
LIFE IN A TIME OF FOOD PRICE VOLATILITY

Ethiopia report, year 2

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‘Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility’ is a joint four-year research project by Oxfam and IDS to explore the effects of changes in food prices in communities around the world. The objective of the research is to gain a better understanding of the ways in which food-price volatility affects the lives of people living in poverty in rural and urban areas and how they cope with its impacts. This research report on Ethiopia is a contribution to the second year of that project. The report shows how different groups in Ethiopia are affected, including at the levels of personal income and finance, health, social, family and security.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings of the research conducted at two sites, an urban neighbourhood in the Capital, Addis Ababa and a rural community in Oromia region, indicate that in both sites the price of food items have shown limited increase. The increase in food price had a greater effect on the poorer population. The trend during the last year indicated that the price of vegetables changed significantly compared with the price of basic food items, such as maize, wheat, and *teff*. In both urban and rural areas, the prices of sugar and food oil have remained unchanged because these items were provided by the consumers' association in the urban areas and by the farmers union in the rural ones. In the rural areas, the increase in the price of food crops has been precipitated by the increase in the cost of agricultural production (fertilizer, improved seeds, pesticides, labour, etc.) while in the urban areas the increase is mainly caused by the increase in transport costs and unfair traders. Overall, however, the data show the increase in price has been insignificant. The major reasons were the government application of the new law on price control and the establishment of consumer associations, at the local level, that supply consumer goods at reasonable prices. Many hope this will be more effective in the coming years and called for more governmental intervention in price regulation.

Regarding the changes in occupations in the two sites, the local government has tried to create some jobs. However, the available vacant positions are limited compared with the number of job seekers. In the rural site, paid work in the irrigation projects consumes a large amount of labour and the wages have been increased by more than double for some of the activities such as planting, collecting, etc. The problem is that to perform these paid labour activities, workers need simple basic farming skills and the educated young people do not want to be involved in these activities. Even the big investors in irrigation and flowering farms do not want to employ educated young people because they are not hardworking.

The research shows that at the household level, domestic work remains the main activity of women and children in both sites. In the rural areas, men still play a dominant role in farming and herding activities. However, in both rural and urban areas, there have been slight changes in the gender division of labour. Men have started to be involved in domestic activities such as fetching water and firewood, caring for children, and cooking. One of the big changes in the rural site was that wives/women have started to play important roles in buying and selling items in the market. These seem to be associated with the increasing awareness of gender equality within the rural community in general and within the household in particular. In general, the high cost of living means all family members have to work hard outside the home, including women. As wages of maids are becoming too high, male family members have increasingly shared the domestic workload.

With regard to the types of food consumed by household members, the majority of the households in the urban areas eat bread or *enjera* with cabbage or *shiro wot*. In the rural area, the main daily food at the time of interview was *torosho* (dried flat bread) with cabbage. In both sites, people have struggled to get a balanced diet. As many of the respondents reported, poorer households could not afford to get vegetables, which are very expensive. Also respondents in both sites reported that despite a wish to eat protein-rich foods, such as meat, butter, eggs, and chickens, they could not afford to buy them as these items are very expensive.

The data establish that the poverty of each household directly contributes to increasing hunger. In relation to accountability to the hungry, all respondents stated that there is no right to food unless someone finds his/her own way of getting it. This clearly indicates that the provision of food to the hungry is the main responsibility of the individuals and households themselves. Both in the rural and urban sites, there were no formal government structures providing food aid to the hungry during food crises in the localities. Government policy focuses on improving the livelihoods of the people by improving production and productivity of agriculture in the rural

sites, and by creating job opportunities for the urban unemployed. Ensuring food security at the household level is associated with improving the general living conditions of the people.

The government representatives in the study communities argued that the provision of food for the hungry created dependency syndrome. Therefore, the officials continue to agitate and train the people to actively engage in work in order to reduce hunger and poverty. People are constantly aware that the government will not provide food support to hungry people except in times of natural crises such as flooding, crop destruction by pests, etc. The role of the government is to provide technical (training, advice, etc.) and administrative supports, and to regulate the market prices of basic food items.

Finally, while appreciating what the government is doing in regard to price regulation, supply of consumer goods at reasonable prices, and creating job opportunities, we still believe that it is the responsibility of the government to provide food aid at least to the disadvantaged section of the population (such as old people, orphans, people with disabilities, etc.). The government's strategic trend to ensure food security through improving the livelihoods of the people may be appreciated and encouraged. However, the government should revise its policy on the right to food and should have structures at the local level to respond to urgent hunger issues in the community.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Ethiopian economy has experienced strong growth over the past decade, averaging 10.6 per cent each year from 2004/05 to 2011/12 compared with the regional average of 5.4 per cent. The growth is broad-based and pro-poor, as more than 60 per cent of government spending goes to the education, health, roads, water, and the agricultural sector (MOFED 2010).

The per capita income (adjusted for inflation, measured in 2005 US dollars) was \$256 in 2012; this represents a significant increase over recent decades, but still remains below the \$992 average in sub-Saharan Africa. The Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) was Ethiopia's guiding strategic framework for the period 2005/06 to 2009/10; the growth efforts during this period were threatened by the twin problems of macroeconomic instability – inflation (due to domestic as well as external causes such as oil and food price increases in 2008) and shrinking foreign exchange reserves (World Bank, 2009).

The remarkable economic growth registered over the last 10 years appears to be pro-poor, resulting in declining poverty headcount indicies at national and regional levels, and in both urban and rural communities.

The incidence of poverty (below the national poverty line) declined markedly between 2004/05 (38.7 per cent) and 2010/11 (29.6 per cent). The incidence of poverty fell from 39.3 per cent to 30.4 per cent in rural areas and more substantially from 35.1 per cent to 25.7 per cent in urban areas, over the same period. During 2010/11 urban Ethiopia experienced a significant reduction in the poverty gap; in contrast, poverty severity increased in rural areas during the same period. The headcount poverty rate fell in all regions of the country.

Nationally, the income inequality measured by the Gini coefficient remained constant. In urban areas income inequality increased at an alarming rate until it reached 44 per cent in 2004/05, it then declined to 37.8 per cent in 2010/11. This decline was likely due to the urban-focused activities of the government, as the ruling party lost elections in some urban areas during the 2005 election.

The achievement of food self-sufficiency is one of the key objectives in the Ethiopian government's Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) for the years 2010 to 2015. The proportion of households with insufficient consumption expenditure to cover their food needs (food poverty headcount index) in 2010/11 was 33.6 per cent at the national level, 34.7 per cent in rural areas, and 27.9 per cent in urban areas. In the same period the food poverty gap index was 10.5 per cent at the national level, 11.1 per cent in rural areas, and 7.3 per cent in urban areas. Similarly, the food poverty severity index stood at 0.046 at the national level, while in rural areas it was slightly higher than in urban areas, at 0.05 and 0.029, respectively. The overall result indicates that all kinds of food poverty indices (incidence, depth, and severity) were higher in rural than in urban areas (MOFED, 2013a).

The national food poverty index declined from 38 per cent in 2004/05 to 33.6 per cent in 2010/11 (a reduction of 12 per cent). During this period, the decline in the index was greater in urban areas (a reduction of 21 per cent) than in rural areas (a reduction of 10 per cent). Despite the huge decline in rural food poverty incidence and the gap between 2004/05 and 2010/11, no statistically significant change was observed in the severity of food poverty (squared poverty gap) during the same period in rural areas. In urban areas during the same period the food poverty gap and severity indices declined substantially (by 38 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively).

There are notable disparities in poverty levels among Ethiopia's regions, documented by the national-level poverty report conducted by the Ministry of Finance (MOFED, 2013a). In 2010/11, the poverty head count indices were highest in Afar Region (36.1 per cent), Somali Region (32.8 per cent), and Tigray Region (31.8 per cent), while poverty estimates were lowest in Harari (11 per cent), Addis Ababa (28.1 per cent), and Dire Dawa (28.3 per cent). In terms of food poverty, the highest rates were observed in Amhara Region (42.5 per cent), Tigray Region (37.1), and Benishangul-Gumuz Region (35.1 per cent). The lowest food poverty rates were found again in Harari (5 per cent), Dire Dawa (21.7 per cent), and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNP, 25.9 per cent).

The poverty measures indicate that absolute poverty declined between 2004/05 and 2010/11 in all regions except in urban Dire Dawa (where the incidence of absolute poverty increased by 6 per cent). The poverty gap also declined over this period in all regions except in rural Afar Region, rural SNNP, Addis Ababa, and urban Dire Dawa. Poverty severity also declined over the period in many of the regions including Tigray Region, Amhara Region, Benishangul-Gumuz Region, Harari, urban Afar Region, urban Somali Region, and rural Dire Dawa, but increased in rural Afar Region, Oromia Region, rural Somali Region, SNNP, Addis Ababa, and urban Dire Dawa.

The demographic and health survey provides data on stunted growth, wasting, and underweight rates for the past decade. Nationally, there was a clear downward trend in the rates of stunted growth (identified by comparing measurements of children's heights with a growth reference population) from 58 per cent in 2000 to 44 per cent in 2011. The underweight rate is on a similar downward trend. The prevalence of wasting (low weight-for-age) fell less significantly.

Both the Welfare Monitoring Survey and the Ministry of Education's statistical abstracts indicate education has been expanding in Ethiopia over the past 15 years, and net enrolments in primary schools have almost trebled since monitoring began in 1994. Currently, 85.3 per cent of Ethiopian primary-age children are attending primary school (MOFED, 2013a). Secondary school enrolment has risen too, but remains at quite a low level, especially in rural areas and among the poorest groups. Levels of literacy and numeracy (among the population over 10 years) have also increased significantly over time.

According to a recent report by the Ministry of Finance (MOFED, 2013a), poverty reduction, improvements in food security, and children's progress in education and nutritional achievements, have been driven by economic growth and growth in the incomes of those below the poverty line. This usually results from one of two channels – growth in incomes or redistribution of benefits to people living in poverty. Economic growth has played the most important role in poverty reduction over the past 15 years. In urban areas, infrastructural development (e.g. cobblestone construction) and its use of labour has increased the incomes of many of those living in poverty, subsequently reducing inequality.

Despite the general improvements in living conditions for Ethiopians, around 25 million people in the country (29 per cent of the population) live below the nationally defined poverty line. Chronic malnutrition is very high at 44 per cent. In recent years, inflation has been a major shock for the majority of the urban population and for a significant proportion of the food-deficient rural population.

Together, Oxfam and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) have initiated partnerships in 10 countries (Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Zambia) to track the impact on people's lives of increased food prices. The research aims at documenting the experiences that people living in poverty have of food price volatility. The findings of the study are intended to inform policy makers and other wider audiences for short- and long-term responses with the objective of protecting those vulnerable to the volatility of food prices.

The study is a collaborative work between Oxfam and IDS, as well as different institutions and researchers in study countries. In Ethiopia, the research is led by Dr Tassew Woldenhanna from Addis Ababa University. The *Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility* project comprises three research components: global and national food security tracking, longitudinal qualitative case studies of 23 communities, and integrated qualitative–quantitative studies in all the countries. The research covers four years, with final output expected in 2015.

In Ethiopia, partner senior researchers carried out a qualitative study in two communities (one urban and one rural) in August 2012 for Year 1 and in August 2013 for Year 2. This report can be considered as an update to the Year 1 report. Year 2 data has an additional focus on ‘accountability to the hungry’. This report only highlights the major issues related to price changes and how these changes affect the livelihood and well-being of the population. The way in which the government and local institutions responded to hunger is also discussed. So, the report focuses on the country contexts, methods, government regulations, major findings, and policy implications.

The urban study area is a *woreda* in a Kolfe Keraniyo sub-city of Addis Ababa. In this community, traders, civil servants, pensioners, vendors, house renters, grain sellers, vegetable growers, daily labourers, etc. with the economic status of rich, middle, poor, and very poor, live together. Some earn their living with petty trade and small businesses organized with the help of the *woreda* administration which provides skills training and credit services. They are engaged in wood and metalwork, construction, tailoring, food processing, cobblestones, and other income-generating activities, and are generally improving their lives. Indeed, the costs of food items have been increasing such that some people work for more hours and for better profit.

The rural site is located in Adami Tulu Woreda, Eastern Zone of Oromia Region. Approximately 95 per cent of the people in the community are dependent on agriculture and the majority of the population earn their living through rain-fed farming.

In the past, farmers were predominantly cattle breeders. Now, due to the shortage of grazing land and droughts, the number of cattle owned by individual farmers has declined, although there are still households in the community which breed cattle, goats, sheep, and donkeys.

Detailed issues related to the socio-economic, geographic, and demographic and livelihood risks of the people in the communities can be referred to from the Year 1 report.

2 METHODS

The research themes, research questions, and research methods were adopted from the global methodological paper. The research themes focused on three areas: 1) *ill/well-being* – investigating how food price volatility affected the well-being of people on low/precarious incomes in the study communities, 2) *coping strategies* – establishing how these people cope with changes in prices, 3) *accountability to the hungry* – exploring who answers to the hungry in the communities and how.

The research questions include:

1. How does food price volatility affect the well-being of people with low incomes?
2. How do people cope with changes in food prices over time?
3. Who is responsible for the hungry people in the communities?

The methods used in data collection involved focus-group discussions (FGD) and interviews with key informants and household heads. The focus-group discussions involved diversified groups of people from each community mainly focusing on women, youth, mixed (gender, age, occupations, religion, etc.), and those engaged in grain production (rural) and traders (urban). We organized 8 focus-group discussions, 10 key informant interviews, and 20 household case studies. The methods used and respondents involved in the research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Research methods and types of respondents in urban and rural communities

Focus-group discussion	Key informants		Household cases	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Rural/Urban	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Women	1. <i>Woreda</i> leader	1. <i>Kebele</i> leader	1. Woman who was pregnant in Year 1	1. Woman who was pregnant in Year 1
Youth	2. Women, Children and Youth Affairs leader	2. Farmer cooperative leader	2. Daily labourer	2. Polygamist
Mixed groups	3. Youth association leader	3. Health extension worker	3. Minority ethnic	3. Daily labourer
Grain producers for rural/ Traders for urban	4. Consumers' cooperative leader	4. Women, Children and Youth affairs head	4. Very poor person	4. Minority ethnic
	5. Health official	5. Agricultural extension officer	5. Female-headed household	5. Female-headed household
			6. NGO support beneficiary	6. Grain producers (2)
			7. Community support beneficiary	7. Very poor person
			8. Pensioner	8. Very old person
			9. Very old person	9. Support beneficiary

The data collection was conducted in August 2013, the same month as that of Year 1. We used the same three field researchers in Year 1 (1 male and 2 females) and 1 new male researcher. While two of them conducted the field work in the rural community, the other two conducted interviews in the urban community. They have high educational backgrounds (second degrees) and extensive fieldwork experience in qualitative research. The researchers speak the language of the respondents. In group discussions, one researcher facilitated the discussion while the other one took notes. Individual interviews were divided among the individual researchers.

As in Year 1, we trained the researchers on fieldwork guidelines/protocols, research ethics, daily data collection activities, deliverables, expected outputs, and report writing. We used digital audio recorders to supplement the detailed field notes and digital cameras to take pictures.

The audio data is transcribed from the local language into English. This is supplementary to the written reports. All data is labelled with the pseudonym of sites and respondents.

As per the ethical guidelines of the FPV project, the field researchers were well informed about the purpose of the research, the need for consent, the confidentiality of the identity of the respondents, etc. This helped the participants to feel free to participate in interviews and to give information with confidence.

3 COUNTRY CONTEXT

Until recent years, the Ethiopian government had not developed a policy that helped to control the impact of the high increase in the price of consumer goods. However, in 2010 it issued a decree (proclamation no. 685/2010) of Trade and Consumers' Protection Authority with the purpose of protecting consumers and the business community from unfair market practices and misleading market conduct. The specific objectives of the proclamation are:

- to protect the rights and benefits of consumers;
- to prevent and eliminate trade practices that damage the interests and good will of business persons;
- to accelerate economic development;
- to ensure that manufacturers, importers, service dispensers and people engaged in commercial activities in general conduct their activities in a responsible way.

Regarding the protection of the rights and benefits of consumers, the proclamation emphasized the following important points:

- the consumer should get sufficient and accurate information or explanation on the quality and type of goods and services he/she purchases;
- the consumer can selectively buy goods or services;
- the consumer should not be obliged to buy for the reasons that he/she looked into the quality or options of goods and services or made a price bargain;
- the consumer should be received humbly and respectfully by any business person and be protected from such acts by the business person as insults, threats, frustration, and defamation;
- the consumer can submit his/her complaints to the Trade Practice and Consumers Protection Authority for adjudication;
- the consumer should be compensated for damages he/she suffers because of transactions in goods and services.

In order to implement the proclamation, the Trade Practice and Consumers' Protection Authority was established with the power and duty to:

- take appropriate measures to increase market transparency;
- conduct studies and research in connection with consumer interests and rights;
- regularly announce to consumers goods banned, from being consumed or sold, by government or internationally;
- organize various education and training fora in order to enhance the awareness of consumers;
- ban advertisements of goods and services which are inconsistent with health and safety requirements;
- ensure that the interests of consumers get proper attention;
- protect consumers from unfair activities of business persons and unfair prices of goods and services;
- take administrative and civil measures against business persons or other persons who violate consumers' rights and interests.

In general, the proclamation of the Trade Practices and Consumers' Protection Authority and the establishment of an independent body to implement it is an important step to mitigate the impact of price volatility and unfair price increases by traders. We understand that the authority

has already started its work in Addis Ababa where it established its headquarters. A discussion with the Director of the Research and Development Directorate confirmed that the Authority had already started to use the media to make the public aware of unfair price changes. He added that the Authority wants to extend the provision of education and training to the public and to take cases which violate the rights and interests of consumers to court. It has also started to receive complaints regarding unfair competition and unfair price increases, by hoarding goods, from consumers and traders. The impact of such a proclamation and consumer protection is very much evident in the urban site which is discussed in the next section.

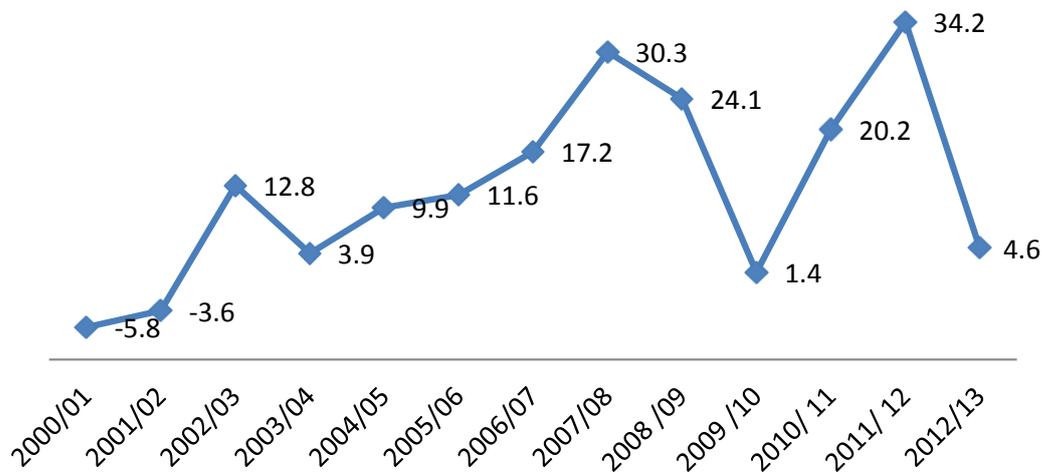
4 MAIN FINDINGS ABOUT FOOD PRICE CHANGES

CHANGES IN FOOD PRICES

In this section the major findings of the study are presented. It focuses on the impact of price changes since Year 1. It also reports on the type of work people do and the changes in wages as well as the changes in what people are eating compared with last year.

The respondents were asked to estimate the price changes and to suggest the causes of the changes over the last year. Responses from the rural Grain Producers' FGD participants indicated that while the price of some staple food crops, such as barley and wheat showed some decline, the prices of maize, *teff*, vegetables, etc. showed increments (Table 2). The macroeconomic report by the Ministry of Finance (MOFED, 2013b) indicated that there has been an increase in general prices since the year 2000 and the increments in price were the highest in 2008 and 2011 and very low in 2013 (Figure 1, Table 2a and 2b). Therefore, the qualitative survey in 2013 indicated modest increments in prices in general, but it varies by crop.

Figure 1: Annual percentage change in GDP deflator from 2000–2012



Source: Extracted from http://laborsta.ilo.org/sti/EN/SUB/CPI_CHGE_RT.xls

Table 2a: Trends in implicit deflator and annual percentage change in GDP deflator

Eth. calendar	G.C.	Implicit GDP deflator (basic prices)	Percentage change in GDP deflator
1992	1999/00	0.33	0
1993	2000/01	0.31	-5.8
1994	2001/02	0.30	-3.6
1995	2002/03	0.34	12.8
1996	2003/04	0.35	3.9
1997	2004/05	0.39	9.9
1998	2005/06	0.43	11.6
1999	2006/07	0.51	17.2
2000	2007/08	0.66	30.3
2001	2008/09	0.82	24.1
2002	2009/10	0.83	1.4
2003	2010/11	1.00	20.2
2004	2011/12	1.34	34.2
2005	2012/13	1.41	4.6

Table 2b: Percentage changes in price of selected cereal in Addis Ababa

Year	Maize	Sorghum	White wheat	Mixed teff	White sorghum
2008	136.4	126.0	79.7	86.1	88.2
2009	-18.0	-20.0	6.5	9.0	-1.0
2010	-22.5	-12.5	-15.8	-17.4	-9.6
2011	74.1	32.1	50.2	15.5	1.8
2012	-2.1	27.7	-11.9	36.6	42.7
2013	30.0	25.5	19.7	23.1	19.2

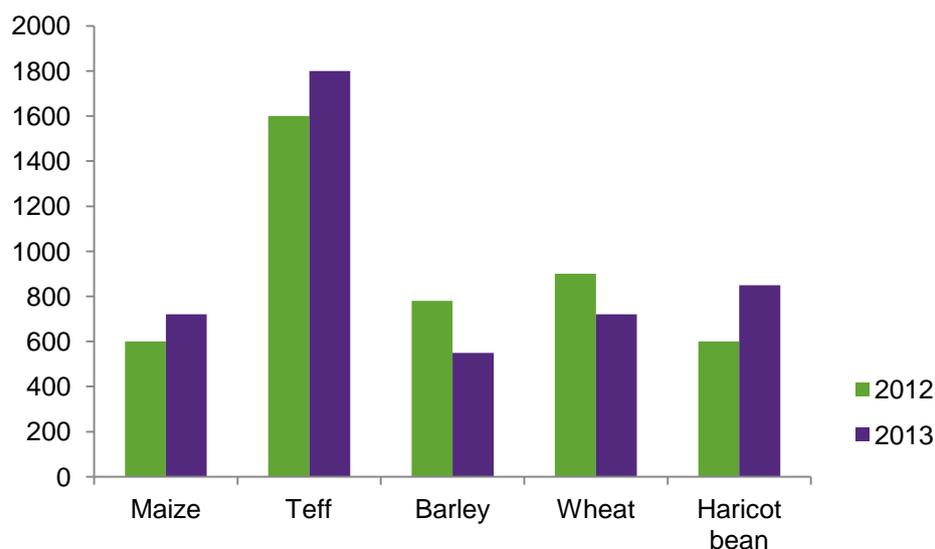
Source: extracted from FAO GIEWS price data accessed from <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1SQ60psl48Zpd1n4f3hj2m6KGW-XUuzHZdl1dmUqGti4/edit?usp=sharin>

Table 3: Food price change (in Birr) estimates as reported by respondents in the rural site

Food item	Unit of measurement	Price in Birr (2012)	Price in Birr (2013)	Causes for price change
Maize	Quintal	600	720	Shortage of rain resulted in a decline in production forcing farmers to buy maize from the market; many farmers sell it at a low price in winter and buy it for a high price in summer; traders buy the crop at cheaper prices in winter and increase it in summer.
<i>Teff</i>	Quintal	1600	1800	The price change is minimal as compared with the previous years. Large numbers of people in the area do not consume <i>teff</i> . They rather produce it to sell.
Barley	Quintal	780	550	The production was good last year and this had a positive impact on price.
Wheat	Quintal	900	720	Last year, the production was good as compared with maize. In addition, many farmers saved the crop in the winter which led to an increase in the supply in summer.
Haricot beans	Quintal	600	850	Traders export the crop; some traders hoard the crop and create a shortage in the summer.
Tomatoes	Kilogram	4	12	The plant was affected by pests in spring and summer.
Onions	Kilogram	5	12	The crop was affected by pests, and farmers declined to produce it in bulk fearing the unexpected decline in price.
Cabbages	Quintal	70	80	Production was good.
Meat	Kilogram	170	180	Limited increase in price.
Fish	Kilogram	15	35	The price of fish, in particular, showed a big change due to increased demand at the national market and reduction in production because of chemicals released from flower farms damaging fishes in lake. The high price of beef forced farmers to consume fish which also affected the demand.

According to the respondents, the increase in food prices adversely affected their livelihoods, and some of the poorer households have failed to cope with the changes in price particularly during the summer season when the poor rural households are forced to buy food crops and seeds from the market. The increase in the production inputs (fertilizer, improved seeds, and pesticides) and services (health, education, transport, etc.) greatly contributed to the depletion of income for most poor households. This in turn led to a critical shortage of food crops in households. The price change estimates of selected food items over the two years are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Change in price of food items (in Birr/quintal): rural site



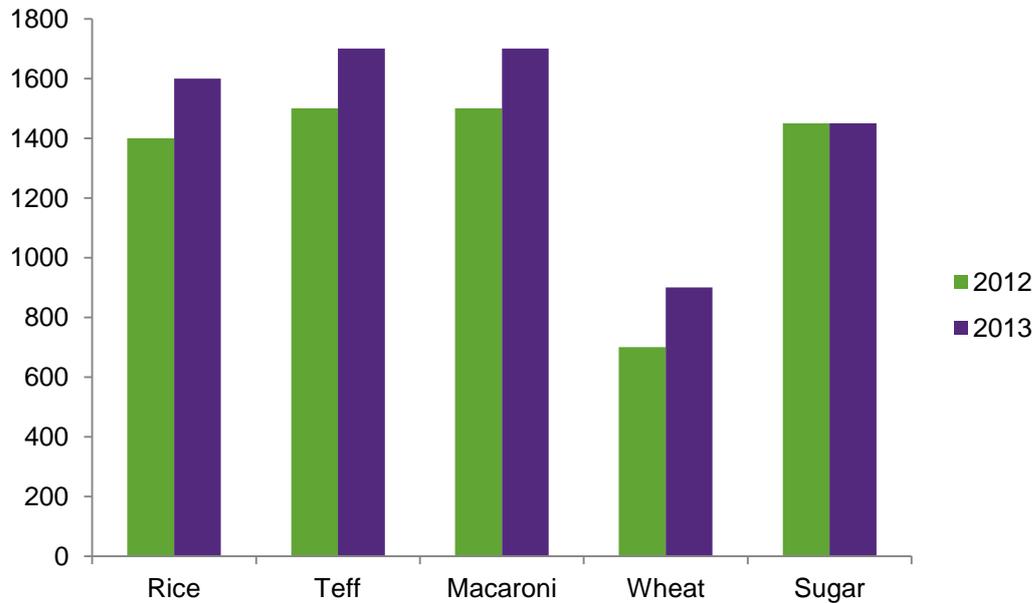
Respondents in the urban sites also reported that the price of food crops and other food items have shown increases over the last year. Inflation, the increasing cost of transport, and the conspiracy of 'greedy' traders are the main factors for the increase in the price of food crops. Table 4 indicates the summary of the price changes and factors for these changes as explained by the women FGD participants.

Table 4: Food price change estimates as reported by respondents in the urban site

No.	Food Item	Measurement	Price in Birr (2012)	Price in Birr (2013)	Causes for price change
1	Rice	Kilogram	14	16	Inflation.
2	Teff	Kilogram	15	17	Increase in production and transport costs.
3	Macaroni	Kilogram	15	17	Inflation.
4	Wheat	Kilogram	7	9	Increase in production and transport costs.
5	Sugar	Kilogram	14.50	14.50	Consumers' Associations provide it at a fair price.
6	Tomatoes	Kilogram	8	24	Wholesalers try to maximize their profit by imposing high prices; lack of price regulation.
7	Onions	Kilogram	8	16	Wholesalers try to maximize their profit; lack of price regulation.
8	Cabbages	Kilogram	8	8	Good production during the year.
9	Carrots	Kilogram	3	8	Producers' knowledge of national market prices increased; wholesalers try to maximize their profit by imposing unnecessary prices; lack of price regulation.
10	Potatoes	Kilogram	3.50	5	Wholesalers try to maximize their profit; lack of regulation of the price from the government.
11	Meat	Kilogram	80–90	100–120	Increase in transport costs.

It is surprising that the price of vegetables has increased by more than double within a year. This greatly affected the urban population. Though the change in the price of most vegetables was also high in rural areas, the changes and the impacts were more visible in urban areas. On the other hand, according to the *woreda* leader, some 'greedy' traders deliberately store the food crops and create shortages in the market to create and thereby increase their profit by selling at higher prices. Key informants agreed that the increase in the cost of house rent put huge pressure on the ability of consumers to purchase food crops. People migrating to the city for work and to live have increased the demand for house rent.

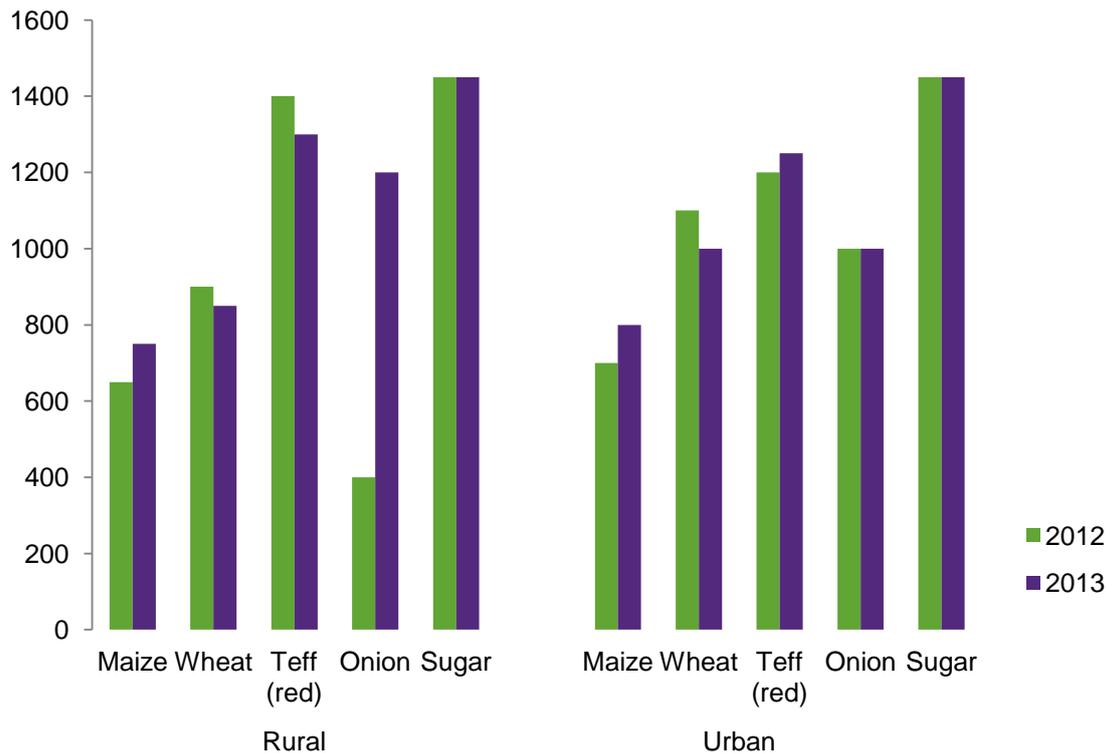
Figure 3: Estimates of price changes (Birr/in quintal) of food items: urban site



As indicated in Figure 3, the change in price of food items in urban areas is very low. Although some traders still use different mechanisms to raise food prices, respondents agreed that the establishment of the Consumers' Cooperative has helped consumers to have food items at reasonable prices. Prices have been relatively stable in the last year.

Households also discussed the price changes and their impact on the life of household members over the past year. Figure 4 illustrates these changes highlighting the rural and urban (as reported by ex-migrant household heads in the rural site and the heads of female-headed households in the urban site).

Figure 4: Estimates of prices changes for selected food items over the two years in rural and urban sites



While the price of onions has somehow increased for the rural household, prices of all items for urban households have remained relatively stable. Sugar as a selected item has been provided by the government factory and sold by the Consumer Associations and Farmers' Cooperative in both rural and urban areas, respectively. That is why its price remains similar (birr 1450/quintal) across sites in both years.

The impact of some price changes (which will be discussed in the next sections in detail) is more evident at the household level both in the rural and urban areas. Both the rural and urban household respondents involved in the interviews confirmed that the increase in the price of basic food stuffs accompanied by the increase in the price of production inputs, cost of services, and other consumable items has hampered their ability to feed their household. For the poor, even a small increase in price had a considerable impact on the members of their families.

In the rural areas, most adults in the household are forced to skip breakfast and snacks. Sometimes, this is in order to provide their smaller children with at least three meals a day. A grain producer reported the real experience of how his household and other community members adapt themselves to the changes in the availability of food items at the household level:

During the harvesting season, we can get variety of food stuffs. Now [in summer] we eat less variety of food. In winter we get teff, wheat, maize and other stuff. We used shiro wot, cabbages, salad, etc. Now, we cannot get most of these food items. There is no teff but we eat a mixture of maize and wheat crops. Most of the time, we eat bread with cabbages. So, both the quality and quantity of food consumed in my household has declined this summer because we are purchasing much of the food items from the market.... Sometimes, we do not eat breakfast and we may totally skip snacks. So we eat only lunch and dinner. Of course, children cannot wait until lunch [they have to eat breakfast] (ET02_HH_GP_13).

The household head who received community support in Year 1, but no more in Year 2, also confirmed that his household has struggled to eat at least three times a day.

We do not eat sufficient amount of food. The household should have eaten four times a day including breakfast, lunch, snack and dinner. However, we cannot get food even three times. The variety was very good in winter but in summer the variety highly declined and we mainly eat bread with cabbage or milk. We rarely eat shiro wot, meat, and vegetables (ET02_HH_CS_13).

The grain producer reported that during times of food shortage and crisis, people are forced to eat food items which are given a low status in the community. One of these food stuffs is red haricot beans. He said, 'This summer, we eat red haricot bean as well. This is eaten only during the time of food shortages. It is not common to eat haricot bean in our community during the time of food surplus because people consider it as unwanted crop for food (but for sale)'. The food is less nutritious and is usually produced for sale.

In the urban area, the poorer households consume the same kind of food for longer periods of time. They do not have the capacity to buy a variety of food stuffs. The female-headed household head, for example, said that her household members have eaten *enjera* with *shiro* sauce most of the year; her child could not get a balanced diet due to a shortage of income and the high cost of living. The following ideas are taken from what she reported:

I have been struggling to feed my children properly because of my economic problem. There are times when my children eat only bread for days. There are also times when they eat only kolo [roasted grains] for their dinner. Last year, I was able to buy macaroni for my children. This year, I never bought it. Last year I bought chicken for most of the holy days but this year, I couldn't buy chicken even for a single holy day. I can't buy chicken with 180 Birr although it would have been important food. Thus, this year, I could not provide my children with a balanced diet because food items are getting expensive (ET01_HH_FHH_13).

In both communities, people are forced to reduce the quality and quantity of food consumed in the household in order to cope with the impact of price changes on the livelihood of their household. Some household respondents in urban areas said that they were forced to spend much of their income on house rent which directly led to a decline in their income for the purchase of food crops and other consumables. Young people migrate to the city for work and other households come to live in the city resulting in huge housing problems. House owners prefer to rent to the youth who can pay a big amount by contributing some money and sharing a single room.

Concerning the source of food consumed at the household level, it was reported that almost all of the urban households purchased basic food items from the local markets and shops. Only one householder reported that her household received some food items from an NGO and relatives. Even this household buys much of the food from the market. It seems that most of the time, the father and mother are the main bread-winners though in some households older children engage in some kind of income-generating activity in order to cover their daily meal. For instance, in the grain seller's household, the older son is an assistant taxi driver and that covers his personal and subsistence costs though he does not contribute money for the household.

The situation in the rural area is different. The availability of food in the household is affected by the season and whether the production is good or not. During the autumn and winter seasons, most of the households consume from what they have produced on the farm. Food shortages affect most households during the summer and when production becomes low due to lack of rain. So, during the late spring and summer as well as at times of food crisis, people partly purchase food items from the market and partly consume from what they have saved. Some poorer households may also borrow food items from better off farmers with/without interest. Poor households also engage in daily labour in order to earn money to buy food stuffs.

CHANGES IN WORK PATTERNS AND WAGES

Interviews with key informants indicated that the government and some private organizations have tried to create job opportunities for jobless young people both in urban and rural areas. The data indicated that more job opportunities have been created in the urban site than in the rural one.

According to the *woreda* leader in the urban site, the government works strongly with the communities and private companies to create more jobs for urban jobless people. He reported that more than 1,200 jobless people have got employed in construction, factories, small-scale enterprises (for example, wood work, metal work, etc.) and service provision organizations over the last year. In addition, the *woreda* helped young people to be organized into small-scale micro-enterprises. A large number of these unemployed youths formed enterprises and cooperatives in a number of areas including loading and unloading factory products, urban farming (poultry, vegetation production, disposable solid waste materials, construction and cobblestone work, etc.). These small-scale enterprises have created job opportunities for other people in the locality.

Petty trading is one of the areas which engages a large proportion of the labour force in the urban area. This activity is mainly run by women. According to the head of *woreda* Women, Youth, and Children's Affairs office, the government has tried to help these petty traders to form cooperatives. However, most of them do not volunteer to form cooperatives. Rather, they want to continue to work individually. They fear the risks of losing their business. This has greatly contributed to the slow expansion of income-generating activities in the *woreda*.

Interviews with households in the urban area indicated that generally the income of their household members has increased as compared to the previous year (Table 5).

Table 5: Comparison of wages for five urban households involved in the two rounds of research

Household code	Current occupation(s)	Current monthly earnings (in Birr)	Last year's occupation(s)	Last year's monthly earnings (in Birr)
PW	Weaving	450	Same	350
VP	Civil servant (Janitor)	550	Daily labourer	300
GT	Grain seller	400	Same	300
SB	Weaving	1350–1050	Same	750--900
DL	Daily labourer	800–1000	Same	600–1000

As the majority of the household respondents reported, though their income showed increments, this has not brought important changes in their livelihoods. This is because the cost of living has increased by far more than the increase in their income. For example, according to the woman who was pregnant in Year 1, though her monthly income has increased by more than 20 per cent this year, the quality of food consumed by the household members shows a decline from last year. The increase in the price of food items has contributed to the deterioration of the livelihood of her household. She reported the situation of her household as follows:

The total monthly income of my household is 450 Birr this year; out of which 300 Birr is used for purchasing food items. Last year, the total monthly income of my household was 350 birr, out of which 250 Birr was spent on food items. Last year, I could afford buying butter to visit a friend/a relative who gave birth to a new baby. This year, I could not do the same as the price of butter is very high. Last year the price of a cup of butter was 10

Birr but this year, it is increased to 15 Birr. Thus, the increasing price of food items has deteriorated the livelihood of my household (ET01_HH_PW_13).

The amount spent on food seems to decrease but this was mainly because the household stopped buying some items such as butter which they used to buy during Year 1.

It seemed that job opportunities were less available in the rural community studied than in the urban one. According to the *kebele* leader, most of the government positions were already occupied and there were few vacant positions in the area. However, the number of jobless, educated and uneducated, people has been increasing at an alarming rate.

The only job opportunities available in the community were paid daily work on the irrigation scheme. This is particularly important for women and working children to earn an income when their household faces financial and/or food shortages. The *kebele* leader explained this as follows:

Paid work [in the irrigation scheme] is one of the major activities which absorbs large numbers of the labour force in this community. The irrigation farm owners created good job opportunities for uneducated youths and women. The price of daily labourers has increased by 50% this year and many paid laborers have benefited from increase in the daily wage (ET02_KI_KL_13).

As the paid labourers in the irrigation project do not need to be professionals, it is not preferred by the majority of the educated young people.

In the neighboring *kebeles* and towns, there are private companies engaged in irrigation, Flowering Farms, and construction activities. Though these companies have created job opportunities for large numbers of people within and outside the *woreda*, they prefer to employ the less educated people to the educated ones. Uneducated youth seem to work harder with relatively lower wages than do the educated. They have fewer vacancies for those who complete secondary and college/university education.

Figure 5: Vegetable growing through irrigation attracted young workers



Some respondents blame the government for not creating job opportunities for educated rural young people. According to the *kebele* leader and health officer, the government's focus is on expanding agricultural production instead of creating jobs in non-farm activities. According to the *kebele* leader, increasing agricultural output does not mean increasing job opportunities for

rural jobless people. This is because increasing agricultural production is possible only by improving the productivity of the land as there is no way to expand the size of farmlands. There is already a severe shortage of farmland and there is little possibility of distributing land to landless young people.

Nevertheless, there are some attempts, by the government and some NGOs in rural areas, to organize young people and women into cooperatives and help them to engage in loading and unloading, and trading activities. Last year, one loading and unloading cooperative was established in the community. The cooperative members were educated young men who had no jobs. They have mainly engaged in loading and unloading the vegetables (tomatoes, onions, peppers, cabbages, etc.) on trucks. In addition, one NGO called SEDA (Sustainable Environmental Development Association) helped to organize some women into a trading cooperative. It constructed a house near to the roadside where the cooperative members can sell vegetables to passengers traveling to Addis Ababa and to Southern Ethiopia. In addition, some educated young people from the community have been employed in the government construction project in Ziway town. Some farmers were also employed in the Farmers Training Centre (FTC) which is located in the community. However, these work opportunities created for the local people are very few compared with the number of unemployed educated young people in the area.

The other important occupational change in the rural community is the increasing flow of migrant paid labourers into this community. These are seasonal migrant labourers coming from Southern Ethiopia and working in the irrigation scheme as daily paid labourers. They stay in Ziway town, and come to the community when there is paid work. The increasing inflow of the seasonal labour migrants into the community has contributed to an increase in the daily wages at the irrigation farm. As they are more experienced and skillful, compared with the local labourers, they have the power to negotiate on payments which actually contributed to radical change in the payment rate. For example, the rate of planting a line of tomato/onion seedlings has increased to more than 1 birr. It was less than 50 cents last year.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE EATING

Both in the urban and rural study communities, the availability and quality of food consumed by the people differs by season, and is affected by inflation. The head of a household which receives some community support in the rural community clearly explained this as follows:

We eat the food in a sufficient amount but the quality is not good. The household should have eaten four times a day. However, we could not eat even three times a day. The variety was very good in winter but now the variety is highly declined and we mainly eat bread with cabbage or with milk. We rarely prepare shiro wot, hardly eat meat and different kinds of vegetables (ET02_HH_CS_13).

The same respondents said that though both the quantity and quality of food consumed in his household had declined this summer [2013], the availability was generally good compared with last year. He said, 'last year we suffered from hunger and we were unable to feed ourselves. But now we are able to buy the food from the market with our own money'.

In the urban community, households are forced to reduce the quality and variety of food consumed by the household in order to cope with the impact of food price increases. As reported by the majority of the respondents in this community, adults in particular had to skip breakfast and snack.

Figure 6: In some households roasted grain or a piece of *enjera* with tomato could be the meal



Some of the households involved in the study said that in the last year, they have reduced the frequency of eating food to twice a day. A respondent from a very poor household reported the situation of her household as follows:

My household members rarely eat breakfast. If we eat breakfast, we skip lunch and vice versa. When we are able to eat breakfast, it is always bread without tea. When we are not able to eat breakfast, we eat enjera with shiro or bread with tea for lunch. Similar food is served for dinner. We stopped to have snack long time ago. In General, we have reduced the frequency of eating food to two times a day (ET01_HH_VP_13).

When we analyse the types of food consumed by the household members, it becomes clear that the majority of the households in the urban areas eat bread or *enjera* (flat Ethiopian bread) with cabbage or *shiro wot* (bean stew). In the rural area, the main daily food at the time of interview was *torosho* (dried flat bread) with cabbage. Cabbage is cheaper during the rainy season as it is produced in the garden of most people both in the rural and urban areas. According to the respondents in both sites, though their household members wished to eat protein-rich foods such as meat, butter, eggs, and chickens, they could not afford to buy them as the price of these food items is very expensive. Some of the respondents even reported that they haven't eaten meat for more than a year. As one respondent from the rural site reported, for example, the price of a kilogram of meat is 180 birr which has increased by more than 30 per cent in a year. One FGD respondent for the same site said, 'My family has not consumed meat during the last one year because price of meat has increased every month and it has become beyond the capacity of my household to buy [and consume]'. Of course, this seems to be less in the urban site (not more than 120 birr per kilogram as most respondents reported. A female respondent from the urban site also said that in the past people at least ate *doro wet* (chicken) but now the price reaches above 180 birr which means that poor households cannot afford to buy chickens. Also urban households struggle to afford vegetables (such as tomatoes, onions, potatoes, etc.) during the summer because the low supply of these vegetables creates shortages in the market which directly results in an abrupt increase in price.

In both sites, food prices reach their highest peak in the summer season. This causes a shortage of food in most of the poorer households. The supply of food items declines in summer and the demand is high as farmers start to buy food stuffs from the market. In the rural community, autumn and winter are good times because most of the households get a variety of food stuffs from their own harvests. During this time, the quality and quantity of the food consumed, by the household, increases. For the urban community, the seasonal difference is

not as much of a significant factor because the price is manipulated by the 'greedy' traders who intentionally hoard the food crops and create shortages in the market.

When we see the main sources of food at the household level, the majority of the households in the rural community get it from their own farms. However, almost all of the households in the urban areas obtain food stuffs from the market. This clearly indicates that food price increases greatly affect the well-being of urban households. As the head of the female-headed household in the urban site said, 'the increase in food price creates high stress in my household'. In the rural area, the households most vulnerable to food price volatility are the landless and those households with large family sizes. Of course, this is aggravated by the increase in the cost of production inputs (fertilizer, improved seeds, pesticides, etc.), cost of land rent, and cost of other consumables.

CHANGES IN DOMESTIC WORK AND GENDER ROLES

With regard to changes in the responsibilities at the household level, respondents at both sites confirmed that as the age of the children increases, they take more and more responsibility within the household. In the urban community, both male and female children have been more engaged in domestic activities. The increasing wages of domestic workers have forced parents to use their own children for domestic chores. According to one respondent, the wage of domestic workers has increased by 50 per cent in one year, and this has made poorer households stop employing domestic labourers. This was also confirmed by the youth FGD participants in the urban site:

Households do not want to hire house maids due to high rate of salary. The lowest house maids' salary was 200 birr last year. This year it is increased to 300 birr. Therefore, instead of employing house maids, parents force their children to help them in domestic activities. This in fact has put pressure on children because their increasing responsibilities at home adversely affect their education (ET01_FGD_Youth_13).

In the rural community, the increasing cost of farm labour is the main cause for the increasing engagement of children in family labour (both domestic and farming). Moreover, the fast increase of paid work opportunities in the irrigation scheme attracted large numbers of children to engage in paid labour. According to the *kebele* leader, paid daily labour increased by 50 per cent between 2012 and 2013.

When we see the gender roles in the household, women still play a dominant role in domestic activities such as baking, cooking, washing clothes and household utensils, fetching water and wood, and caring for children. However, a recent trend has shown that men have started to take responsibility for some domestic activities such as fetching water, washing clothes, and caring for children. One reason was, with the increasing wages of maids, family members need to help each other. The grain producers who engaged in the group discussion (ET02_GPFGD_13) clearly explained about these new trends. They said that in the past, men did not want to be involved in domestic activities. But now, many husbands have started to help their wives with domestic activities. One participant of the FGD shared his experience by saying:

Now I fetch water and firewood for my household. In the past, I used to quarrel with my wife when she came late from the market. I was beating her as well. But now I understand that.... [I was not correct]. Now I start to understand that she is a responsible person for the household. She may stay in the market due to lack of taxis and other problems.

Another participant said that when his wife goes to market, he cooks food for the children. He also fetches water and firewood. Another participant said that he cooks cabbages and bakes bread at home. He fetches water and firewood as well. And he is happy to be helping his wife.

Another participant commented that in the past there was no education about the equality between men and women but in the last few years the intensive education provided by the government has helped to reduce the gap. Government officials, women's associations, and other institutions work hard to educate people about gender equality which could, in a way, be expressed in the narrowing of the traditional gender division of labour.

Though the majority of the group and individual interview respondents appreciated the changes in the gender roles within the households, there are huge challenges to fully implementing the government's efforts to ensure gender equality in the areas of domestic and other household activities. One of the major problems is that many men still do not have skills and experience in domestic work. So, it takes time for men to take full responsibility in all kinds of domestic activities.

The other challenge is the conflict between the traditional division of labour within the household and the new education on the equality of gender roles in the household. This is confirmed by one young man who participated in a youth group discussion. According to him, the norms of society limit men's role to farming, herding, and selling farm products; domestic work is the role of women. He said:

This is part of the culture of the people. The only recent change in the community is in the area of caring for the smaller children. In this case fathers start to care for the children, which was not the practice in the past (ET02_YFGD_13).

This respondent concluded that as this is part and parcel of the culture of the people, it is difficult to change this in a short period of time.

Therefore, though many men are positive towards the changes in labour sharing within the household, the traditional gender-based labour system could not cope with the fast increase in the agitation and propagation of gender equality which sometimes leads to conflicts between husbands and wives, and the older and younger generation, etc.

So, the real experience of people in the rural area indicates that whenever new laws related to gender roles in the households are enforced at the community level, it is important to take into consideration the norms and values of the people. It is also important to give skills training to men on how to accomplish domestic chores before boldly enforcing the law.

5 LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR FOOD SECURITY/HUNGER

The research undertaken also analysed the local accountability for food security/hunger in the study sites. The perceptions and experiences of the interview participants about the right to food and the responsibility of providing food to the hungry during the critical food crises in their localities are discussed in detail.

THE SITUATION OF THE URBAN SITE

Urban respondents reported that as a whole the government, parents, and other working adults in the household are responsible for the reduction of hunger in households. In times of critical food shortage within a particular household, the roles of neighbours, relatives, and friends are very important in providing some financial and food support to the hungry. Respondents indicated that though family ties and social networks have become looser, neighbours and friends still play important roles in supporting hungry people. A woman in this site said:

It is a common practice that people in the neighbourhood help each other in times of food crises or health problems. When somebody is hungry, he or she can ask the neighbours, relatives or friends for food support. But that neighbour, friend or relative can give food to the hungry only when they have extra. I offer food for my sister or brother when they face serious food shortage. Besides, people have to work hard in order not to be hungry (ET01_HH_PW_13).

Sometimes, hungry people apply to the local *kebele* administration for food aid. However, the administration provides a positive response only if there are NGOs which provide food aid/school feeding programmes within that *kebele*. The role of the *kebele* administration is to assess the seriousness of the hunger and link hungry people with concerned NGOs. There is no mechanism by which the administration itself provides food support. This means that the local government structure has no responsibility to provide direct food support.

Household respondents made it clear that though they have suffered a lot from food shortages during the year, they have never asked the local government for food support. This is because they know that the government has little capacity to provide such support. However, they knew that some of their neighbours reported their problem to the *woreda* Women, Youth, and Children's Affairs Office. But the response from the office was not satisfactory. One poor household respondent reported that last year (2012) there was a school feeding programme in the school that her child was attending and her child was getting tea and a biscuit every school day. However, as the NGO providing this support stopped the feeding programme, this support was not available this year (2013). The grain seller respondent reported that the World Vision Organization provides some food and financial support to orphans and children from the very poor households but the support is very limited as compared with the number of people seeking food aid in the community (ET01_HH_GT_13).

Respondents generally believe that the government is not responsible or accountable for the hungry. According to one respondent, it is the responsibility of parents to work hard and feed their household members. The government should not be responsible for individual/household-level hunger. The government should be responsible to provide aid only when part of, or all of, the community faces hunger. Even for this kind of hunger, there is no responsible government structure at the *kebele/woreda* level which could provide an immediate response. So there is no way in which people can ask for food aid from the government during times of food crisis. This is also confirmed by the *woreda* leader.

The prime responsibility [of helping the hungry] lies with the family head. The one who generates income (in the family) is likely to be responsible. Anybody who wants to eat has to work hard as long as he/she is capable. Parents have the responsibility to feed their children all the time. Families have to save money [food crops], and work hard in order to protect themselves from hunger (ET01_KI_LA_13).

The head of the Women, Youth, and Children's Affairs Office also felt that the hungry have no right to food even during a time of food crisis. She said:

The community members should not develop the feeling of dependency syndrome. There are many young graduates who have been dependent on their parents only because of the fact that they didn't get the type of job they aspire to have. There are also people who apply to my office for some kind of food aid. I believe that those people have to work hard instead of asking for food aid. I have told them that as food aid does not bring sustainable solution to their food crises, they have to work hard and seek other solutions by themselves (ET01_KI_WCYO_13).

According to her, hunger happens due to individual laziness. The community is accountable for the hungry because it is the responsibility of the community members to advise lazy people to work hard and feed themselves and their families. She said that the government is responsible only for hunger that happens due to natural calamities which may be beyond the capacity of the community members to deal with. Moreover, the government is responsible for providing technical (training, advice) and administrative support to the people in order to reduce hunger and to ensure food security.

As it works on women, youths, and children, her office receives applications related to hungry children and women. The office have tried to link them with aid organizations working in the *woreda* but at the same time it has advised those aid organizations to engage these people in sustainable economic activities instead of simply providing them with food aid which directly makes them idle and aid dependent.

The *woreda* leader added that the role of the government is to design programmes that enable the community to prevent hunger and secure food by creating job opportunities for the citizens. He said that the government also tries to intervene in the market in order to stabilize the food prices. Therefore, the responsibility of the government is to fight hunger and poverty by expanding job opportunities to a large number of jobless people in the communities. Moreover, the government works closely with the Consumer's Association to reduce the impact of food price changes on the poorest and most affected by hunger in the communities.

Figure 7: The Urban Consumers' Association provides edible oil to consumers at a fair price



Household respondents also reported that in public meetings, people asked the local administration to intervene in the market in order to stabilize the price of basic food items and other consumables. In this regard, the government has played an important role in establishing the consumers' associations which provide sugar, food oil, wheat flour, etc. at fair prices. Recently some consumer's associations have started to diversify the food items they provide including soft drinks, meat, etc. The problem is that the poorest of the poor still could not even afford to buy items from the consumer's association. The government has not designed a mechanism for how this section of the population can help their household members to get proper food.

SITUATION IN THE RURAL SITE

As with the case of the urban community, there is no government structure at the *woreda* and *kebele* levels which is responsible for the hungry in the rural site. According to the majority of the household respondents, hungry people do not have the right to food. They equate the right to food with the right to work. The youth focus group participants said that 'if you work, you can have the right to food but if you do not work, you have no right to food'. However, the *kebele* Women, Youth, and Children's Affairs has a different view. According to her, the government should be accountable for the hungry people. She said, 'The government and NGOs are responsible for protecting people from hunger. The government is responsible because next to God, the government is considered as a father of its citizens and a father does not remain silent when his children are hungry' (ET02_KI_WYCA_13).

The *kebele* leader, however, said that the government cannot be responsible for hunger that happens at household and individual level. According to him, the government has already made it clear that people should work hard and feed their households. He added that the role of the government is limited to providing technical assistance (training, advice, provision of modern farm inputs, etc.) to the farmers. It provides this technical support in order to improve agricultural production and to ensure food security at the household level. This stand of the government was positively accepted by the household respondents as well. However, they commented that the government should still provide some kind of food assistance to poor households during the seasons when food shortage affects wider community members.

With the absence of government and NGO support to the hungry, neighbours and relatives are the main actors in providing food support. People in the rural areas still have strong social bonds which are important not only for helping each other with social events but also playing key roles during critical food crises at the household and individual levels.

Focus group discussion participants reported that people should get food in order to survive. This means that naturally people have the right to food. However, this right to food depends on whether the individuals work hard to feed themselves and their household members. The following ideas were discussed by the grain producers who participated in focus group discussions:

The right to food is equal to the right to work. When you work hard, you can get the food. There is no right to food staying idle. Lazy people cannot have the right to food unless they work hard...; idle people are harmful for themselves and their country. Becoming hungry is a humiliating thing. People do not like to hear that someone [in the community] becomes hungry. Also the government already declared that people should work hard to move out of poverty/hungry, and people has no right to request for food while they have hands to work and mind to think. The government educated the people not to seek/beg food. Of course, local people can borrow money/food crops with some interest to those people who become hungry (ET02_FGD_GP_13).

According to the respondents, hunger happens when a person fails to work hard or due to natural disasters. The government should help hungry people to ease any problem that happens only due to natural circumstances. However, hunger that is happening due to the

individuals' failure to work can be relieved by the individuals themselves. At the same time, neighbours, friends, and relatives can help hungry people when the problem happens for a short period of time.

Both the household and FGD participants provided lists of mechanisms which hungry people in their community use to reduce the impact of hunger. Some of them buy food crops by selling their livestock. Some of them buy food crops by renting out their lands. Others borrow money and/or food crops from other people with interest. The availability of paid work in the irrigation project is also an important way out for many hungry people. They can mobilize their family members and engage in paid labour in order to feed their household members during a time of food crisis. Some households employ their smaller children in the house of rich farmers in order to use their salary to purchase food crops. One youth FGD participant said that some hungry people overcome the problem by becoming involved in theft. According to him, 'stealing is one mechanism of survival during critical food crises'.

Regarding the main direction of government policy in relation to food security and combating the impact of hunger, local officials said that the focus of the government is to bring long-term sustainability through economic development in the rural area.

It is reported that at the beginning of 2013, the government provided intensive training and advice to local farmers on how to improve agricultural production and productivity, and how to secure food at the household level. The government made it clear that expecting food aid from them and NGOs will only create a feeling of dependency. As reported by the kebele leader and the Agricultural extension worker, the government conducted a farmers' training conference at the beginning of 2013 with the objective of motivating and encouraging local people to work hard in order to improve production and to ensure food security at the household level. The training led to a widespread movement on the part of the farmers to actively engage in their farming activities. The result is encouraging. This year's agricultural production looked very good and the majority of farmers feel that the training helped them to use agricultural technologies and techniques (sowing in line, weeding more than once, proper use of fertilizer, and improved seeds, etc.). According to the local agricultural extension worker, there has been a huge attitudinal change among farmers towards the use of new farm technologies and production techniques which has helped many farmers to move out of poverty and hunger. He added that this is the result of the government's long-term plan to ensure food security at the household level through improving the livelihoods of rural people.

The extension workers also provide advice on farming and the *woreda* officials have conducted official visits to farms in order to monitor the impact of training on the production and productivity of farmers. Moreover, farmers have shared experiences of model farmers from other communities. The lessons they gained greatly contribute to improving their productivity but the increase in food prices still remains a hurdle to food security.

6 CONCLUSION

The findings of the research conducted at two sites, an urban neighbourhood in the capital, Addis Ababa and a rural community in Oromia region, indicate that in both sites the price of food items have shown limited increase. The increase in food price had a greater effect on the poorer population. The trend during the last year indicated that the price of vegetables changed significantly compared with the price of basic food items, such as maize, wheat, and *teff*. In both urban and rural areas, the prices of sugar and food oil have remained unchanged because these items were provided by the consumers' association in the urban areas and by the farmers union in the rural ones. In the rural areas, the increase in the price of food crops has been precipitated by the increase in the cost of agricultural production (fertilizer, improved seeds, pesticides, labour, etc.) while in the urban areas the increase is mainly caused by the increase in transport costs and unfair traders.

Overall, however, the data show the increase in price has been insignificant. The major reason was government application of the new law on price control and the establishment of the consumer association at local levels that supply consumer goods at a reasonable price. Many hope this will be more effective in the coming years and have called for more governmental intervention in price regulation.

Regarding the changes in occupation in the two sites, the local government have tried to create some jobs. However, the available vacant positions are very small as compared with the number of job seekers. In the rural site, paid work in the irrigation projects consumes a large amount of labour and the wages have been increased by more than double for some of the activities such as planting, collecting, etc. The problem is that these paid labour activities need simple basic farming skills and the educated young people do not want to be involved in these activities. Even the big investors in irrigation and flowering farms do not want to employ educated young people.

The findings showed that at the household level, domestic work still remains the main activity of women and children in both sites. In the rural areas, men still play a dominant role in farming and herding activities. However, in both rural and urban areas, there have been slight changes in the gender division of labour as men start to become involved in domestic activities, such as fetching water and firewood, caring for children, and cooking. One of the big changes in the rural site was that wives/women have started to play important roles in buying and selling items in the market. These seem to be associated with the increasing awareness of gender equality within the rural community in general and within the household in particular. In general, the high cost of living means families members have to work hard outside the home, including women. As wages of maids become too high, male members have increasingly shared the work load of their female members at home.

With regard to the types of food consumed by the household members, the majority of the households in the urban areas eat bread or *enjera* with cabbage or *shiro wot*. In the rural area, the main daily food at the time of interview was *torosho* (dried flat bread) with cabbage. In both sites, people have struggled to get a balanced diet. As many of the respondents reported, poorer households could not afford to get vegetables which are very expensive. Also respondents in both sites reported that though their household members wished to eat protein-rich foods such as meat, butter, eggs, and chickens, they could not afford to buy them as the price of these food items are very expensive.

The data establishes that the poverty of the household contributes to the increasing hunger within the household. All respondents stated that there is no right to food unless someone finds his/her own way of getting it. This clearly indicates that the provision of food to the hungry is the main responsibility of the individuals and households themselves. Both in the rural and urban sites, there is no formal government structure which provides food aid to the hungry during food

crises in the localities. The policy of the government focuses on improving the livelihood of the people by improving production and productivity of agriculture in the rural sites, and by creating job opportunities to the urban jobless people. Ensuring food security at the household level is associated with improving the general living condition of the people.

The government representative in the study community related the provision of food for the hungry with creating dependency syndrome. Therefore, the officials continue to agitate and train the people to actively engage in work in order to reduce hunger and poverty. People are continuously aware that the government will not provide food support to the hungry except in times of natural crises such as flooding, crop destruction by pests, etc. The role of the government is attached to providing technical (training, advising, etc.) and administrative supports, and regulating the market prices for basic food items.

Finally, appreciating that the government is doing much in regulating price, supplying consumer goods at reasonable prices and creating job opportunities, we still believe that it is the responsibility of the government to provide food aid at least to the disadvantaged section of the population (such as old people, orphans, people with disabilities, etc.). The government's strategic trend to ensure food security through improving the livelihood of the people may be appreciated and encouraged. However, the government should revise its policy on the right to food and should have a structure at the local level to respond to urgent hunger issues in the communities.

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