# Research officer daily diaries for Kormargefia, North Shewa, Amhara

## Fieldwork 1

### Female research officer

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| Sun | 17 | Travel |
| Mon | 18 |  |
| Tues | 19 |  |
| Wed | 20 |  |
| Thurs | 21 | Trading dungcake is one of the main means of generating off-farm income for the community. It is generally common for the women in other parts of the country to engage in preparation and sale of Dungcake. However, in Cor Margerifia, trading dungcake is mainly done by the men including the older ones. On our way to the community in the morning, we saw a man with a donkey carrying packed dungcake wrapped in hide. |
| Fri | 22 |  |
| Sat | 23 |  |
| Sun | 24 | There was a meeting held around the kebele office by the social court members. The objective of the meeting was to pass a decision on the case heard a few days previously. The case was related to a quarrel between two farmers who share a border on their farmland. The disagreement was connected to the right to use irrigation water. In the ‘got’ where they live, there is a spring, which for a long time was unused. One of them, the accused, asked the villagers to work on the spring to enable them to use irrigation. However, all neighbours were not willing to work with him. Finally, he decided to dig and prepare gravity based irrigation by himself for his land. After he had done it and had already started to use the water, the neighbours asked him to pass the water to their land too. He denied their request. Then, they brought the case to the social court. Today, the court is expected to pass the final decision. |
| Mon | 25 |  |
| Tues | 26 | There is a general trend among the community that husbands are involved in domestic work, particular taking crops to the Grain mill. When I was passing the grain mill, I saw a man at the gate whose clothes were whitened by the flour and it was a good chance for me to observe what the people were saying before. |
| Wed | 27 | Around 9:00 AM, a supervision team from the wereda arrived around the kebele office. Uncommonly, the kebele manager and two Das were in their office. I was doing an informal interview with the kebele manager while waiting for my guide to come. The supervision team, two women, entered the kebele office suddenly. I could see how emotional the manager was. After they greeted us, one of them pulled her chair near to the manager’s desk and started to show her reports. She asked him about the work of social court, complaints in the kebele on land issues, the progress of cases which had been in the hands of the kebele administration for the last six years, good governance, work on taking feedback from the households on the way the kebele management is running, etc.  I tried to talk to the other supervisor about the wereda supervision. She told me that her colleague came from the wereda administration office to collect information regarding complaints from the community especially regarding good governance. She was from the wereda micro-credit office and she came to check how the youth association which plans to work on irrigation is doing. She was there two weeks previously too. |
| Thurs | 28 | Uncommonly, people(men) were well dressed; complete suit, leather shoe and well washed ‘Gabis’ and ‘Netela’. There was a social group celebration based on religion, mehaber, in one of the households in cor margefiya sub-kebele. There were two houses in the compound; bed and living room together and kitchen. The members of the mehaber were having food and drinks in the living room separately while other invited guests, most of them villagers and relatives of the household head and the spouse, were in the kitchen. The household prepared Tela (local beer), roasted wheat and chick peas, bread, enjera and wot for the guests. I had roasted wheat and chick peas, which I enjoyed very much. |
| Fri | 29 | The vet was giving service in the kebele. A farmer brought six sheep affected by the same diseases. The disease affects their legs and paralyzes them. They start to use their knees to walk when it gets serious. The vet said that the scientific name of the diseases is ‘foot root’. It creates pests inside the foot of sheep and horn which prevents the sheep from walking freely. The vet uses a small chopper like material to cut off the horn and gives the animals an injection. The injection is given for three consecutive days. It helps to stop the bleeding. The disease was common in arid and semi-arid areas, as he told me. However, recently it spread throughout the kebele.  Beyond this, he was selling drugs for both cattle and shoats. People were complaining that the prices of the drugs are higher than the price at which the traders in Debre Brehan used to sell. |
| Sat | 30 |  |
| Sun | 31 | There were several people around the social court office. The secretary of the court was the only official in the office. While he communicated with the people, I heard that they were there because the kebele chairman had accused them, saying that they were absent from the watershed management for more than four days. Moreover, the secretary mentioned to them that they are resistant to kebele activities in the community. |
| Mon | 1 | I was walking to the kebele chairman’s house with my guide. When we were about to reach there, we saw him coming to the kebele office where I waited for him for almost an hour. He was with two farmers. When we met on the way, I tried to remind him that I had an appointment with him. He apologized to me and told me that he is going to deal with the farmers’ land transaction case. The farmer had agreed to rent his land for three years to a farmer who is a resident of the kebele. They need to show the border of the farmland to the kebele manager and sign a contract paper prepared by the chairman. After they did this, they have to go to a ‘bar’ to have areki. As a result, I re-arranged the meeting for another day and went to another respondent’s home. |
| Tues | 2 | While I was walking to my respondent’s home, I met three men digging a hole. They were digging near to another pit for water harvesting which had been used for the last two years. The old one was built with stone walls and floor. It is around two metres deep. Roughly, its length will be around 1 and half metre. It is narrower at its bottom. The man, who is the owner of it, told me that he uses the hole to collect water in rainy season and that he mainly uses it for livestock drinking water. Before a year, he had been using the water to cultivate vegetables in a small plot of land located inside his compound. As he said, this year the amount of water was less so he stopped cultivation and only used it for his livestock. In the last two years, the water dried up around march. It was there from October to March for use.  Having this experience, for the coming season he is working to enlarge the size of the hole so as to increase the amount of water. |
| Wed | 3 |  |
| Thurs | 4 |  |
| Fri | 5 |  |
| Sat | 6 |  |
| Sun | 7 | There was a social gathering in one of the households in the sub-kebele Aloberet. The household invited people to a lunch on the day of the Christening of their baby girl. Early in the morning they went to the church, Saint Goirgis, to have the religious ceremony and baptize their 80 days old infant girl. They invited around 15 households, and children from the invited households are expected to come with their elder brothers or sisters as well as parents.  They prepared enjera from teff flour, ‘wot’, and tella. My guide is the elder brother of the man who had the baby girl. He invited me to the gathering. They have a small house roofed with straw, almost nothing to sit on in the ‘living room’ (there is a place to set made from stone, mud and dung named ‘medeb’. People were sharing it just to find a place to seat and get served.  In the meantime, after asking their permission, I started to take photos. People were happy about that. However, when my guide asked the mother of the baby girl for a photo with her child, she refused. The reason, as he explained me later was that she fears to let her child to be seen by other people from outside the community suspecting that they might be with evil eye. As she said to him, “I don’t know who she is, or where she came from. So why should I expose my baby?.” |
| Mon | 8 |  |
| Tues | 9 |  |
| Wed | 10 |  |
| Thurs | 11 | On Thursday, on the way to the sub-kebele Aloberet, a woman was nagging my guide. After they agree to disagree, I tried to find out what the case was about. He says, “five years ago, a man living in the sub kebele intentionally pierced a household’s congregated iron sheet with a sharp stone. It was at mid-night. The stone didn’t cause any harm to the people who slept in the house. However, it fell directly in the bed room where two children and the household head slept. The man, whose iron sheet was damaged, suspected the right man, who actually threw the stone. He did not go to the kebele or other conflict solving institution in the kebele. What he did was that he gave the case to God. In Amharic, the community members named this action as “letabot sete/seqele”.  According to his explanation, because of his actions, the man’s two daughters died within three years. Afterwards, the man who lost his daughters sent elders to the man who took the ‘action’ for an apology. The man whose congregated iron sheet got pierced confessed that he is the one who did the action which led his daughters to die i.e. god took revenge for the wrong doing of their father.  The elders mediated and let the wrong doer, the one who throw the stone purchase a new iron sheet and repair it by his own labour or labour hired at his expense. At this time, the wrong doer pointed to another individual to be part of the case. He mentioned that the individual was with him while he threw the stone. He asked for cost sharing to cover the cost of repairing roof. The woman, who was nagging with my guide, is the wife of the man who was accused as being part of the crime. She was saying ‘I will show him what I am. I will take the case to the wereda. He will lose his energy and money by following the case at the wereda court. I swear, I will make it.” |
| Fri | 12 |  |
| Sat | 13 |  |
| Sun | 14 | On the election day, there was a meeting before the election started in the sub-kebele, Aloberet. The meeting was chaired by the kebele chairman. The aim of the meeting was to find out who stole the grain of a household located near to the church, believed to be more secure. After the meeting, I tried to talk to a few people. They said that in the last week, a household had two quintals of barley stolen from a traditional storage container which was in the compound. As they explained, the man, the household head, was ploughing his farmland which is located near to his residence. The spouse had left the community to go to Debre brehan to visit her child who lives there. Their children were in school. When she came back, she found the storage container misplaced and the grain stolen. They report the crime to the militia and the kebele chair has managed to organize a meeting for the case today.  In the meeting, as they told me, the kebele chairman expressed his suspicion that the thief is not from another place, but from the community. The people, who were in the meeting, suggest cursing as a solution. However, the kebele chairman told them that it is very early to take that option. He recommended them to search out the thief among themselves. He mentioned that cursing will harm their own children because there is a possibility that their children might have taken the grain. He also said that cursing, in the local language ‘letabot mesqel’ is harmful not only to the people but to the kebele at large. |
| Mon | 15 |  |
| Tues | 16 |  |
| Wed | 17 |  |
| Thurs | 18 |  |
| Fri | 19 |  |
| Sat | 20 |  |
| Sun | 21 | Travel |

### Male research officer

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | 17 | Travel |
| Mon | 18 |  |
| Tues | 19 |  |
| Wed | 20 |  |
| Thurs | 21 |  |
| Fri | 22 |  |
| Sat | 23 |  |
| Sun | 24 | The kebele leadership - all the 9 cabinet members - are supposed to meet and make decisions once a week on Sundays. Expecting this, we went to the kebele office, but the chairman and any other cabinet members were not available. Fortunately, we found the social court judges in an office preparing for the day’s court routines, and 6 or 7 men and women were also present, sitting in groups around the office. I conducted interviews with scheduled respondents. I knew by experience and from the manager on our first day meeting that the mandatory office day for the kebele leaders was Sunday and if we want any one of the leaders, either we take appointments like any other respondents, through the guides, or wait until the weekend to find them at the office. I thought, their absence on that Sunday, could be due to some reason and I hoped to find them at the office the next Sunday |
| Mon | 25 |  |
| Tues | 26 |  |
| Wed | 27 |  |
| Thurs | 28 |  |
| Fri | 29 |  |
| Sat | 30 |  |
| Sun | 31 | The kebele chairman/other leaders were not available, but I conducted interview with scheduled respondents |
| Mon | 1 |  |
| Tues | 2 | We passed by a community livestock water pond on our way from the main Addis-Debrebrhan road to the kebele centre as we travelled daily. On our return from the centre, we found a horse stuck in the pond submerged up to the neck. There were no adult men around to help the horse out of the mud, except herders watching it helplessly. We couldn’t help either, and left. The pond water has retreated down to the centre so cattle/sheep struggle stepping on thick sticky mud to reach the water at the centre. Farmers said it was a common incidence occurring during the dry season, especially for cattle getting stuck with four legs sunk deep in the mud. It required the cooperation of many able bodied men to pull them out, particularly big/heavy oxen. |
| Wed | 3 |  |
| Thurs | 4 |  |
| Fri | 5 |  |
| Sat | 6 |  |
| Sun | 7 | As usual, we went to the Kebele office for appointed interviews and/or to find unexpected respondents coming to the social court for their own cases. By chance, one of the pre-selected respondents, a seasonal sheep trader, came later to attend his pre-set court case. The guide brought him to me for the interview while he was waiting for his case to be heard. I was wondering what case he had in the social court and asked him whether he was a litigant or defendant. He was to defend a case filed against him by a woman neighbour demanding compensation for her lost pasture/field grass eaten by his cattle. He indicated that he had tried to resolve the case through village elders in which the mediators decided on a 100 birr compensation payment as a fair deal of resolution. He agreed to pay, but the woman refused as it was too small a compensation for her loss. So the mediation effort failed and she formally took the case to the social court, and he has been defending himself since then. He told me that witnesses were heard in the previous court meeting and all her witnesses including her brother gave evidences in favour of him, because they said to the court that they saw his cattle grazing, but didn’t know whether they were grazing on his or her pasture as they didn’t know the border. Thus the court decided to study and give a final verdict on that very day. I thought that the social court session days would be very important to find many different respondents, particularly in gathering data related to types of disputes/resolutions. |
| Mon | 8 |  |
| Tues | 9 | We arrived at the kebele at 9 o’clock, and as I was waiting for any one of the pre-arranged respondents to arrive, I could see some young boys among people hanging around in the kebele compound. I asked the guide if any of the young could fit anyone required for module 6 respondents, and one of them was around 19 years of age from a poor family. None of the expected respondents had arrived thus far, so I decided to interview him. But dealing with his personal date revealed that he was a child orphan household head, the breadwinner of the household in supporting his siblings. I was in a dilemma for some time whether the module was meant to focus on young men living with parents or include others in a wider context. Finally, I decided in favour of diversity and interviewed. He has 2 brothers, two half-brothers and a half-sister from his mother only. He is living at his deceased parents’ house with his two siblings both attending school. First their father died and finally the mother and he took the responsibility of supporting his siblings managing the orphan household. I think all this could be the consequences of HIV/AIDS. Thus, in view of future research module design, it seems important to consider newly emerging households such as those led by elder siblings, child headed households, or orphan households led by guardians, as to how they are functioning, problems, and coping mechanisms |
| Wed | 10 |  |
| Thurs | 11 |  |
| Fri | 12 |  |
| Sat | 13 |  |
| Sun | 14 |  |
| Mon | 15 |  |
| Tues | 16 |  |
| Wed | 17 |  |
| Thurs | 18 |  |
| Fri | 19 |  |
| Sat | 20 |  |
| Sun | 21 | Travel |

## Fieldwork 2

### Female research officer

**Story one.** A woman, who had been living in the community before, has started to open a grinding mill. As per the plan, the mill will only be used for making ‘Shiro’ both for the community resident as well as for her ‘shiro’ trading. She already built a tin roofed and walled house for the mill at Cormargefia sub-kebele, kabiy gizaw got. Indeed, she was ready to install the mill but she delayed because of shortage of electric power. Although the plan was to share electric power with the mill which already was there for a years, latterly, the people found out that the power is not enough for operating another mill. She is contacting and dealing with the kebele as well as wereda office in search of other possible options to get electric power for her business. Because of this problem, she delayed the installation of the mill.

**Story two.** Kabiy Gizaw got seems to have better prospect for urbanization. Some of the indicators are the expansion of household resident area as well as business. The only local bar, where local beer, beer, Areki and soft drinks are provided, is located in this got. Moreover, there is land purchasing based on contractual agreement which expected to last for 25 years.

**Story three.** Because of the meeting at the wereda level, the kebele administration had organized a community work for harvesting the crops of those model farmers who joined the training. The community work is obliged to work half day on these individual farmers at least for 15 days. About 30 individual farmers have started to harvest barley crop that owned by the kebele chairman.

**Story four**. There has been a women conference taking place at the kebele. At the meeting, women were complaining about the long time that the organizers are demanding to complete the conference. However, the kebele manager told them that it is their obligation, not a right to attend the meeting for the next three consecutive days.

**Story five**. A woman, who practices ploughing had been harvesting lentils by herself knowing that the doctor’s advise her to take long rest because she has typhoid which is at its very serious stage. She says, “I don’t care about their advice. I will die working on my land. I will feel ill, if and only if, I become idle”.

### Male research officer

**Thursday**. The first day we went to wereda officials for permission to start our field work, both the Wereda administrator and the vice were busy organizing different workshops and trainings, but they took some time and facilitated things for us informed us they also informed us that all the top 10 leaders from each kebele in the wereda were gathered to attend a 25 days training on AGP so that the kebele manager was the only responsible person in the kebele office. It was clear then that the 5 farmer cabinet heads, including the chair and the vice, and 5 of the party core leaders could not be available for us to conduct any interview with the kebele chairman nor the party leader, and it was also difficult to replace them by anyone with similar roles, as the chairman is at the same time head of the party primary.

**Friday, Day one in the community**. I started an interview with the Kebele manager, and as we were chatting about possible respondents he told me another bad news that the crop DA was transferred to another kebele promoted as head of agricultural office since September and he indicated the Wereda has introduced a new structure by opening agricultural sector offices at each kebele; previously there was only one DA supervisor for 3 proximate kebele Das. I tried to find any appropriate replace to the crop DA for module 6, but couldn’t find any, even the NRM DA, who is predetermined respondent for Meseret, was absent for attending up grading courses in Kombolcha, since last July.

**Day five, Wednesday**. I was interviewing the 19 year old boy when the two Ferenges arrived at Kabigizaw Got, then went to the kebele center with Meseret; when they returned back, I was interviewing a key informant, who is also canal irrigation user from a big spring that the Ferenges wanted to visit so that he could help them explaining about the history and functioning of the spring irrigation. As the Ferenges left we restarted the interview from where we stopped, in the meantime he asked me as to whom the two Ferenges were and, especially as to how the male Fereng could speak such a clean Amharic. I told him they were the research project leaders, who came to see the community for them and observe how we the ROs were doing. Then he expressed his wish that they could help the community in some way to construct a small dam in order to increase the power of the water to flow/reach as many farms as possible downstream and asked me if the Ferenges and the study have any plans to help or can influence the government to provide such supports. I explained to him about the purposes of the research and the Ferenges cannot provide direct assistances, but their research findings and recommendations would be shared with the government so that such problems could be given attention. He wished any organization could see the study out come as soon as possible and help them in constructing a dam before the spring completely dries out and we continued the interview.

It was interesting his curiosity/queries about the study and the Ferenges was primarily regarding the benefits it/they could bring to the community or in helping solve problems related to their livelihoods.

**Day Six, Wednesday.** As I was chatting with the livestock trader at the kebele office, a man arrived complaining that ‘they ‘were contaminating the sacred customs and religion of the community. He explained about people he just came across harvesting fodders on ILCA fields on the non-working day of the holy Saviour. He indicated that these people were trying to cheat themselves that they were not working on own farms so didn’t violate the rules of abstinence from work on holy days, as if God was foolish to understand it. He sadly complained that it was people like these who brought misfortunes against the community, hail, frost, crop, and livestock diseases were all sent to punish the deeds of such individuals

**Day 7, Thursday**. As I was waiting for scheduled respondents at the kebele Centre some women arriving in twos, threes or so, later the kebele manager and young girl from Wereda culture and tourism office arrived. The manager told me that the wereda has prepared a three days conference for women in all kebeles to reorganize and strengthen women’s associations and expressed his doubts that many would not come to attend, even for one day, let alone three consecutive days. He complained the Wereda shouldn’t have scheduled such longer meetings in this time of harvest as many were already complaining against the 25 days training for 10 kebele leaders and the imposition of collective labor contribution to harvest crops of all the trainees. He said the same three days meetings of the kebele youth was scheduled to take place the next week. He feared no one or very few would come for the day as it was a working day so that he will have to cancel it, and expected many would attend the next day as it is a non-work day. And he had to change the scheduled meeting for Saturday to Sunday because no one would be available as it is the most important market day. He told me in the afternoon that the meeting was cancelled as only 15 attendants were available. All such complaints against multiple meetings/trainings imposed at that critical time of harvesting were common responses among many interviewees

**Day 9, Saturday**. I interviewed a key informant and the rich farmer in Debrebrhan, as pre-agreed appointments after market: the key informant revealed an interesting story about customary methods of controlling hail, where the community used to contribute grain (6kg each) for Beredo-degami (hail stoppers) known as Debteras (special class of priests involved in magic), but around 9 years ago, a dispute arose when hail partially rained and destroyed crops in some parts of the village and those who lost crops by the hail refused to pay the contribution arguing the hail stopper betrayed them they could not pay him for that would be as if to reward him for damaging their crops, but people from hamlets where the hail didn’t fall contributed. Finally, the community resolved it by deciding to go to hail stoppers and rather take their appeals to Angel Gabriel for hail protection and the same the contribution to the hail stoppers should be given to parish Church of Angel Gabriel in the village. Then, the church leader announced July as Ye-beredo Bea l(annual day of the hail) and declared that all the saints/Angels memorial days in a month should be observed as non-working days during the month of July.

**Day 10, Sunday**. The middle wealth respondent, who didn’t come for the first scheduled interview on Thursday, explained that he was called to participate in harvesting crop and fodder grass for one of the cabinet in his Got, who went for training in Debrebrhan. He estimated around 30 farmers had collectively harvested barley and livestock grass in the morning period, and left to deal with own harvesting in the afternoon. He complained they were being forced to sacrifice their household harvests to work for others who are getting trainings, paid per diems, food, and beds, but he said they don’t blame the leaders, because the government forced them to go this time, while it could have prepared the training when there is less farm work activity.