 'Youth' is a period which can last for more than a decade (say aged 15 to 25) and each young man's trajectory can change direction during these years. The WIDE Bridge data suggests that in trying to draw conclusions about how young men in rural communities have responded to recent modernisations it is useful to think of three categories, remembering that real young men may move between them during their 'trajectories to adulthood'.

1. Getting on: young men with successful trajectories taking advantage of opportunities in education, agriculture, trade, business, employment, migration (DBIII:04 Young people's economic experiences); easier for rich young men.
2. Getting by: young men uncertain about their futures but keeping busy, making a living by combining economic activities linked to agriculture, trade, business, employment, migration and sometimes returning to education for a while.
3. Sitting idle for shorter or longer periods: young men unable to find work or unwilling to do what is available; tempted to join alcohol/cigarettes/gambling sub-cultures; getting into drink-fueled conflicts; tempted by criminal activity.

There are also three useful categories to help thinking about the responses of rural young women to modernisations.

1. Economically ambitious: young women taking advantage of opportunities in education, trade, business, employment, migration; sometimes co-operating with their husbands, sometimes postponing or even rejecting marriage; easier for rich young women.
2. Getting by: young women on uncertain education/livelihood/marriage trajectories waiting to see how things would pan out; finding a good way or choosing what seemed to be the least worst; likely to continue livelihood activities after marriage and may return to education; may divorce - especially likely for those marrying very young.
3. Off-track temporarily or permanently: pregnant but not married; if accepted by family could

get back on track; those leaving to towns possibly falling into prostitution; some not-pregnant may also fall into it after migrating for domestic or other work; more likely if poor.

In the four sites, compared with even five years ago, young women were freer to choose how to manage a combination of education, work of their choice and marriage through the years from adolescence to their later 20s. It was also easier to get 'back on track' and to move from 'getting by' to 'getting on'. However they still faced many obstacles (DBIII:04 Young people's economic experiences).

- Recognise the need for more complex responses to different kinds of young people's needs and problems

### Inter-generational mobility

This was affected by economic inequalities. Rich households could provide their children with private education, capital for business, entry into elite networks, urban houses and access to rich wives. Children and young people from poor households were excluded from all these opportunities.

### Young people in the community

Like adult women and poor men young people had little participation in kebele structures. While there was appreciation by some of recent government youth interventions they were thought to be much too little.

- Consider a review of kebele governance structures with a view to making them more attractive to, and inclusive of, women, poor men, and young people.

In the socio-cultural sphere adult and young men participated together in *mehaber* (*Harresaw*) and were more likely to sit together in bars than in the past. Young people did not participate much in community religious activities, except in *Aze Debo*, and the new spiritual and miracle religions in Kambata were not welcomed by adults. Generally:

*'Young people have different ideas from old people; education may enable you to see challenges as opportunities. Young people are highly confronting old systems at different levels – economic, social and political'* (Young man in *Sirba*).

### Conclusion: new ways of thinking about development in Ethiopia

Rural development models, ideas and concepts are lagging behind the rapidly changing realities of modernising rural communities. In particular conceptualisations of rural people and rural places need updating.

A key aspect of the developmental state as described by Meles to Alex de Waal was *'...an atomised and satisfied peasantry... are becoming capitalist and have abandoned their allegiances to intermediate social entities, and satisfied in that their material well-being is improving'* (de Waal 2018: 2). However, as the WIDE Bridge data show, rural residents now include rich, middle-wealth and poor males and females of different ages engaged in a complex mix of livelihood activities most of whom cannot be considered as either peasants or potential capitalists. At the same time urbanisation (DBII:01 Urbanisation); is bringing big changes to rural places which can no longer be viewed as self-contained communities of farming households.

- A conversation about appropriate conceptual frameworks for understanding all aspects of rapid change in rural areas needs to be conducted among academics and policy thinkers

Recognition of the ways in which modernising changes are increasing inequalities in wealth, income and lifestyles, and contributing to alienation and demands for political change, has not yet been incorporated into development policy thinking and language. Also, unintended consequences of



development activities can increase wealth, gender and inter-generational inequalities. And they can damage intra-community relations.

If development is to continue to be pro-poor, and gender- and youth- friendly then government action is required to counter 'inequality traps'. Left to themselves, economic, political and social inequalities tend to reproduce themselves over time and across generations and during periods of rapid modernisation such inequalities are prone to increase. A suggestion for consideration is to:

- Assess all potential unintended consequences of development interventions
- Introduce inequality mainstreaming following the example of gender mainstreaming: assess all policies, programmes and projects for potential increases in wealth, gender, and generational inequalities, and potential harm to intra-community relations
- If necessary propose and execute ameliorating activities

### References

- Bevan, P. (forthcoming 2019) 'The impact of modernisation processes on economic and political inequalities in four rural communities between 2010 and 2018'  
<http://ethiopiawide.net/publications/>
- Bevan, P. (2010) 'WIDE3 Yetmen Community Situation'  
<http://ethiopiawide.net/publications/substantive-reports/>
- Dessalegn Rahmato, (2008) *The Peasant And The State: Studies In Agrarian Change In Ethiopia 1950s - 2000s*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.
- de Waal, A. (August 2018) 'The Future of Ethiopia: Developmental State or Political Marketplace?' World Peace Foundation <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2018/08/20/the-future-of-ethiopia-developmental-state-or-political-marketplace/>
- Nicolas, F. (March 2017) 'Chinese Investors in Ethiopia: the Perfect Match?' *Note de l'Ifri* download from <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/chinese-investors-ethiopia-perfect-match>
- DBII:02. 'Rurbanisation, urban expansion into rural areas, and thickening rural-urban linkages', Philippa Bevan, 2016. Available at [http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE\\_DB02Rurbanisation\\_final.pdf](http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE_DB02Rurbanisation_final.pdf)
- DBII:03. 'Inequalities and differentiation in rural communities', Alula Pankhurst, 2016. Available at [http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE\\_DB03Inequalities\\_final.pdf](http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE_DB03Inequalities_final.pdf)
- DBII:04. 'Youth transitions to adulthood in rural communities (2010-13)', Alula Pankhurst, 2016. Available at [http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE\\_DB04Youth\\_final.pdf](http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE_DB04Youth_final.pdf)
- DBII:05. 'Education in rural Ethiopia (2010-13): aspirations and uncertainty', Catherine Dom, 2016. Available at [http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE\\_DB05Education\\_final.pdf](http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE_DB05Education_final.pdf)
- DBII:06. 'Changing patterns in maternal & infant health and well-being 2003-13', Philippa Bevan, 2016. Available at [http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE\\_DB06Maternity\\_final.pdf](http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE_DB06Maternity_final.pdf)
- DBII:07. 'Economic participation of women and girls in rural Ethiopia (2010-13)', Lilli Loveday, 2016. Available at [http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE\\_DB07Women\\_final.pdf](http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE_DB07Women_final.pdf)

DBII:08. 'Moving for work from rural communities (2010-13)', Catherine Dom, 2016. Available at [http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE\\_DB08Mobility\\_final.pdf](http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDE_DB08Mobility_final.pdf)

DBIII:01. 'Land & urbanisation', Sarah Vaughan, 2018.

DBIII:02. 'Modernising smallholder farming: achievements, challenges and prospects in four communities', Mulugeta Gashaw, 2018.

DBIII:03. 'Nonfarm enterprises and 'rural' livelihoods: survival and growth', Mulugeta Gashaw, 2018.

DBIII:04. 'Economic experiences of rural young people in 2018', Catherine Dom, 2018.

DBIII:06. 'Selected Aspects of Social Protection', Agata Frankowska, 2018.

DBIII:07. 'Local government and governance', Sarah Vaughan, 2018.

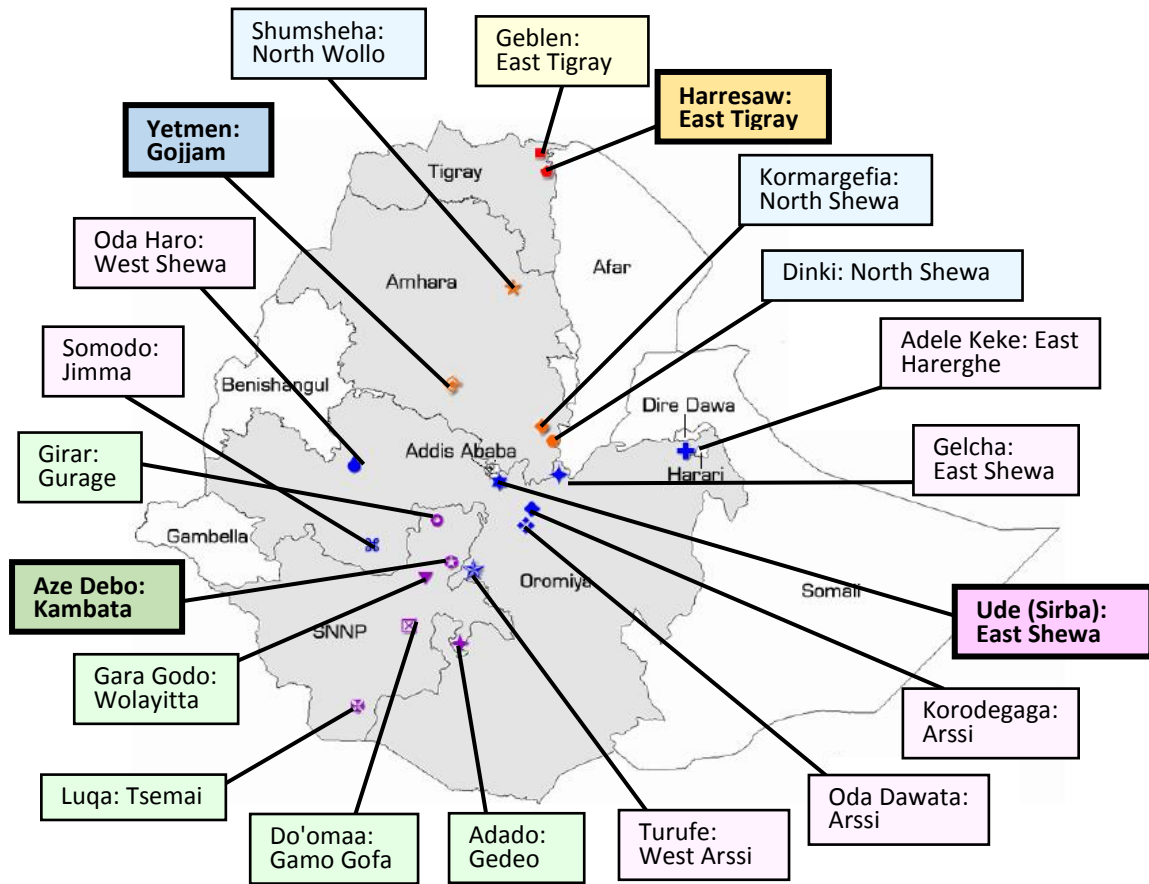
### **Note: Discussion briefs from the Ethiopia WIDE research**

This brief is part of a series of seven produced by the Ethiopia WIDE team on the topics of land, farming systems, non-farming systems, youth economic experiences, social protection, inequalities and local government, based on research carried out in four communities between January and March 2018.

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

In the current Bridge Phase, 4 sites were selected one from each of the 4 regions for a fourth round of research. (In the map below, the names of the Bridge sites are in bold and darker colours have been used for the boxes). Links have been established with 4 universities (Ambo, Bahir Dar, Hawassa, and Mekele), paving the way for these institutions to take on an increasing role in continuing to track change in communities across the country.

Map of the 20 WIDE communities (with Bridge sites shaded)



The four Bridge communities are **highlighted**

<sup>1</sup> This brief was prepared by Philippa Bevan in December 2018. The evidence base supporting its conclusions is a paper (Bevan, 2019) which will shortly be available on the WIDE website [www.ethiopiawide.net](http://www.ethiopiawide.net). I am grateful for helpful comments from Catherine Dom and Alula Pankhurst.