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Institutional Assessment Report:

Tsaeda Amba Woreda, Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia

Research Program on Livelihood Change Over Time

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The Research Team
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Acronyms

ACRP	Africa Community Resilience Project
ADP	Area Development Program (World Vision)
CDPC	Community Disaster Preparedness Committee
CFW	Cash for work
CMAM	Community management of acute malnutrition
DPPA	Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Agency (Government of Ethiopia)
DRM	Disaster risk management
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EW	Early warning
FFW	Food for work
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
HARITA	Horn of Africa Risk Transfer for Adaptation
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
KDPC	<i>Kebele</i> Disaster Preparedness Committee
LCOT	Livelihoods Change over Time (research program)
LEAP	Livelihoods Early Assistance Program
LIU	Livelihoods Integration Unit (DPPA)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal or participatory rapid Appraisal
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Program
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound
UN	United Nations
WFP	World Food Programme

Terminology

Several terms related to local administration are used throughout this report.

These include:

- Kebele** The smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia, equivalent to a ward or township
- Kushet** A Village, or sub-kebele
- Woreda** The next larger administrative unit, equivalent to a district

Executive Summary

The Africa Community Resilience Project (ACRP) was designed by World Vision International in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action as a blueprint for creating resilient communities. Ethiopia is one of three countries involved in the program, and Tsaeda Amba the participating Area Development Program. Tufts University is working collaboratively with World Vision International to assess the ACRP program's impact and to monitor livelihood dynamics in Tsaeda Amba. This longitudinal assessment is part of a broader research effort by Tufts, an initiative called the Livelihoods Change Over Time (LCOT) study, which seeks to understand major livelihood adaptations in situations of protracted or repeated humanitarian emergencies.

A household survey and a participatory impact assessment were carried out in 2009 to provide a baseline and historical picture of the hazards, risks, assets, and institutions that affect livelihood dynamics in Tsaeda Amba *woreda*. The objective of this round of data collection was to understand the broader context of livelihoods change in Tsaeda Amba *woreda*, in particular institutional constraints to risk reduction, in order to inform the development and implementation of risk management strategies for that area. The fieldwork also included understanding the national policy context, particularly the pending National Disaster Risk Management policy and related policy instruments.

The data for this assessment were collected during January of 2010 by a Tufts-led team comprised of staff from World Vision, Mekelle University, and government. Focus group discussions and household-level open-ended interviews were conducted in five *kebeles* selected from the three livelihood zones represented in Tsaeda Amba *woreda*. The results depict the breadth of institutional constraints. In addition to fieldwork at the *kebele* level, the team interviewed policy makers in a number of

government ministries, including the Disaster Risk Management/Food Security Sector office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD), UN and other donor agencies, and organizations with offices both in Tigray and in Addis Ababa.

Major areas addressed in this report include the question of access to land and natural resources and the efforts made to address land and natural resource conservation; access to credit, and the links between credit and vulnerability reduction which can be both positive and negative; markets and market access; traditional institutions and practices; labor, migration and remittances and the contribution of each to livelihood systems that are, at face value, primarily agricultural and based on small-holdings; gender and social relations; local government; and access to the national social protection program, the Productive Safety Net Programme or PSNP.

Three major areas of findings include access to land and natural resources, credit and the risks of default, and traditional practices and institutions. The small size of land holdings, the limits on land transactions, and the absence of any major land redistribution subsequent to the redistribution held in the wake of the current government coming to power in 1991, have all made access to land for primary agricultural livelihoods a major constraint. Land is used continuously, making for soil quality degradation problems, but more importantly, there is a growing class of landless youth for whom livelihood choices are a major constraint. While soil and water conservations programs are an important part of DRR programs, they cannot directly address this issue.

Access to credit and, through credit, to production-enhancing technology, has been a mainstay of the overall development strategy of the Ethiopian Government in Tigray, and it has a history of many successes. However, in the context of the cur-

rent situation, this study found that the high cost of defaulting on loans is leading to behaviors that can undermine livelihoods—mainly the selling of major assets to avoid the stigma and high cost of defaulting on a loan. Thus one of the strategies intended to improve livelihoods has the potential to significantly undermine the livelihoods of one group of people. The extent of this issue has yet to be quantified. Offering rural financial services that are savings-led rather than credit-led is one possible solution. The HARITA project is also exploring an approach to rainfall-indexed micro-credit that could protect against losses to at least one major hazard—drought—and thus protect against the risk of credit default. That program is also just in the pilot phase, and it isn't known how widely it can be scaled up.

Recognizing and building on traditional institutions could also address some of these concerns. But the analysis of traditional institutions reveals that some are potentially helpful in reducing

risks, particularly *Uqub* and *Idr*—traditional savings groups and ceremony groups (to help in paying for such unexpected events as funerals)—but some practices such as traditional feast days can be detrimental. These are both already addressed by ACRP interventions.

National level policy and actors are also analyzed in this report. Ethiopia has a new Disaster Risk Management policy, which is just in the process of being rolled out. Several years in the making, it represents a significant shift away from reactive disaster response, towards pro-active disaster management. As such, it should help to provide the over-arching framework in which programs like ACRP function. It is too soon to be able to gauge the impact of the new policy as the *woreda* or *kebele* level.

A second participatory assessment in July 2010, will take all these factors into consideration when assessing the interventions and impact of the ACRP. ■

Section 1: Introduction

The Africa Community Resilience Project

The Africa Community Resilience Project (ACRP) was designed by World Vision International in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action as a blueprint to creating resilient communities. The project is research-based and will build capacity for improving resilience through disaster risk management programming and mainstreaming. The project also defines key indicators of resilience, and seeks to influence policies and programming aimed at supporting disaster risk reduction. A six-step process of identifying community priorities and incorporating them into disaster preparedness planning underpins the project. Ethiopia is one of three countries involved in the program, and the Tsaeda Amba project in Tigray is one of four Area Development Programs involved.

Update on the ACRP Program in Tsaeda Amba

Since the first round of field work completed in July 2009, the ACRP project has been engaged in a number of activities. These include identifying partner organizations, including Government of Ethiopia offices, other NGOs and universities; running a one-day training with government office staff, *kebele* chairpersons and managers from each 11 targeted *kebeles* of the woreda on 2009 implementation and 2010 planning; and forming of a task force to oversee operations in 2010.

Challenges to ACRP noted in regular reports include the limited level of staffing at the ADP level, with all staff having multiple commitments and limited time for project activities; late approval of annual plans by the National Office; limited community resource mobilization; and participation in ACRP activities such as soil and water conservation (World Vision 2009). Observation of limited staff time, multiple obligations and long working hours by program staff was also noted by the research field team.

In the first quarter of 2010, ACRP plans include activities to

- Train community members on hazards, vulnerability

and capacity assessment.

- Conduct a hazard and vulnerability mapping for disaster prone areas or villages.
- Incorporate DRR into ADP plans through the re-design processes, annual planning events.
- Prepare Disaster Preparedness Community Plans (CDPPs) through community workshops.
- Identify community training gaps through participatory processes.
- Develop community annual training calendar on disasters, hazards and vulnerabilities.
- Identify early warning systems with community.

Recommended additions to these plans from the research team included a deliberate attempt to get the original CDPP plans that were being followed at the *kebele* level at the beginning of the project, and keeping these for comparison over time, as one means of demonstrating impact of the program.

The LCOT program

The Livelihoods Change over Time (LCOT) program was proposed to capture major livelihood adaptations in situations of protracted or repeated humanitarian emergencies, taking into consideration both the interventions of humanitarian agencies and the institutional, environmental and policy constraints that define livelihoods. The purpose of LCOT is to capture livelihood dynamics longitudinally over time, including the impact of shocks or crises in real time when they occur.

The Tsaeda Amba study is one of three planned studies under LCOT, capturing the elements of protracted vulnerability to slow onset crises, with major causal factors being drought and other climatic factors, chronic poverty, resource degradation, and increasingly, inflation and other economic hazards. In reality, of course, Tsaeda Amba residents face multiple hazards but the case study intended to capture these as the main hazards. A second study planned for Bangladesh highlights repeated exposure to rapid onset natural di-

sasters. A third study will focus more on conflict as the main hazard.

Objectives of the Ethiopia study

Undertaken in collaboration with World Vision, the Tsaeda Amba study intends to capture the dynamics of livelihood change over time in a given location, but also to capture the impact of the DRR interventions that World Vision is implementing through ACRP. Further, ACRP is a pilot program intended to develop a risk management strategy that can be scaled up to apply to other areas of Ethiopian and Africa more broadly. Thus strategy development is also part of the objective. Specific objectives include

- Assess the impact of a specific, community-driven Disaster Risk Reduction program in Northern Ethiopia.
- Assess change in livelihoods over time, including an understanding of the dynamics of changes in livelihood assets, strategies and outcomes in response to repeated shocks.
- Understand the major factors driving these changes—all causal factors including but not limited to interventions of ACRP.
- Understand community perceptions of hazards and risk.
- Develop the means to measure the impact of DRR intervention in chronically risk prone areas.
- Provide feedback to project management in the development of a risk management strategy.
- Assess whether DRR interventions reduce the risk of shocks, mitigate the impact of shocks in terms of reducing asset loss or deteriorated humanitarian status, and reduce the cost of emergency response.

Research questions

Two sets of research questions guide this study

1. In northern Ethiopia, what is the evidence that a set of community-driven interventions to reduce or mitigate the risk of specific hazards will enable people to anticipate, prepare for, mitigate, cope with, and recover from the impact of a shock and become more resilient to future shocks? Are people less at risk after the program? Are their assets better maintained? Do livelihood outcomes (food security, nutrition, health) deteriorate less in the face of shocks?
2. How do communities perceive risk and what do they perceive is necessary to overcome the risk of repeated humanitarian emergencies? What do communities consider to be the appropriate mix

and threshold of assets necessary for overcoming the risk of repeated crisis at the household level? What are the main institutional constraints to risk reduction irrespective of household strategies and assets?

Objectives of this assessment

This assessment was intended to gather information necessary to understand the broader context of livelihoods change in Tsaeda Amba woreda—*beyond the impacts of the ACRP program*. This broader context includes:

- Local institutions
- Local systems of natural resource management
- Land tenure and landlessness
- Market and credit access, and hazards related to these
- Gender and social relations
- Access to the PSNP and other forms of social support and protection
- Migration and remittances
- Local governance

The fieldwork also aimed to understand the national policy context, particularly the pending National Disaster Risk Management policy and related policy instruments.

For further information on the ACRP program, Tsaeda Amba woreda, and the research program, please refer to the first report of the study (Maxwell et al 2009).¹

Field methods

The data for this assessment were collected during January of 2010. Daniel Maxwell and Jennifer Coates from Tufts led a data collection team comprised of two researchers from Mekelle University, one staff member from the World Vision/Mekelle office, four World Vision ADP staff, and two government employees based in Tsaeda Amba.

Many of these individuals had participated in the previous round of data collection, and were thus somewhat familiar with the objectives of the research and the methods employed. Nonetheless, a comprehensive one day training was conducted in Tsaeda Amba to review the research process to date, to clarify the objec-

¹ Available on-line at https://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/download/attachments/33396087/ACRP_Report_1.pdf?version=1

tives and plans for the current phase of research, to review techniques and tips for facilitating focus group discussions, and to orient the team to the specific topics and questions in the discussion guides for this round of the study. Consent forms were used and all team members were trained in the process of seeking informed consent.

The team utilized a purposive sampling approach to select the sites for this phase of the research. Though this phase intended to focus on non-program factors affecting changes in livelihoods, the researchers decided to limit the sample frame to ACRP program *kebeles* (rather than including *kebeles* that had served as a control group in the previous phase of research), in order to maximize the relevance of the results to ACRP program planning and implementation.

Though the initial intention of this phase of research was to conduct an in-depth examination of institutional factors affecting livelihoods, due to staff time constraints and perceived community constraints it was determined that only one day could be spent in a *kebele*. As such, more *kebeles* were sampled than originally anticipated, and less time was devoted in each *kebele* than originally planned. The result was a set of data that better depicted the breadth of institutional constraints than an in-depth view of their inner workings in any particular site. Working within the time constraints, the team selected *kebeles* from each of the three livelihood zones in which the ACRP operates. The number of *kebeles* sampled in each livelihood zone was roughly proportionate to the geographic coverage of the ACRP program in that area. For instance, one *kebele* was selected from the two program *kebeles* in the Atsbi Womberta highlands, three of seven program *kebeles* were sampled in the Eastern Plateau, and one of two ACRP *kebeles* was selected from the Irob Mountains area.

The second sampling stage involved identifying individuals at the *kebele*-level to participate in focus group discussions. *Kebele* officials assisted in selecting potential respondents according to criteria provided by the research team. In each *kebele* the team requested that the leaders assist in forming five focus groups: two male and two female focus groups -- half representing higher wealth strata and the other half representing lower wealth strata -- and a fifth group of individuals representing key institutions within the community. Discussions with the latter group of key informants were intended to elicit a bigger picture overview of social and economic dynamics related to various institutions in and outside the community. This key informant focus group was made up of representatives from the Women's Association, the Farmer's Association, religious institutions, (Orthodox Church and/or mosque), the Youth Association, and the elders group.

In some *kebeles* a representative from the *Kebele* Administration also participated in the discussion.

In addition to these focus group discussions, the team selected and interviewed a representative from four different households in each *kebele* using open-ended discussion guides, in order to get a sense of household-level perceptions of institutional constraints and facilitators of livelihood changes. Though the team tried to interview two male and two female household representatives, one each from a different wealth group, often only males could be located. The *kebele* officials assisting in the identification of respondents preferred not to stray too far from their immediate location in the town center; therefore, the results of this set of interviews may be biased in some ways by having omitted individuals living far from the *kebele* center.

The team spent one day in each *kebele*. Each enumerator pair conducted one focus group and one household interview, with one enumerator facilitating and the other taking notes. Though in many cases it would have been useful to return to the site the following day to collect additional clarifying or probing data, the researchers were told that the community had other work commitments. They had to contribute mandatory labor for soil and water conservation in the mornings, and in the afternoons many members had to work on the PSNP. World Vision partners felt that *kebele* administrators would be hesitant to relinquish their workers for a second day of research.

Apart from the *Kebele*-level focus groups and household interviews, to obtain a picture of the broader context and higher-level institutional forces influencing livelihoods, the team interviewed policy makers in a number of government ministries, including the Disaster Risk Management/Food Security Sector office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD), and various other national ministries or their offices at regional and woreda levels; UN and other international agency headquarters offices in Addis Ababa; donors; a number of national and local organizations working in Tigray (REST, Dedebit Credit and Savings Institute); and other local offices in Tsaeda Amba woreda.

At the end of each day of data collection, team members typed or hand-wrote their notes and submitted them to the PI along with all completed consent forms. Debriefing sessions conducted with the full team were helpful to dig more deeply into the enumerators' impressions of the focus group results. The Ethiopian team members were able to assist in interpreting the data based on their own in-depth knowledge of the local context. ■

Section 2: Local Institutions

Land access and holdings

Enumerators asked focus group participants and household respondents about the size and quality of their crop and grazing land and about how land access and quality have shifted over time.

Land access

In 1991 (1983 on the Ethiopian calendar), the newly installed EPRDF government engaged in a large-scale land reform, and there has been no subsequent redistribution since. The government owns all land, and rental markets in the area are weak. A consequence of these policies has been the creation of a generation of landless individuals—the youth in this region—who are offspring of the generation granted land under the original 1991 process.

Landowners typically cope with increasing family size initially by intensifying their production. At some point, they may divide their land into smaller parcels allotted to their children. However, the 1991 land endowments were small, and subdivisions of less than one-half hectare risk rendering them too tiny for continued productivity. As such, once young adult children are married (at around 20 years of age for males and 17 for females) they find themselves without access to adequate land and are forced to seek employment as petty traders or day laborers.² When a landowner dies, the land traditionally passes to his or her adult children. If there are no immediate survivors, then the land is either allocated through a lottery drawing from those on a list of landless persons or

2 This information regarding petty trading and other off farm labor as income opportunities for landless youth is not consistent with the results from the household survey. In the survey, ninety-three percent of households reported owning some land, while only four of the households sampled indicated that their income came from petty trading. Further exploration of this issue will be warranted in future rounds of data collection, along with an investigation of alternative hypotheses, including the possibility that people are responding according to how they believe the development agent would like them to respond, or the possibility that landless households were somehow systematically under-represented in the sample.

through a less random process of selection by the community of those deemed to be the “poorest.”

In part to address this growing crisis of youth landlessness, the Natural Resource Development Office has implemented a policy of distributing marginal land—in particular, the steep hillsides that are unsuitable for crop production. In these areas, youth are encouraged to invest in tree plantations along with other complementary activities such as bee keeping. Reportedly, demand for these parcels of land is relatively low, in part because returns on forestry investments require a long time horizon. Where immediate needs take precedent, few are able to wait for this long-term payoff, nor do they have the confidence that the payoff will eventually arrive.

The government’s resettlement program is another option for youth facing landlessness with limited livelihood options. However, most respondents in this region felt that the resettlement program was unattractive for several reasons. For one, the destination of resettlement is to lowland areas, where it is hotter and diseases are more prevalent. Also, people expressed reluctance to move far from where they feel rooted in family and community.

With such scarcity of land, and without any land deeds or official land surveys, there is always the potential for conflict over land rights. Respondents reported such conflicts, but most seemed minor and manageable within either the traditional system of arbitration by elders or, where that failed, within the district justice system. Such conflicts mostly manifested in boundary issues—for instance, a person may “accidentally” plough into their neighbor’s property—not ownership issues. Among the group of local elders called in to settle the conflict are often persons who were engaged in drawing the boundaries for the 1991 land reform. They are able to remember the original borders and, when possible, their word is used to settle such territorial disputes. At present there doesn’t appear to be a mechanism for institutionalizing the knowledge of these particular elders, leaving open the possibility of increasing conflicts once these mediators are no longer around.

Land and soil quality

Though some respondents started out with soil of

good quality after the land distribution, most respondents reported that their soil quality is poor and getting worse. For instance, one woman who assumed control over .25 hectare of land after a divorce, is unable to use animal manure as a source of fertility because she does not have a suitable place to keep and graze the livestock. At times she applies chemical fertilizer, but her access and application is inconsistent. Fertilizer seemed to her to be a risky investment due to the unpredictability of rain. Though she had planned to divert water to the fertilized portion of the fields, she recognized that this strategy would only be successful with sufficient rainfall. This particular respondent had received information and training from the government's soil and water conservation program, but she felt that information was not the limiting factor in the continued presence of drought. By contrast, another female respondent with the same land size reported that she has been able to maintain the fertility of her plot through external support from the agriculture office (DA). Equipped with information, she felt she had improved the quality of her farmland by applying compost, fertilizer, manure and various soil conservation techniques.

Private grazing land

For the most part, respondents reported having limited access to private grazing land, though the amount of grazing land varied across households. Several respondents had no grazing land at all, while others had what they deemed to be a small area ranging from 100-600 square meters. Likewise, there was variability in the quality of this grazing land—some reported that during drought there is no grass at all, while others reported that the water table in their area is high and sufficient enough that grass is available regardless of rainfall levels. Some reported a tension between the need to use animal dung for fuel (due to deforestation) and to use it to re-fertilize the grazing lands.

Communal natural resources

Respondents listed eucalyptus trees, stones, cacti, wild animals, natural forest, and water as their primary communal natural resources. Almost unanimously, they felt that the quantity and quality of these resources have reduced over time due to a combination of overuse, the negative impacts of volcanic eruption in nearby Afar, and the prolonged drought. Government soil and water conservation activities seem to have raised awareness within the area of the effects of natural resource degradation on agricultural productivity and food insecurity. Measures to reverse the trend, such as gully treatment, check dam construction, and tree plantations, are being taken up in many of the communities where these data were collected.

Most communities interviewed had some type of communal forestland that had recently come under the management of the soil and water conservation program. For instance, in Sendada *Kebele*, the community had developed an enclosed area that it planted with trees and replanted with grass every year. Through a cut-and-carry system whose rules were determined by the community, members are allowed to access the grass for their cows and oxen. Recognizing that access is not beneficial to those members who don't have oxen, the non-owners agreed to allow access to their portion of the communal area in exchange for requiring the oxen owners to plough their fields. Every year the community has been adding to the amount of enclosed land, and discouraging free grazing. In addition to reaping the benefits of increased fodder, respondents reported that the reforestation has decreased runoff and flooding downhill, and has reduced the degradation of cultivatable land, with benefits to reducing the risk of hazards like flooding. This appears to be a successful strategy that should be further encouraged under the ACRP.

Not all areas had communal grazing land. In those areas with communal lands, the *kebele* and woreda leaders were responsible for maintaining the rules of access. Rules and procedures followed by government officials seemed to be location specific, rather than driven by a general policy. For instance, one respondent said that the area is "sometimes closed, but not always," while others said that the grazing land is guarded and the community must seek permission from the local leaders, who decide at the time whether to allow community use or not.

Water resources are communal and insufficient to meet the needs of humans and livestock year round in nearly all *kebeles* where the interviews were conducted. Most drinking water is accessed through hand-dug wells, rivers, and springs, while water for animals comes from rivers and, in some cases, protected dams. In a few communities the hand dug wells and springs are managed by a water committee. In some areas there is a small fee (around 50 US cents) that goes to cover costs associated with maintaining the water points. However, even where management is deemed to be good, the availability and reliability of the water from these sources are not adequate. Only one respondent reported that there is no shortage of drinking water from the hand dug well in that area, even during drought, and when one well stopped working it was replaced by another that has continued to supply sufficient amounts for human consumption. Despite the acute scarcity, respondents denied experiencing any disputes or conflict over water. There was one report of arguments while in the queue for water that were resolved by guards at the scene.

Women and children typically collect another natural resource, wild foods, including different types of cactus

(the fruit for humans and the cactus pads for livestock) and other plants whose names in Tigrinya include *hamli*, *bushiko* and *ango*, *kuinti*, fruits of *cado* and *da'aro* trees. Most are consumed by both wealthy and poor alike in season to supplement the diet. Cacti are also privately owned and consumed to improve dietary diversity. According to respondents, *hamli*, *cado*, and *kuinti* are likely to be consumed during times of crisis, while *kuinti* may be sold in the market.

Credit access

Enumerators asked respondents to describe the various options for accessing credit, their attitudes toward taking credit in an environment of risk, the ways in which people most commonly use credit and manage debt, and issues and challenges that they experience with repaying loans.

Respondents cited three different formal sources of credit in the focus group discussions and interviews: (1) Dedebit Credit and Savings Institute (DECSI), an independent micro-finance institute that grew out of the major national NGO operating in the area, the Relief Society of Tigray (REST); (2) The government agriculture office, and (3) World Vision. In addition, some respondents reported taking informal loans from neighbors, family members, or employers. The activity of traditional moneylenders (called “hazara”) had nearly ceased with the penetration of Dedebit into the area from 1994 onward.

Respondents estimated that approximately 90 percent of community members take some type of loan. The remaining ten percent are either too rich to need a loan or are too poor to feel they can assume the risk of taking one. Formerly, loans through Dedebit were given in the form of a “household package” through a group lending model to landowners only. At present, individual loans are available in cash or in kind, and youth and the landless now have loan access.

Livelihood packages include loans and associated inputs for cows, beehives, farm tools and petty trading. Each livelihood loan package has a different set of terms associated with it; for instance, someone taking a loan in the form of a cow is required to begin repayment after two years, and must complete repayment after four. Loans for petty trading have much shorter repayment periods—these loans must be completely repaid every month. Recently Dedebit interest rates have increased from 9–18 percent. Though community members weren't sure of the reason for the increase (some said that it related to the depreciation of the birr against the dollar and the global credit crisis), this doubling of the interest rate has had a dramatic effect on people's willingness to take loans, as well as on their ability to repay in the face

of continued drought. It is important to note, here, that respondents distinguished semantically between taking credit (or a loan) and debt. To them, having a loan is not debt—rather, debt is the result of not paying down a loan during the initial repayment period.

WorldVision loans are small, in-kind and interest free. These loans are administered through cooperatives, and all repayments are intended to feed back into strengthening the cooperative. These loans have not achieved broad coverage—respondents estimated only 2 percent of the population has access to WV loans. Government loans are given through the Agriculture and Rural Development Office for inputs and livestock. As with DECSI, the repayment schedule is based on the time horizon needed for the investment to mature. For instance, a loan for chickens has a faster repayment schedule than a loan used for a cow.

While most people take loans for productive purposes, others reported taking loans for expenses such as school fees, housing construction materials, and other consumption needs. Many respondents reported taking loans to restock their oxen or other livestock due to loss of animals during drought (either through mortality or the sale of livestock to pay for food and other basic needs). There is a seasonal demand for loans—most apply for credit from April to June due to the low prices of small ruminant animals at that time and the need for funds for agricultural inputs.

Though DECSI reports a low default rate, the majority of borrowers said they are unable to repay their loans or do so with great difficulty due to the persistent drought and high interest rates. Those that were unable to repay had often lost livestock. Others had used their loans for consumption purposes. People defaulting on a loan face a jail sentence (respondents in the focus groups had served time in jail) or migrate from the area to escape their indebtedness. Those that repay with difficulty are often forced to sell off livestock (that they may have used the loan to purchase) or other assets.³ The luckier few may receive remittance support from abroad. Other repayment strategies include borrowing from family or neighbors, engaging in petty trading of prepared foods, and fundraising by preparing *tela* (a drink) for community members to enjoy in exchange for a contribution to their loan fund.

Almost across the board, community members re-

³ Note that selling livestock to repay debt is also a strategy used in a “good year”—that is, it is part of a planned approach to repaying a loan that may also include selling a portion of the harvest. The distinguishing feature of distress sales is likely to be the proportion of total livestock sold, the sale of the most productive assets (ie. oxen) and the timing/price at which they are sold.

ported a decline in loans taken from DECSI due to the combination of high interest rates, strict repayment schedules for certain types of loans (e.g. petty trading), and fear of the consequences of defaulting. This risk aversion is quite understandable against the backdrop of the recurrent drought, where loans for productive purposes are even riskier due to the increased likelihood of crop failure and livestock mortality. Despite the environment of risk, people do continue to take loans, out of necessity, with the hope that the following year will be a good year and that they will be able to repay. The Productive Safety Net Program serves as one guaranteed source of collateral for families to repay smaller loans from friends and relatives.⁴ But formal credit access is a double-edged sword in this area, and cannot always be considered a successful “pathway out of poverty” under current terms and conditions.

Traditional institutions and community groups

Residents of Tsaeda Amba *woreda* rely to some extent on traditional institutions, such as *Idr* and *Uqub*, to help them to manage certain types of risk. The purpose of *Idr* is to facilitate the process of paying for, and executing, key social ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. *Idr* groups are formed by community members without government involvement, and their prevalence varies dramatically by *kushet* or location—most appeared to have at least one or two functioning groups, but several of the *kushets* in the sample had four or more and others had none at all. Membership in *Idr* involves committing to a monthly contribution of approximately 25 cents per person (50 cents per couple), a cost that is often prohibitive for the landless youth. Thus, *Idr* members tend to own houses and land, and derive from the slightly better off segment of society.

Well-functioning *Idr* groups have elected officials (i.e. chairman, secretary, and cashier) and a charter of regulations. Such societies typically meet once a month, in addition to mandating that members attend funerals and weddings. Money paid into the *Idr* is used as a group savings account to cover the steep cost of these social events, and *Idr* group members give their labor to help execute the ceremonies. As discussed in the following section (traditional practices) people who do not have this savings mechanism or this type of social capital are often unprepared and unable to manage the “shock” of a wedding or funeral when the situation demands. This

⁴ This strategy is also complicated by the fact that the PSNP is not always distributed on time; therefore some respondents reported having to take loans for food that would typically have come to them through the PSNP.

type of shock, though not always unexpected, is often severe enough to drive a household into a trap of indebtedness from which they cannot emerge.

Uqub, another traditional institution found in Tsaeda Amba, is a type of revolving savings and credit association. Unlike the *Idr* societies that have fixed membership rates, there are different *Uqub* groups for people with different contribution capacities. Members make weekly contributions of a fixed amount, and once a week there is a drawing where the winner receives the full amount in the account that week. The *Uqub* is structured so that each member is eligible to “win” only once per cycle, and every member must win before the cycle begins anew. Because the timing of the *Uqub* benefit is unpredictable and doesn’t necessarily coincide with when the money is most needed, people often make deals (for a small price) to trade their expected future payout for the immediate payment when they “win.” Despite the potential benefit to members, *Uqub* institutions are not very common in the areas in this sample.

In addition to these types of traditional institutions, there are other government organized institutions within each *kebele* that are intended to play a role in supporting the process of governance and community development. These groups include the Women’s Association, the Farmer’s Association, the Youth Association, and the “Government Group.” The Farmers Association is open to male farmers ages 31–60, and is supposed to be “dedicated to social management” by “transferring its experience to the next generation,” and “supporting weak households with agricultural labor.” Membership in the FA requires a contribution of around four birr annually (US\$ 0.40) to cover operating costs such as stationary. Most respondents seemed to feel that the FA’s in their respective communities were essentially defunct. Women’s Associations are open to women of any age. Their mission is to promote women’s participation in economic development, to minimize harmful traditions such as early marriage, and to promote the rights of women within the community. Female WA members that were interviewed seemed generally positive about the impact that their associations have had on improving the quality of life for women and girls. They reported that, through awareness raising, girls are increasingly educated at the same rate as boys, and the incidence of rape has declined dramatically. They pointed out that the associations have no resources to improve the plight of the poor, except through their focus on women’s rights.

Youth Associations are open to males only, ages 21–30. This type of association undertakes a wide range of activities, including patrolling the community to protect against disturbances, participating in land rehabilitation and housing construction, assisting the elderly and disabled war veterans, and working to foster income-gen-

erating opportunities for unemployed youth. None of the respondents seemed to feel that these three associations had any useful role to play in helping to prevent or mitigate the effects of shocks such as drought. On the contrary, several respondents complained that the groups required financial contributions, that there was pressure from government to join, and that the funds were not well accounted for (i.e., that they did not see any benefit of their participation, and the money seemed to “disappear”).

The Government Group is not so much a community organization as it is a government-mandated approach to governing at the micro-level. *Kushets* (locations or sub-*kebeles*) are divided into groups of 30 households; each group of thirty has a representative that transmits information between the neighborhood unit and the *kushet* and *kebele* leadership. Many respondents felt that their group was not active at present, while others referred to instances in which the thirty-household clusters had organized to conduct various types of developmental activities, like communal weeding and the construction of rainwater harvesting tanks.

In addition to these government-sponsored institutions, some respondents mentioned other types of (less common) associations within their communities. For instance, in Sendada *kebele* a cooperative formed to procure bulk purchases of grain for local distribution at a lower price than could be commanded by individuals. In the couple areas where these types of cooperatives exist, they were newly established and not perceived to be economically strong. However, respondents felt that there was potential for these institutions to expand their role and to be a useful livelihood support. “Interest groups” such as groups formed around a particular issue like HIV awareness, Parent Teacher Associations, and some informal savings and credit groups were also active in certain communities. No one felt that these groups were useful in preventing or responding to the various types of shocks that are most common in Tsaeda Amba.

Traditional practices

Respondents seemed proud to describe certain positive traditional practices in their area that were beneficial to their well-being. These practices included cooperative weeding and communal efforts to harvest crops when they threatened by excessive rain or flooding. Nearly all interviewed reported a dramatic decline in what they deemed to be “harmful” traditional practices. Practices such as early marriage, female genital cutting, and rape are now very rare. Many more women deliver children at health centers now than at home, and this was felt to be a positive development for the health of women and their babies.

Despite progress in these realms, there was near unanimous agreement that the traditional approaches to celebrating funerals, weddings, and religious holidays continued to have harmful effects on livelihood outcomes, particularly during times of recurrent drought. Funerals are particularly costly and time consuming. There are several steps involved in respecting the deceased and ensuring their passage to heaven. During the first ten days after a death in the family, relatives are required to buy local beer and bread for the priests who then pray the whole night for the dead person. The provisioning and praying continues for up to 80 days, after which it is decided whether the deceased will enter heaven or not. Once the relatives are able, they must host what is called *teskal*, an elaborate celebration held for the community as a remembrance of the deceased. The *teskal* often requires huge financial outlays, and there is social pressure to provide an ample feast and to invite large swaths of the community, if not everyone, including relatives from other parts. Households often go into debt in order to sustain this social custom.

Weddings are almost equally difficult for many households to manage, as there is not only the wedding celebration itself to cover but also the dowry. Families of the betrothed share the cost of the wedding celebration. Figures reported ranged as high as 15–20,000 birr, though this may be an exaggerated “ideal” figure since it far exceeds the per capita annual income of the average household in the *woreda*. In some communities, families ask for a 5 birr donation from guests in order to help offset the total cost. Some reported that the size and value of dowries have been increasing, while others indicated that they were on the decline due to the drought. In general, the male’s family has to purchase jewelry. The family of the female traditionally gives livestock, though some mentioned that the number of animals in a typical dowry (the size of which depends anyway on wealth and social status) is decreasing. The example given was that females in the past used to bring ten or so animals whereas at present they may only muster two or three.

Respondents across the sample felt that the expenses associated with these practices were exceedingly harmful to their ability to manage other aspects of their lives and livelihoods, as executing one of these ceremonies typically involves taking loans from rich relatives and assuming significant debt. People in this area feel trapped between the social obligation to include the community in such celebrations, as a means of maintaining good social capital networks, and their inability to afford such outlays. Many respondents reported that social expectations were easing due to the drought, and there seemed to be a sense of relief to see these practices on the wane. Interestingly, though the government has attempted to institute regulations to limit the amount spent on celebrations, many people seemed to resist government involvement in this sphere. They general

attitude was one of “we’ll do it because we have to/want to, but not because they told us to!”

An additional category of “harmful traditional practices” that emerged in the interviews is the large number of religious holidays mandated by the Orthodox Church. On these days, people are not allowed to work, so there is a high opportunity cost to being religiously observant. It was not clear from the information obtained how many holidays there used to be, but people felt that this number was declining due to government awareness creation. One respondent reported that, at present, “there are *only* four church holidays per month, not including Sundays.”

Regarding the role of religious institutions in the community, most respondents felt that the church/mosque served primarily as a provider of spiritual assets, rather than a source of support to the economically disadvantaged or those affected most severely by drought. In fact, many pointed out that the churches themselves are often suffering financially, and must be maintained through annual monetary contributions by their congregations.

Market access and market exposure

Respondents were asked about their access to markets and to market information and about the effect of price volatility on their income, expenditures, and decisions around whether and what to sell. As mentioned previously, many of the respondents were selected by *kebele* leaders and lived fairly close to the *kebele* center, implying greater market access and less isolation than might be typical of the area. In any event, respondents reported attending the weekly markets in Edaga Hamos and Freweini; the time to market ranged from a half hour to two hours each way. None of the respondents had advance access to market information, but several responded optimistically that this wasn’t an issue since they could easily find out the going rate once they reached town on market day. Only one respondent recognized that there was information asymmetry and felt that those who have better access to information have an unfair advantage. People buy and sell a huge range of items in the market, and sales of PSNP grain are quite common here in order to obtain cash for other food and non-food items.

Labor, migration and remittances

Migration, even on a very localized basis, in search of work is a common livelihood strategy that households in Tsaeda Amba undertake during periods of financial

stress. The most common form of migration described by respondents is, in fact, a type of long commute. Residents in rural areas head to towns like Edaga Hamos and Adigrat searching for temporary employment, which respondents referred to as “migration.” While much of this migration would be more commonly categorized as “day labor,” some in fact appeared to be seasonal migration. While useful for augmenting household income during the drought, this type of strategy also carries opportunity costs. Respondents described the common scenario of walking 2.5 hours or more to town, or paying for transport, only to find themselves unable to secure a job for that particular day. Women who sought day labor reported having to leave their children and homes unattended, with the children hungry and no one to prepare their meals. When women get to town and cannot find casual work, some resort to begging and prostitution.

Very few of the respondents interviewed were receiving any remittances or had family members that had migrated to distant locations in the Middle East or Sudan. That said, some do migrate abroad, with mixed success. One woman has a sister who found work in Saudi Arabia and sends up to 2,000 birr a year to her parents, helping them to repay their loan for a cow. Other people described situations where a family member had migrated to Saudi Arabia or Sudan and had not been heard from since. Only three of the respondents mentioned having sons who had migrated to larger cities in Ethiopia (Mekelle), or to the agriculturally productive area of Humera. This is surprising, given that the Livelihoods Profile for Tsaeda Amba *woreda* describes migration patterns in normal years to Humera to participate in sesame production activities and to Afar to participate in the salt trade.⁵ The Livelihoods Profile report for the Irob Mountains livelihood zone does not quantify the extent of migration, but does mention that 60 percent of migration is to local towns, while 40 percent is to larger cities in the region.⁶ In the current set of interviews, the presence of the PSNP was offered up as a reason for the low rates of migration. Several people cited their fear of family disintegration as a primary deterrent against sending a family member outside the region or country. Those who did have a son who had migrated said that it was not a positive coping strategy, despite generating some remittances, as it dramatically increased their own work burden.

5 DRMFSS. *Tigray Livelihood Zone Reports: Saesie Tsaeda Amba Woreda*. Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector, 2006

6 Ibid.

Gender and social relations

Respondents were asked to describe the breakdown by gender of responsibility within the household, and to comment on who makes which types of decisions. The responses to these questions differ depending on whether the year in question is a “good” year or not.

During a good year, women engage in maintaining the household, cooking food, caring for children, washing clothes, sewing, collecting water and firewood, and tending the livestock. Depending, they may also do the marketing and go to the mill. Most men engage in agriculture activities during “good times.” During bad times, women and men alike are compelled to head to nearby towns to seek off-farm employment, and to participate in the PSNP. Many people reported that the responsibility of the children is to go to school, to shepherd the livestock, and to help fetch water. One respondent, a female who was also the household head, said that the children must continue to go to school during both good and bad years, even if it means more of a burden for her to shoulder personally. Other respondents added that the children must go to school, but during bad years they must also collect wild foods. Decision-making within the household rests primarily with the male household head, while women take the lead in deciding matters related to their own spheres of responsibility and healthcare for the family. One household mentioned that women also decide whether to sell non-productive assets (like jewelry) while men make decisions around sales and acquisitions of productive assets. One household, which is certainly a positive deviant, reported that they have a very effective and well-established household management system that they established ten years ago. The husband holds the position of Chairperson, the wife is the Cashier and the daughter is the Secretary. Decisions are made “by committee” regardless of whether it is a good or bad year. The husband had acquired his idea for this system while in the army.

Local government

Respondents were asked about the role of local government in shaping their livelihood options and outcomes. Enumerators inquired about their level of representation in government, who the most and least influential types of people are in the community, their opinions about government policy and programs, and the role of government in mitigating the effects of the current drought. Enumerators felt that it was difficult to get people to speak comfortably and honestly about these subjects. Few people had anything negative to say about the way that government functions in their area. There is an election scheduled for May of 2010, which may be one reason for self-censorship.

Most respondents reported having adequate political

representation, since they had a voice in selecting who their representatives would be at the *kebele* and *woreda* levels. Nearly all respondents remarked that the most influential people in their areas were those that had been selected to serve in government, and that these people had earned this position through their honesty, hard work, education, and leadership. These ‘influential’ people were ‘uncorrupt’, “good,” and “religious.” Several people added that these representatives could be removed if they failed to perform up to the expectations of their constituency. Less influential people, or people with less power, were deemed to be those that acted outside of the norms and traditions of the community. No one suggested that the power dynamics within the community were somehow unjust or even entrenched; quite to the contrary, the implications of these comments are that the poorest are somehow deserving of their situation while those that are good, decent and honest people gain influence and respect.

People also seemed to have faith in their informal and formal legal institutions. Many small disputes are still settled by local elders, or by mediators (*shimagles*) or religious leaders. However, one respondent reported that the judicial process is increasingly fast and efficient; a local justice rules on minor incidents and can award up to a 5,000 birr penalty, and most decisions are made with a day or two after the incident occurs. More serious crimes are handled at the *woreda* level. Respondents seemed to feel that the system was improving, both in terms of fairness and efficiency.

People seemed to feel the beneficial effects of government policies and programs first-hand. For instance, respondents cited health care, education for all, and agriculture-led industry as positive developments that also supported labor and employment. They noted that there used to be only one main road in the area, constructed by the Italians sixty years ago. Now, there are access roads that connect the *kushets* to the main road. Whereas ten years ago there was only electricity in Mekelle and no generators or power outside of towns, now there is hydro-powered electricity in some villages. Telecommunications networks have improved dramatically in the past few years, and now many people have access to cellular technology, though coverage is limited outside of towns. Others mentioned peace and security, agriculture activities including massive water harvesting schemes, tool and seed distribution, and natural resource rehabilitation, as government initiatives that have had a visible and positive impact on their lives and livelihoods.

Access to the PSNP

The Productive Safety Nets Programme has very wide coverage in Tsaeda Amba which has meant that the government’s efforts are very visible and beneficial to a

large proportion of the population. Respondents were asked to describe the criteria that were used to choose beneficiaries for the PSNP and whether or not they thought that the selection process was fair. PSNP members were also asked how the safety net affected their livelihoods and ability to cope during the drought.

At the community level where the interviews were carried out, the respondents had a difficult time estimating the number of people currently enrolled in the PSNP as a proportion of residents in their community. Not surprisingly though, all PSNP beneficiaries said that they had been chosen in a fair way, according to guidelines that had been explained to them by local government representatives. Beneficiaries were chosen based on having no land, no animals, and no source of remittances. Beneficiaries reported that those not in the PSNP do have at least some land or some animals. No non-beneficiary respondent complained of being unfairly excluded, but there were reports that emerged during the focus group discussions that one of the big sources of conflict in these communities was the PSNP selection process. The conflicts were not so much over irregularities in the selection process, but rather over

agement of their own farmland. Only a few people reported the opposite experience, including having to keep their children out of school while working on the PSNP so as not to leave the house empty, and having to work longer days in general.

Drought was well described in the first report as a hazard in Tsaeda Amba. Figures on woreda average rainfall for the past five seasons were provided by the DRMFSS office on this visit, and is provided in Table 1. The drought conditions in 2009 resulted in 33,600 additional beneficiaries being added to the PSNP list for 2009—making for an even larger than usual number of beneficiaries.

Although the distinction might not have been clear at the local level at the time of the interviews, a major change in PSNP participation is in the offing for 2010, which may well increase conflict over who is included in the PSNP. Up to 2009, *individuals* have sometimes been targeted at the local level for inclusion in the PSNP, whereas the intent all along was to target *households*, not individuals. National policy is being revised on this question (see Section 4 below). The targeting of individuals means that the coverage of the PSNP is much

TABLE 1.
Average Rainfall in Tsaeda Amba Woreda, 2005-2009

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rainfall (mm)	459	582	706	437	252

competition for a scarce resource among those who were perhaps not the worst off but still in great need of assistance. The picture that emerged through the focus group discussions and household interviews is different than that captured by the household survey, which suggested a greater number of people receiving benefits. Overall about half the population is included in the PSNP, but it appears from both the household survey and the participatory baseline that a much greater proportion of households receive some benefits. This is mainly because individuals have been targeted for the PSNP rather than households—so a household receives some benefits even if only one or two individuals in the household are enrolled in the PSNP. This policy is changing in 2010 (see below).

Respondents described that it was possible to cope with the drought by participating in the PSNP, that the safety net improves their range of livelihood strategies, and keeps them from having to migrate. Other positive benefits of PSNP participation included developing an improved work habit, keeping busy, being able to send their children to school, and receiving supplementary education/information that help to improve the man-

agement of their own farmland. Only a few people reported the opposite experience, including having to keep their children out of school while working on the PSNP so as not to leave the house empty, and having to work longer days in general. Drought was well described in the first report as a hazard in Tsaeda Amba. Figures on woreda average rainfall for the past five seasons were provided by the DRMFSS office on this visit, and is provided in Table 1. The drought conditions in 2009 resulted in 33,600 additional beneficiaries being added to the PSNP list for 2009—making for an even larger than usual number of beneficiaries. Although the distinction might not have been clear at the local level at the time of the interviews, a major change in PSNP participation is in the offing for 2010, which may well increase conflict over who is included in the PSNP. Up to 2009, *individuals* have sometimes been targeted at the local level for inclusion in the PSNP, whereas the intent all along was to target *households*, not individuals. National policy is being revised on this question (see Section 4 below). The targeting of individuals means that the coverage of the PSNP is much broader but obviously at the same time, much more watered down.⁷ In order to improve the impact of the PSNP, only those households that are the most chronically vulnerable will be eligible, and entire households will be targeted. This should improve the impact on these households, but will obviously be a loss of income for those just above the cut-off level—whatever it is—and may well increase local conflict over who is targeted and who isn't. In fact, there is little doubt that preventing that kind of intra-community conflict is precisely why the practice of targeting individuals emerged—to be able to share the benefits of the PSNP as broadly as possible at the local level. ■

⁷ This helps to explain the observations in the participatory baseline and the household survey that nearly all households reported some income, food, or both from the PSNP, whereas woreda figures indicate only about half the people in the *woreda* are included in the PSNP.

Section 3: Implications for ACRP and DRR generally

The major purpose of this report was to provide the institutional background to the impact assessment; however, some of the findings have direct implications for disaster risk reduction programming generally and for ACRP specifically. These include the issue of access to land and communal natural resources, access to credit (and the risks of indebtedness), and traditional practices and institutions.

Access to land and communal resources

Land access and tenure issues are deeply entrenched problems in Tsaeda Amba; those without land are unable to draw upon this natural resource for their livelihood and food security, while those with land are unable to sell or easily share-out their land during crisis, thereby limiting a potentially useful coping strategy. Land tenure is generational, such that the landless class is comprised primarily of young adults at the prime of their productive potential. While landlessness and food insecurity are typically positively correlated, in this region where drought is endemic, the gap between those who do and do not own land may be narrowing. It is possible that youth who must rely on employment through migration to other regions or who engage in petty trade for their livelihood are better adapted to withstand, or even benefit from, drought. For instance, they may not acquire the same level of debt as landed households that experience livestock mortality and loan default as a consequence. That said, landless populations have a much lower asset base to draw on, and are thus vulnerable to other types of shocks, in particular to unpredictable idiosyncratic shocks like illness.

In its efforts to mainstream disaster risk reduction activities in Tsaeda Amba, the ACRP should influence the design of DRR plans to ensure a focus not only on hazards like drought and its mitigation through improved natural resource management. The vulnerable landless population should receive considerable attention as a group, through the re-design of livelihood packages that are tailored to their specific circumstances. Identifying alternative livelihood packages with friendlier terms, promoting asset building-activities

that focus on off-farm enterprise, and generating employment opportunities for landless, are DRR activities that will help to strengthen the ability of this target group to withstand the effects of idiosyncratic shocks. To date, this has mostly focused on bee keeping, but bee keeping is both fairly capital intensive and subject to drought hazards.

Though the common perception among respondents was that natural resources continue to degrade, they also seemed optimistic about the ability of the government soil and water conservation program to reverse this trend. There are many good examples of successful land remediation through this program; however, at present these efforts appear piecemeal. It may be that the strategy is sound enough, but the intensity of its implementation is insufficient. Creating a “critical mass” of natural resource improvement, particularly in the highest risk areas, may be necessary to demonstrate that success is possible. This is an area in which the ACRP is engaged, and it may be one of its major contributions.

Most communities interviewed described systems of natural resource management with rules that appeared to differ by location. At the same time, many of the respondents were unclear about the rules of access, or felt that they were arbitrarily enforced. While it may make sense to have community-specific plans to suit the context, clearer and more transparent rules should improve the predictability of access to communal resources, thereby better assisting people to plan and to engage in alternatives when necessary.

Indebtedness and fear of default

Though mentioned in the first round of the research as a hazard, one observation that clearly emerged from the analysis of the field notes from the first round was that the main means of overcoming the cycle of poverty that entraps many households in the worda entails taking of greater risk, because most of the programs rely on funding from micro-credit. From the household survey, slightly over half the households (55

percent) in the ACRP program area had outstanding debt.⁸ Most of this was from a formal micro-finance institution, and most of it (75 percent) was to purchase livestock or agricultural inputs (usually through the government-led “household package program,” a program of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development with a “menu” of pre-packaged technical advice and inputs in a variety of areas—crops, livestock, bee keeping and forestry being the most popular). Some of the loans (nearly one quarter) were for consumption purposes. The average size of loan was just over 2,000 birr (roughly US\$170 at the time of the survey). The first round of the household survey did not inquire about household default on loans, or about difficulty repaying.

As noted above, most of these loans were provided by DECSI, which relies on the group-lending model first piloted in South Asia for its micro-finance lending. With 136 field offices in Tigray, DECSI’s coverage is impressive. In key informant interviews in January 2010, DECSI reports a very low rate of default on its loans, and a healthy capital base. While there is some flexibility in rescheduling household debt in the event of a major problem like a drought or crop failure, on average, they have a very low default rate.

The penalty for default on loans is, first, a financial one—added fees to the 18 percent annual interest on the loan, and second, if the fees, interest and principle are not paid in a certain time, the possibility of being jailed. The field team heard repeated anecdotes from the 2009 season about households having taken loans, and having the investment fail due to the poor rainfall. The options facing these households were essentially three: accepting a jail sentence; migration out of the area so that they could not be traced and forced to pay; or coming up with the payment by selling off major assets. Some households reported being pressured into accepting loans by their development agents (DAs) and being unable to repay.⁹ It was not possible to get an estimate of the prevalence of this problem, but it was clearly more than just a handful of households.

8 This is roughly representative of figures from DECSI, who noted something like 15,000 outstanding loans in the whole of Tsaeda Amba, out of a total of some 30,000 households in the woreda.

9 DECSI reported no pressure from the micro-finance agency to take loans, but noted that they often get reports of people being pressured by DAs. The Regional office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD) for whom the DAs work, also report that there is no pressure to take loans. This is clearly not a matter of policy, but of the initiatives of some individuals at the kebele level, perhaps trying to boost his or her performance figures.

To get some idea of the extent of this problem, the research team spent one day in the market at Freweini, interviewing people selling livestock. While the sale of chickens and small ruminants was for a variety of reasons, fully two thirds of those selling oxen and cows (the major single asset held by most households in the study area) were for the purpose of paying off a bad debt on money borrowed for a project that had gone awry—and the biggest single reason for the project failing was because of the poor rainfall in 2009. Some of these sales were made directly by the household affected by the loan; in some cases the cow or ox being sold belonged to a close relative, but not the household unable to repay the loan. It should be stressed that, given the nature of buyers and sellers coming and going in a large livestock market, this was not a proper random sample, nor was it even an estimate of the prevalence of the problem, but was an indication that the problem is not isolated or small-scale. In the second round of the household survey, some measure of the success rate of “household package” or similar projects at the household level will be included, with information about the success of these projects, the rate of repayment of loans and the means by which loans were repaid if the projects themselves failed due to climatic or other hazards.

The point is that the few pathways out of chronic poverty in the study area involve taking on greater risk—the risk of defaulting on a loan and the consequences of a loan default for one’s future livelihood. As such, the model is flawed as, increasingly, those for whom the risk is highest will not pursue this pathway, meaning the potential “springboard” from poverty of credit-funded asset-generating activities cannot be realized. This type of scenario has been recognized in countries like Bangladesh where access to microcredit is even easier and the choice of packages tailored to the ultra-poor is even more varied than in Ethiopia.¹⁰

Means of addressing this kind of risk are just as important as the risks of drought, flood, disease and other hazards, even if credit risk is not expressed as a “hazard” in community ranking exercises. DECSI is of course aware of this constraint to achieving developmental goals through micro-finance; it is one of the reasons for its participation in the micro-insurance scheme described below in the section on NGOs in disaster risk management.

10 See P. Webb, J. Coates, R. Houser, Z. Hassan and M. Zobair. “Does Microcredit Meet the Needs of all Poor Women? Constraints to Participation Among Destitute Women in Bangladesh”. Working Paper No. 3, Boston: Tufts University School of Nutrition Science And Policy, Food Policy and Applied Nutrition Program, July 2002.

Traditional institutions

Traditional institutions like *idr* offer a natural entry point for supporting households' ability to cope with the cost of customary events like marriages and funerals, while savings institutions like *uqub* have the potential to serve as a source of capital without indebtedness. Though their prevalence differed by community, institutions like *uqub* seemed fairly rare across most of the study sites. Other countries have seen success in community-based savings institutions where microloans were problematic. However, these successful institutions had generally received external technical assistance to guide their management structure and operational procedures. In Tsaeda Amba it would be worthwhile to strengthen existing institutions through training and to foster the re-introduction of new savings associations in communities where *uqub* are no longer part of the fabric of the society. A savings-based approach would offer an alternative to the hazards described above of reliance on credit, while also generating assets that can strengthen household resilience to a number of potential hazards.

The high cost of customary celebrations, including weddings and funerals, are clearly a shock to the household economy, compounding indebtedness, and reducing the households' resilience in the face of other hazards like drought. Though it appeared from the interviews that many had been forced to scale back the cost of their celebrations due to drought, households still perceive a social pressure to maintain them for the sake of the public opinion of neighbors and relatives. The sense was that many would be willing to cease or dramatically reduce the size of these events, but no one felt that they could be the first to do so. The drought has offered a convenient reason for cutting back, and it remains to be seen whether they will be scaled-up again once it has ended. A sustained behavior change campaign is needed to draw on influential and wealthier members of society to set an example of restraint, thereby making it easier for others to follow suit. This is one area of ACRP intervention. ■

Section 4:

The impact of key national policies

History of disaster response and risk reduction in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has a long history of both major and minor disasters, triggered by various types of hazards. By far the most common is the threat of drought. Accounts from historians, palace chroniclers, and travelers visiting the kingdom note that famines were a frequent occurrence as long ago as the 16th and 17th centuries (Hussein 1976). A common narrative on Ethiopia during the UN “development decades” was that a major drought—and accompanying famine—struck Ethiopia about once every ten years. Indeed Table 2 reflects this one-famine-per-decade line of thinking. In the past ten years, however, the pace of these shocks appears to be increasing, even as the ability of the Government of Ethiopia and the international community have adapted to prevent droughts from resulting in full-scale humanitarian crises.

Recent analyses have noted that the “once in ten years” narrative of drought/famines in Ethiopia is changing rapidly—influenced at least in part by climate change (Lautze and Maxwell 2006). Figure 1 notes the frequency of drought emergencies in Ethiopia between 1990 and 2007—an eighteen year period, but some areas were affected more than ten times, and most of the country was affected more than twice.

As Table 2 implies, the cost of disasters in terms of lives lost, livelihoods affected, and development setbacks has been extremely high. Between 1975 and 2010, the number of people affected by drought alone in Ethiopia is estimated to be some 75 million people—almost the equivalent of the entire current total population (Central Statistics Office 2008). Against this background of recurrent disaster and high loss of life and livelihood, capacity to respond to disasters, and the ability to manage risk rather than simply respond to disasters after they have occurred, has been a paramount concern of both the Government of Ethiopia and its international partners.

DRM in the broader context of poverty reduction

In addition to specific disaster management policies, a number of other, broader policy instruments for de-

TABLE 2.
History of recent droughts/famine in Ethiopia

Year	Numbers of people affected / Other impacts
1964-1966	1.5 million people affected
1973-1974	2-3 million affected About 200,000 people killed Emperor overthrown
1978-79	1.4 million affected
1982	2 million People affected
1983-1984	8 million people affected As many as 1 million killed Groundwork laid for overthrow of Derg
1987-1988	7 million people affected Human lives lost—many fewer than 1984
1990-1992	About 0.5 million people affected
1993-94	7.6 million People affected
1999/2000	10 million affected 70-100 thousand killed Disaster primarily in pastoral areas—widespread livestock losses
2002/2003	About 13 million people affected—in need of food assistance Number of lives lost is disputed, but lower than 99-00
2009	12-14 million people affected (including PSNP “chronic” caseload)

Source: Oxfam 2009

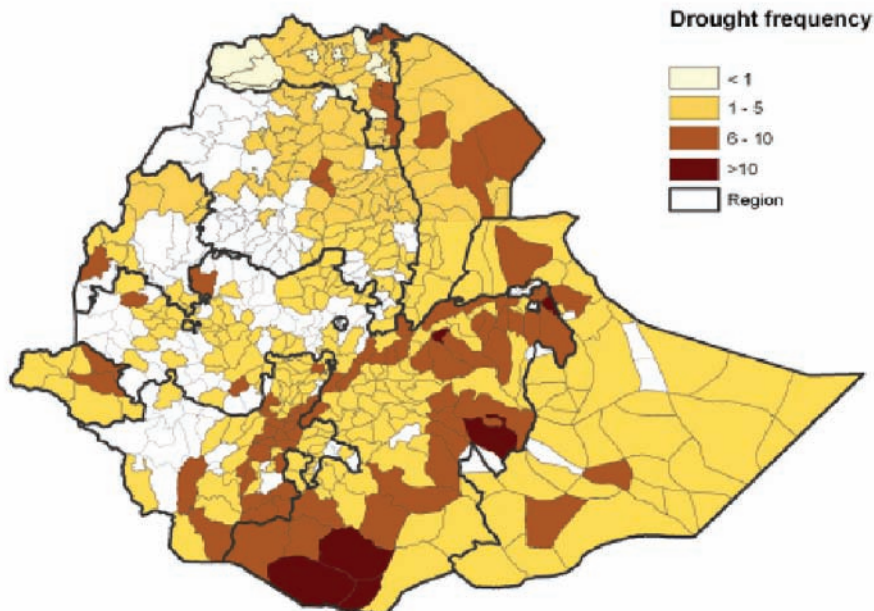


Figure 1: Frequency of Drought in Ethiopia 1990-2007

Source: WFP 2010.

development frame the policy environment in Ethiopia.¹¹ Two in particular bear mentioning here, the Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI) policy, adopted in the early 1990s, and the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) adopted in 2005. ADLI prioritized industrialization, but suggested a value-added approach to the nation's agricultural output as the pathway. PASDEP was Ethiopia's adaptation of the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) process promoted by the World Bank. In general, since taking power in 1991, this government has prioritized reducing food insecurity as a key national development strategy. It has enacted several specific policies or implementing bodies to do this:

1. The first governmental disaster management body predates the current government. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), was established by the Derg in the aftermath of the 1973/74 famine. Its mandate was limited to an ex-post delivery of relief to drought and famine affected population. However, its brief was not purely technical—the fact that the famine of 1973/74 led to the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie was not lost on the new government or the one that replaced it. Disasters in Ethiopia can have serious consequences of both a humanitarian and a political nature.

2. In 1993, following the overthrow of the Derg by the current government, a National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management (NPDPM) was issued. This led to several changes. In 1995, the RRC was abolished, and replaced by the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness

Commission (DPPC), and given a broader mandate that included preparedness and prevention, although its main mandate was still response. Substantial investment was made in both a national early warning (EW) system, initially focusing on the agricultural highlands. This system was extended to pastoral areas in the wake of the 1999/2000 crisis, which was more focused on pastoral areas. And a national strategic grain reserve—the Emergency Food Security Reserve Administration (EFRSA)—was established to enable a more rapid response in the event of a crop failure from drought.

3. Since the initiation of the NPDPM, the government has been the coordinating and lead agency for disaster management and response, although there has been significant involvement by the UN, international donors, and NGOs (both international and Ethiopian). The NPDPM emphasized the link between disasters and development—often summarized as the relief-development continuum (i.e., the policy strongly de-emphasized the “act of God” interpretation of past disasters, but linked them more to failed development policies). And there was much greater emphasis on coordination and partner-

¹¹ This section, and much of what follows, is based on interviews with a number of current disaster management officials, as well as a presentation by Negussie Kefeni at the 2010 National DRM Symposium entitled “National Policy and Strategy on Disaster Risk Management” (January).

ship among different agencies. However, overall there was still a greater emphasis on ex-post response, there was a much greater emphasis put on drought than on all other hazards combined, disaster response was heavily reliant on external resources, and there was no legal framework for disaster management.

4. In 2004, the DPPC was renamed again as the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA), with a revised mandate to focus on emergency response. The new agency began a process of reviewing its procedures and process (the Business Process Review or BPR—a government-wide process affecting not only DPPA, but many other agencies as well). This process brought to light other challenges. First, the emphasis on disaster response meant that there was insufficient support for livelihoods and hence resilience to future disasters was declining, even though the formal development policy of the country indicated that this should be increasing. Second, disaster relief was being targeted to the most badly affected, or most destitute groups. From a humanitarian point of view, this was correct, of course, but it was leading to asset depletion in groups that were not (currently) as badly affected, in turn putting these groups at risk of future disasters. Numbers of “chronically vulnerable” people continued to grow throughout the late 1990s and 2000s, in part because of this phenomenon. Third, there was a chronic shortage of skilled personnel in the disaster management system, and a high turnover of staff. And lastly, food insecurity generally was treated as a repeated, annual humanitarian disaster, rather than as the chronic problem it had become. This meant that disasters had to be declared, needs assessments had to be conducted, humanitarian appeals launched, etc. and the result was frequently a “too-little, too-late” response for a relatively predictable problem. All of this led to the need for a new national policy—a process begun in 2006–07.
5. In 2005, the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) was begun with the mandate to address the chronic food insecurity problem. In brief, this meant addressing the consumption needs of the growing number of people who regularly require assistance to make it through the hunger season, even in “good” agricultural seasons. The clientele served by this group has grown from about 4.8 million people in 2005 to about 7 million in 2010. The PSNP has a contingency plan for expansion of its numbers by up to 20 percent in the event of a difficult year, so the numbers served have some inter-annual fluctuations that

make long-term trends more difficult to trace. However, the PSNP was not designed to be an all-purpose disaster response mechanism.

A new National Disaster Management Policy

A National Disaster Management policy is now before the cabinet of the Government of Ethiopia awaiting final approval. It is expected to be implemented beginning in July 2010, but many of its provisions have already started to take effect. The new policy is underpinned by several objectives. The overall objective of the new National DRM policy is to “reduce the risk and impact of disasters through the establishment of a compressive disaster risk management system within the context of sustainable development.”¹² Other elements of the objectives of the new policy include shifting the focus to proactive measures; to save lives and livelihoods during crises and move quickly to recovery and rehabilitation in their aftermath; to promote resilience; and to ensure mainstreaming of DRM practices across government and partners.

Major differences from the old policy. The new policy is characterized by several major shifts from previous policy:

1. First, the disaster management body incorporates both the PSNP (the Food Security Coordination Directorate) and the disaster response mechanism (Early Warning and Response Directorate). The overall body is called the office of Disaster Risk Management/Food Security Sector (DRMFSS). This is within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD), overseen by a Minister of State.
2. Second, the emphasis shifts from “disaster response” to “disaster risk management” implying a much more pro-active approach to dealing with hazards than in the past—in other words, hazards and risks are to be managed in such a way that they do not manifest themselves in disasters. The major components are the following:
 - a. prevention of disasters by reducing the threat of recurrent hazards (with drought still ranked as the most important hazard, but with many other hazards now incorporated into policy and—critically—early warning);
 - b. mitigation of shocks so that the impact on human and livestock populations is minimized (linking life-protecting with livelihood-protecting approaches);

¹² This was taken from interview notes—the wording in the policy document might differ. The draft policy is not yet in the public domain.

- c. improved preparedness through improved early warning, improving and decentralizing reserves, and through empowering community preparedness measures;
- d. response capacity that links saving lives with protecting livelihoods—and particularly protecting livelihood assets in much the same manner as the PSNP, through early detection and rapid response that effectively prevents affected people from having to sell off assets to deal with a crisis: and finally,
- e. recovery (immediate post-crisis assistance) and rehabilitation (building capacities to withstand future crises).

This “program-cycle approach” strengthens the analysis of the problem making it fundamentally one of development, and incorporating the management of hazards or the risk of disasters into a broader development strategy, intended to reduce the bifurcation of “emergency response” and “development.”

3. Third, disaster risk financing is planned to become the major mechanism of early response. This will be triggered by indicators that track both major hazards (including rainfall, but also including measures of livelihood outcome), and these indicators will be tied to pre-allocated funding for response by means of an index, so that a certain level of either scope or magnitude of a crisis triggers the response mechanism, rather than the old way of declaring a disaster, conducting *ex-post* needs assessments, and then appealing for response funding. This new system promises a much more rapid response (quite apart from the PSNP which will respond independently to chronic food insecurity).
4. Fourth and directly related to the third point, improved early warning will be based on new vulnerability profiles and hazard monitoring, tied directly to the index just described. The vulnerability profiles will be informed by *woreda* level baseline assessments carried out by the Livelihoods Integration Unit of the old DPPA, but will be extended to the entire country (LIU focused on the most drought-affected *woredas* only), and will be tied to *woreda*-level hazard analysis, in addition to underlying livelihood vulnerabilities. A major national project now getting underway will complete these *woreda* vulnerability profiles within the coming three years.
5. Responsibility for policy, management and oversight rests primarily with government, but involves many partners, including donors, UN

agencies, international and Ethiopian NGOs, and increasingly, local communities (through kebele disaster preparedness committees or KDPCs, and private sector actors within Ethiopia (including micro-finance institutions and insurance companies).

A program-cycle approach. In addition to the program-cycle approach described above, the DRM policy envisions activities in three phases or categories including pre-disaster, during disaster, and post-disaster.

The pre-disaster phase includes the prevention of shocks and the mitigation of shocks in the event that they happen. A third element of the pre-crisis phase is good emergency preparedness. All of these shall be incorporated into development planning, and should not become simply an element of early warning (EW) and response—the ability for good early warning and response depends on the extent to which they are incorporated into development planning. Preparedness includes adequate reserves of both in kind assistance materials (food and non-food) as well as financial resources to respond to a disaster. Early warning capacity in this case includes the capacity for risk assessment and mapping, traditional EW forecasting activities, and the capacity to provide good information during an actual disaster. Early warning is intended to be linked to good contingency planning, as well as an index to trigger responses

The disaster phase includes detecting, and responding to any shock, through the mechanism of *woreda* administrations. Where external assistance is required, the Federal Government of Ethiopia will coordinate this assistance. Every effort will be made to ensure timeliness, adequacy, rationality, and appropriateness of disaster response measures in order to effectively mitigate disaster-related loss of lives and livelihoods. The response phase covers not only natural disasters but also man-made crises.

In the aftermath of a crisis, the post-disaster phase will include a damage assessment, post-disaster early recovery and rehabilitation programs will be implemented, in coordination with on-going or pre-existing development programs.

Declaring an emergency is the responsibility of the Federal Disaster Risk Management Council. More localized crises can be declared by the same authority at the regional level. Emergencies are to be declared when the capacities of local authorities to cope have been overwhelmed by events.

Other elements of the new policy. Various other points should be highlighted about the draft DRM policy. A major shift in this new policy regards funding.

While disaster response in the past relied heavily on external contributions, this new policy prioritizes national or internal resources to fund prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and rehabilitation, to the extent possible. Protecting against relatively predictable shocks and vulnerabilities will be incorporated into government recurrent development budgets. Large-scale programs and response would still have a role for donors and international agencies. All such programs will be subject to improved standards for monitoring and evaluation.

One criticism of the previous disaster management system in Ethiopia is that, while it was widely accepted, it had no basis in Ethiopian law. Therefore one of the steps in the new policy is to ensure that there is enabling legislation for the DRM policy, and that it strengthens the mechanisms of accountability. The new policy is intended to incorporate a gender analysis, and design risk reduction interventions from a gender perspective. A DRM technical working group will be created to support analysis and improved contingency planning.

Since 2004 the Government of Ethiopia and a set of donors, led by the World Bank and WFP, have been designing a drought shock scale-up of the PSNP, based on a national index, with localized early warning systems providing information. In 2006, WFP partnered with French firm Axa Re to pilot a program to provide cash payouts to farmers in the event of a severe drought (Hess 2006). As it turned out, 2006 was not to be a drought year, and the plan now involves a form of risk financing, not commercial insurance—a stand-by fund that can be triggered directly by the index. For this phase of the program, risk management will be linked more clearly to contingency planning, capacity building and more robust early warning systems. While the original idea was based on a rainfall index, experimentation has proven that a simple Water Balance Model works better, because total rainfall may incorporate both too much rainfall and too little in the same place during the same season. The water balance model or a Water Requirements Satisfaction Index (WRSI) correlates better to yields. The index will also have some livelihoods outcomes indicators as well. This index forms the backbone of the LEAP (Livelihoods, Early Assessment and Protection) index as the basis for triggering a contingency risk financing fund. The LEAP index will coordinate the key components of a DRM framework including early warning, local contingency planning and capacity building. The critical component however is the risk financing fund that is intended to finance contingency plans for “prompt, if not automatic, mobilization of human, financial and physical resources” (World Bank 2008, p.1).

Information systems are expected to be improved, and linked to an indexing system that will reduce the time lag in responding to crises. Under the current sys-

tem, a major effort at livelihoods mapping was carried out by the DPPA through its Livelihoods Integration Unit (LIU). This has resulted in baseline assessments for all the drought-prone *woredas* in Ethiopia. Under the new policy, *woreda* vulnerability profiles are to be developed which will build on these baselines and extend them to the whole country to analyze underlying causes of disaster risk and DRR interventions for each *woreda*, and design early warning indicators that can trigger a response. Building on work done by the LIU, early warning thresholds will note both a “survival threshold” and a “livelihood protection threshold” of response. While the livelihood protection threshold is obviously the objective for DRM programs, these thresholds also serve a role in the allocation of limited resources in the event of a major disaster.

In terms of the actual implementation of the new policy, as of January 2010, the policy had been submitted to the Council of Ministers of the Ethiopian Government for approval. Legislation is before Parliament, pending the feedback of the Council. Operational guidelines are in draft form, but have not yet been released.

Key actors or programs in DRR in Tigray

Government of Ethiopia departments

The main federal governmental actors in DRR or disaster risk management have already been discussed. These include mainly the DRM/FSS in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD). The structures of the federal government are reproduced at the Regional, Zonal and *Woreda* (district) level throughout the country, including offices of the Food Security Coordination Directorate and the Early Warning and Response Directorate of DRMFSS. The activities of these are closely coordinated at *woreda* and kebele level—usually with overlapping membership of the committees that oversee each. These roles are well described in the first report of this series (Maxwell et al. 2009). Also within the MoARD is the extension program that offers the “household package” programs described above. These packages are offered as a “menu” to participating households, and cover a variety of individual interventions, from growing improved crop varieties to fattening livestock, to natural resource extraction strategies for households with inadequate land resources such as bee keeping, to improving household water sources, etc. Virtually all of these packages require credit—most often in the form of a loan from the Dedit Credit and Savings Institute (DECSI). In the context of the high risk of drought and the reliance of all these strategies on rainfall (including livestock and bee keeping), this is where the risk of credit default arises. The Bureau of Agricul-

ture office in Mekelle claims that the level of household participation—region wide—in the household package scheme will approach 100 percent in the coming year. This could not be confirmed in Tsaeda Amba, but will be checked in the upcoming household survey.

A significant change in the way government programs are run will be introduced in 2010. Up to 2009, PSNP participants (“beneficiaries”) were identified as individuals. Thus some, but not necessarily all individuals in a household could be identified as participants. This meant that while only about half the population of Tsaeda Amba was identified as PSNP participants, significantly more than half the number of households received benefits (partially explaining the results of the household survey and the participatory baseline, which show a very high proportion of households reporting some food or income from PSNP sources). This was the result of national policy—it affects the *woreda* but was not a decision at the *woreda* level. This should improve the household impact of the safety net, but will necessarily reduce the number of households that receive benefits. To date, there has been no graduation from the PSNP in Tsaeda Amba.

NGOs

Besides World Vision, there are a limited number of NGOs operating in Tsaeda Amba. The most dominant is the Relief Society of Tigray, an Ethiopian NGO that was the humanitarian wing of the TPLF during the war against the Derg. Others include the local Caritas chapter, and DECSI, which is an MFI and therefore—at least as far as the Government of Ethiopia is concerned—a different kind of organization from an NGO (i.e., covered under a different piece of legislation).

One of the innovative interventions being piloted in DRR in Tigray is the HARITA project—briefly mentioned in the first report. That program is being piloted by a partnership that includes REST, Oxfam America, DECSI, and Nyala Insurance Company (among many others). This program enables small holders to purchase commercial insurance—offered through Nyala Insurance Company (an Addis Ababa-based private company) against the threat of drought. Based on a rainfall index, the insurance pays out if there is a partial or total crop failure related to poor rainfall. Through an innovative approach using cash for work, farmers are able to take part of their payment for community labor in the form of a voucher that can be exchanged for the insurance premium payment. Although this pilot is being conducted in another part of Tigray for the time being, there is a possibility of including one pilot area in Tsaeda Amba in 2011. ■

Section 5. Conclusions

While the participatory baseline assessment focused mostly on forms of covariate risk, and the measures proposed by the Africa Community Resilience Program to address them, this report has tended to highlight more idiosyncratic forms of risk. Phrasing a question with the communities about “disaster risk” almost inherently ensures that the discussion will be about covariate risk—with drought being by far the most prevalent worry in Tsaeda Amba at the current time (although food price inflation was a major worry in 2008, and other forms of risk outlined in the first report were also included). These are all no doubt important sources of risk, but as this report makes clear, they are not the only forms of risk and they are not necessarily the most threatening forms of risk. Almost certainly the more idiosyncratic forms of risk highlighted here may be more amenable to policy and programmatic intervention than are the hazards of drought or global price inflation, or some of the other covariate forms of risk explored in the first report.

The forms of idiosyncratic risk highlighted here include the risk of credit default, associated with one of the few means of trying to build sufficient assets at the household level to overcome chronic vulnerability. Aversion to this risk seems to be growing, as many people have attempted either increasing their livestock or upgrading their farming, but suffered a loss due to the drought in 2009, and are now suffering the consequences of that loss. The fact that the interest rate has recently doubled on DECSI loans also compounds people’s unwillingness to risk carrying one.

The participatory impact assessment in July 2010 will attempt to shed more light on this problem, but the strategy of relying of the additional risk of credit (and default) as the primary pathway out of chronic poverty and food insecurity may have to be rethought, at least for some portion of the population. At minimum, the design of the microfinance packages should be reconsidered in order to better tailor them to the specific needs and risks faced by this population. One of the means of reducing this risk is through rainfall indexed micro-insurance—along the lines being piloted by REST, DECSI, Nyala Insurance Company, and Oxfam America.

Other forms of risk highlighted in this report include the following:

- increased food insecurity due to lavish traditional practices that lead to indebtedness or at least the depletion of a household’s food supply from its own production
- deteriorating natural resource base and an increasing population.
- HIV or other conditions that make it increasingly difficult for people to independently have a sustainable livelihood
- those associated with the fact that remittances from migration do not always offset the increased work burden on the remaining family members.
- unintended side effects of the Productive Safety Net Program. This includes the observation that while the PSNP is doubtless helping to mitigate the impact of the both the food price inflation in 2008 and the drought in 2009 (there is no humanitarian emergency in Tigray, in spite of back to back serious shocks) the Safety Net program is apparently discouraging migration, this unintentionally exacerbating the population to resource problem. So far, the PSNP has not succeeded in “graduating” very many people—i.e. enabling them to improve their livelihoods to the extent that they no longer require public support. There is thus the risk that the PSNP is preventing or mitigating problems in the short term, but at the expense of making longer-term problems more difficult.

In a sense, many of these idiosyncratic risks are actually side-effects of the strategies that people are using in order to manage the more covariate shocks like drought. They also may not occur as independently as the term “idiosyncratic” suggests, resembling instead a covariate response to a covariate shock.

On the other hand, national policy is evolving rapidly in order to address some of these problems. The impact of some of these national policy changes has yet to be felt at the local level. In fact, helping to translate national policy changes into real changes at the *woreda*

and *kebele* levels in Tsaeda Amba is a challenge that the ACRP should address in its last year of operation.

This report has highlighted subtle differences not previously recognized by the research team or the ACRP management team—for instance, the difference between a “loan” (money borrowed for a project) and a “debt” (a bad loan that the borrower has not been able to pay off). These insights will be incorporated into the household survey in June 2010 and the participatory impact assessment in July 2010.

The ACRP staff should begin to consider now the likely implications of the switch in targeting practices for the PSNP to be put in place during 2010. If national targeting guidelines are followed, it will mean more concentration of PSNP resources into fewer households in the *woreda*, which is anticipated to have two impacts. First, it should enable more of the targeted households to actually build sufficient assets to overcome their situation of chronic food insecurity—a process that ACRP should support in every way it can. Second, it is also likely to mean more conflict at the local level over who is targeted and who is not. ACRP staff should think about ways of helping the *woreda* and *kebeles* make that process as transparent and evidence-based as possible, and also to think about what happens to those households who are just above the cut-off point in the new targeting guidelines. Chances are that this change in targeting policy will represent something of a “shock” to these households in that it will represent the cutting off of a source of income that they used to receive—meaning that in the short term at least, they will become worse off, even though the targeting procedures judged them as being better off. ■

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