THE PERSISTENT FOOD CRISIS IN ETHIOPIA: CAUSES, GOVERNMENT RESPONSES AND HOUSEHOLD STRATEGIES; THE CASE OF ENEBSE SAR MIDIR DISTRICT

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To The Peasants of Enebse Sar Midir

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Abstract

This study looks into the underlying causes of household food shortage and coping and survival strategies of households. It also analyzes government intervention undertaken to address the problem. It was based on a field survey in three peasant associations of the Enebse Sar Midir district in Amhara Region.

The findings of this study show that various and interrelated factors are responsible for the problem of household food shortage. There are many natural predisposing factors such as drought, environmental degradation, hailstorm, crop pests, and animal diseases. Drought and environmental degradation are the most prominent natural causes in the lowland and highland areas respectively. Furthermore, there are many socio-economic constraints such as lack of infrastructural services like credit, marketing and transport communications; population pressure and shortage of farmland; traditional farming systems and practices; and lack of productive assets. Government inappropriate strategies are also found to be aggravating factors.

Given their capacity and available opportunities households try to implement different coping and survival strategies to handle the stress situation. There are some coping strategies adopted to minimize the impact of livelihood shocks which include selling of assets like livestock and wood, petty trading, handicrafts, and agricultural diversifications. When people become more and more vulnerable all these coping strategies become exhausted and their strategies are limited to survival or to combat destitution and death. The main survival strategies experienced are out migration, engaging in daily labor, food aid, decreasing daily food intake and changing food stuff, and social networks or support from relatives and friends.

There are some limited activities undertaken by the government to address the food crisis which include agricultural extension, water harvest, resettlement, safety net programs, credit services, and enhancing income generating schemes. However, even the very few activities carried out are not only ineffective but also disrupt farmers' normal activities and aggravate the problem. These programs were designed at the top and imposed upon to the people at the grassroots. People have no any say; they are simply required to implement the imposed activities to them in mass. Most often, what the government doing is quite irrelevant to what the people need. The consequence has been a failure and worsening of the situation. For instance, the water harvest program which has been implemented widely with barely available resources is conflicting with other peoples' activities and found to be irrelevant in the studied communities. Many chronically food insecure households who are supposed to resettle to the region's resettlement sites but did not accept the resettlement are prohibited to get relief food aid.

Therefore, It is recommended that to achieve household food security or achieve sustainable household livelihood in general: program formulation and implementation should be participatory; alternative sources of income generating schemes should be strengthened; efforts should be made to develop medium and large scale irrigation projects; the severe environmental degradation and population pressures requires considerable attention; and agricultural input and output marketing systems should be improved.

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Abbreviations

AA	Addis Ababa
AAU	Addis Ababa University
AEMFI	Associations of Ethiopian Microfinance Institutions
ANRS	Amhara National Regional State
BoFED	Bureau of Finance and Economic Development
DA	Development Agent
DFID	Department for International Development (of U.K)
DPPC	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
EEA	Ethiopian Economic Associations
EEPRI	Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute
FAD	Food Availability Decline
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization (of the UN)
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FED	Food Entitlement Decline
FMoFA	Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
msal	meters above sea level
NGO's	Non-Governmental Organizations
NTNU	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
PA	Peasant Associations
UN	United Nations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USD	United States Dollar
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

CHAPTER ONE
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

While the world has been changing over the last 25 years economically in remarkable ways, food security remains an unfulfilled dream for currently more than 800 million people (Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture 2004). Today more than one billion are very poor and suffer from food insecurity while 800 million are chronically malnourished (Majda B. Saad 1999).

Projections from various sources show that the global food production trend will be positive by 2020 but food insecurity will be persistent. The food insecurity hotspots in 2020 will be Sub-Saharan Africa. Sub Saharan Africa is the most vulnerable region with respect to food security. The region's per capita consumption is projected to decline 0.5 percent per year through the next decade. By 2008, Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to account for 61 percent of the total gap to maintain consumption and constitutes 79 percent of the total nutritional gap (Shahlas & Stacey 1999).

Ethiopia is one of the most food insecure countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the last three decades food production in Ethiopia has never been sufficient to enable the population to be food secure. Many Ethiopians live in conditions of chronic hunger with a low average daily energy supply and a very high prevalence of under nourishment, about 44 percent (Berhanu 2004).

The proportion of population in the rural area unable to attain their minimum nutritional requirement is estimated at 52% (Devereux 2000). The prevalence of child malnutrition is very high. Perhaps the greatest challenge that the country faces is that of ensuring food security. Serious food shortages and high levels of malnutrition continue to affect a large number of people in several parts of Ethiopia (ibid).

Recent studies, for instance, have shown that the Ethiopian poor continue to become poorer and a greater number of peoples' livelihood insecurity is ever increasing. An expanding rural population struggles to eke out a living on ever decreasing plots of land whose fertility and productivity continue to decline. In normal years, at least 5 million people out of a population of 70 million are in danger of starvation. That number can rise to over 13 million if drought or other factors cause additional shortfalls in agricultural production (Refugees International 2004).

In view of the fact that the majority of the food-insecure live in rural areas and are almost entirely dependant on agriculture, an obvious starting point for action to address long term food insecurity is the agricultural sector. Actions would be expected to focus on ways of increasing rural households' income, as well as strengthening existing coping mechanisms (FAO 2004).

People adopt a range of strategies to cope with reduced access to food. Blaikie (1994) has identified three main types of strategies. These are Preventive, impact minimizing and recovery strategies. Preventive strategies are undertaken when the first sign of food shortage are seen. They are employed in order to prevent slipping to hunger crisis. Impact minimizing strategies are undertaken when the victims are already in crisis. They are carried out to reduce the adverse impacts of the crisis and ensure survival. While recovery strategies are targeted to help the affected people recover from the effects of the food crisis.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Ethiopia is one of the most impoverished countries of the world. A large portion of the country's population has been affected by chronic and transitory food insecurity. The situation of chronically food insecure people is more and more severe.

Workneh (2004) noted that even in years of adequate rainfall and good harvest, people particularly in lowland areas remain in need of food assistance. This clearly shows the

deeply entrenched poverty and food insecurity situation in the country irrespective of adequate rainfall. Although drought plays a significant role in triggering food crisis, the difference in household consumption status between "good year" and "bad year" is not enough to claim that drought is the central cause of famine or food insecurity (ibid).

The current Ethiopian government has elaborated agricultural development and food security policies and strategies. During the first stage of agricultural development led industrialization in 1993, for instance, the government envisaged that the focus on agriculture will improve food security conditions. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that the impact of these programs and strategies in addressing the problem of widespread and persistent food insecurity has been limited (Austrian Development Cooperation 2004).

Data from the Disaster prevention and preparedness commission's profile show that the drought affected and food insecure population of Ethiopia increased from over 8 % in 1997 to 16% in 2003. The growth rate of food insecure population was 2.6 % until 1991, and increased to 4.6 per annum thereafter.

The Gojjam province in North central Ethiopia was known to be one of the surplus producing areas of the country. But over time its potential has been deteriorating and now some districts along the Blue Nile River Valley are identified as food insecure. One of these districts is Enebse Sar Midir.

Enebsie Sar Midir district is found in Amhara regional state, East Gojjam zone. It is located in the Blue Nile River valley. The districts capital, Mertule Mariam is found 370 km Northwest of Addis Ababa, at the centre of 10˚ 45′ N and 11˚ 1′ N of latitude and 38˚ 14′ E and 38˚ 18′ E of longitude. Its mean annual temperature is 15-20°c. In the lowland part of the district temperature is quite higher. This district has a wide range of altitudes, from 950 metre to 3660 metre above sea level. As climatic zones and other physical characteristics are directly related to altitude in Ethiopia, this district also represents wide range of these features.

In spite of the claim that the Ethiopian government has given special emphasis to agricultural development strategies and food security programmes, and is making efforts to improve the food security situation of the country with the continued assistance provided by NGOs, food insecurity in Ethiopia continues to grow and the proportion of food insecure population is increasing. This inspired me to ask as to why the problem of food insecurity has not been minimized. Despite the alleged government efforts, why a persistent and aggravated food insecurity in a formerly good and productive areas?

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

The objective of this study is to assess the underlying causes for food shortage, households' strategies and government intervention mechanisms. Specifically the objectives of the study are:

- To understand the vulnerability situation of households to food crisis in Enebse Sar Midir rural communities.
- To assess the strategies that households adopt when they face food shortage
- To analyze government responses to the crises of households food shortage and intervention mechanisms to address households food insecurity.

1.4 Research questions

The study tried to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the underlying natural causes, socio-economic constraints, and political factors of household food shortage?
2. What coping mechanisms and survival strategies are used by food insecure households them selves to mitigate the impact of food shortage?
3. What responses and intervention Mechanisms have been used and practiced by the government to improve households' food security? How responses and intervention mechanisms practiced have been effective?

1.5 Significance of the study

Achieving household food security has been one of the priority agendas of the Ethiopian government. Huge amounts of resources including resources from donors have been devoted to achieve food security. However, different reports have shown that the magnitude of the problem has been increasing in all parts of the country. Therefore, an assessment made on as to how measures and responses made so far will provide the government as an evaluative result for its intervention endeavors in the study area as well as for other similar areas.

Intervention efforts to achieve food security and responses to the crises should be based up on well designed strategies and programs that are appropriate to particular areas and specific conditions. To design appropriate strategies and programs in this regard, a clear understanding of the root causes that made people vulnerable and how the victims them selves strive to combat the problem with their particular situation are very essential. Therefore, this study which aimed at understanding the root causes that made household vulnerable to food shortage as well as identifying the self help strategies of food insecure households will have practical implications for both the government and other organizations when designing appropriate interventions.

Moreover, this study which identified and raised some main points related to the problem of household food shortage and government intervention mechanisms will give some insight about these issues and there by stimulates further investigations.

1.6 Organization of the study

The research is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter is the introductory part which contains background information, the problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions and significance of the study.

The second chapter discusses the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. It includes the concept of food security, theories of food shortage or famine, livelihood framework, and actors oriented approach.

The third chapter presents the methodological approach used in the study. It deals with the research techniques, the study area, selection of respondents, sources of data, data analysis, issues of validity and reliability and limitations of the study.

Chapter four is about the background of the study area, it discusses the physical, demographic and socio economic conditions of Amhara National Regional State including a district profile. The district profile includes: physical characteristics (relief, climate, soil and vegetation, and water resources) and socio-economic activities including population and social services.

Chapter five, six and seven present the main findings of the research. Chapter five deals with the underlying causes of household food insecurity with particular emphasis in Enebse Sar Midir rural communities while chapter six and seven deal with households strategies and governments interventions to the problem respectively. In the government intervention mechanisms, supply side actions (activities designed and carried out to increase agricultural production and productivity); demand side actions (activities designed and carried out to ensure access to food); and emergency responses are discussed. The last chapter is dedicated to conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter deals with concepts and theories that are relevant to the issues raised in this study. It includes the concept of food security, theories of famine or food shortage, livelihood framework, and actors oriented approach. These theories and concepts are relevant to the issues under consideration.

2.1 The Concept of Food Security

Food security as a concept originated in 1970's and since then it has been a topic of considerable attention. However, the concept has become more complex due to a shift in the level of analysis from global and national to household and individual levels.

USDA (1995) defined food security as, "when all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life". This definition encompasses availability, access and utilization. Food availability is achieved when sufficient quantities of food are available to all individuals. Such food can be supplied through household production, other domestic output and commercial imports or food assistance.

Food access is secured when households and individuals within them have adequate resources to acquire appropriate food for a nutritious diet. Access depends on available income to the household and on the price of food. Food utilization is the proper biological use of food, potable water and adequate sanitation. It focuses more on nutrition and depends on basic principles of nutrition, proper child care, illness management and household knowledge of food storage and processing techniques (ibid).

Maxwell and Frankenberg (1992) identified many definitions for the concept food security. However, all definitions emphasis development from macro-level to micro-level

concern; from adequate level of supply towards concern to meet the demand; and from short term to a concern of long term (permanent).

Macro-level food self sufficiency does not assure the achievement of food security at household level. According to FAO (1996) there are two levels of food insecurity, macro-level (food supply insecurity) and micro-level (food consumption insecurity). Food supply insecurity is the national aggregate insecurity which arises when a country is unable to supply its aggregate food requirement either through domestic food production, imports or run-down of stocks and reserves. On the other hand, food consumption insecurity exists when certain individuals or groups cannot gain access to adequate food given their nominal incomes and the price and availability of food. Consumption food insecurity may exist within food supply security, i.e. certain groups of people may lack adequate food although a country may possess adequate aggregate food supplies to meet needs. Thus, national aggregate insecurity entails household food insecurity. On the other hand household insecurity can exist regardless of the status of aggregate national or regional food supply.

The World Bank (1996) defined food security as, "year round access to the amount and variety of food required by all household members in order to lead active and healthy lives, without undue risk of losing such access"[1]. This definition also encompasses availability, access and utilization to meet an active and healthy life. Household food security is the application of this concept at family level, with individuals in the household as the focus of concern. This suggests that, an analysis of household food insecurity should also focus on individual household members, i.e. individual level of security within a household or the vulnerability of certain groups of a population – women, children and the old. In some societies for instance, traditional or cultural practices prevent women and children to share the available food with men. Women may have less control of resources than men. Hence, women and children may be more vulnerable.

Food insecurity exists when people do not have adequate physical, social or economic access to food as defined above. Food insecure people are those individuals whose food

[1] *www.fivims.net/14-04-05*

intake falls below their minimum calorie (energy) requirements, as well as those who exhibit physical symptoms caused by energy and nutrient deficiencies resulting from an inadequate or unbalanced diet or from the bodies in ability to use effectively because of infection or disease (ibid).

Food insecurity can be categorized as either chronic or transitory. Chronic food insecurity is a continuous inadequate diet resulting from lack of resource to produce or acquire food. It is a long term phenomena affecting households that persistently lack the ability either to buy or produce enough food. Poverty in general, is a major determinant of chronic food insecurity. Transitory food insecurity is a temporal or seasonal shortage of food because of unexpected factors for only a limited period. Transitory food insecurity is often triggered by seasonal instability in food supply or availability and fluctuation in prices and incomes (Degefa 2002).

Transitory food insecurity can be further divided into cyclical and temporary. Temporary food insecurity occurs for a limited time because of unforeseen and unpredictable circumstances such as drought or pest attack while cyclical or seasonal food insecurity is a regular pattern in the periodicity of inadequate access to food (Eshetu 2000).

Chronic food insecurity can translate into a higher degree of vulnerability to famine or hunger. Repeated seasonal food insecurity also depletes the assets of the households and exposes them to a higher level of vulnerability.

Food insecurity is a complex phenomenon, attributable to a range of factors that vary in importance across regions, countries and social groups, as well as over time. These factors can be grouped in four clusters representing areas of potential vulnerability: the socio-economic and political environments, the performance of the food economy, care practices, and health and sanitation.[2]

[2] www.fivims.net/ 14-04-05

In order to achieve success, strategies to eliminate food insecurity have to tackle these underlying causes by combining the efforts of those who work in diverse sectors such as agriculture, nutrition, health education, social welfare, economics, public works, and the environment. At national level a range of specialized agencies and development organizations must work together as partners in a common effort (ibid).

According to FAO (2002) food insecurity can be approached in different ways. Food insecurity is a multi-disciplinary concept which takes into account of technical, economic, social cultural and political dimensions. The concept of food security must form part of the broader concept of food strategy, which in itself forms parts of a socio-economic development strategy and poverty reduction policies.

2.2 Theories of Famine or Food Shortage

Since Malthus various researchers have come out with a number of theories to explain famine. Devereux (1993) argues that there is no single and complete famine theory developed. Famine theories vary according to the interest and ideological differences of authors. Nevertheless, According to Devereux, it is possible to group the existing famine theories under three main types which both emphasized on what causes hunger. These are: Food Availability Decline (FAD) theory, Food Entitlement Decline (FED) theory, and Political Economy Explanations.

2.2.1 Food Availability Decline (FAD) Theory

Food Availability Decline Theory explains that famine or food shortage occurs when there is an aggregate decline in food supply. According to this theory people starve because of a local, national or regional decline in food availability to a level below the minimum necessary for survival. However, FAD theory has been criticized for its only dealing with supply side which disregards the demand side. It said nothing about people's income and purchasing power. Furthermore, it failed to address the vulnerability differences and access to food from outside the affected area (Sen 1981, Devereux 1993).

According to FAD theory, a decline in food availability may be attributed to many factors. The two most important and frequently used factors are: Demographic (population growth causes famine) and climatic (drought causes famine).

Demographic Theories

There are two competing theories regarding the relationship between population growth and food availability. One argues that population increases in a geometric progression while food production increases in arithmetic progression. Therefore, unless population increase is checked, it tends to outstrip food production and famine or starvation will occur. This argument is originally the work of Thomas Malthus who developed the theory of rapid population as a cause of food shortage or famine. Malthus' theory, however, is criticized for his failure to consider the technological improvements in agriculture which would enhance productivity (Devereux 1993).

The second theory on population and food availability argues large population size as positive stimulus for growth. Proponents of this view are Easter Boserup and Karl Marx. For Marx's model the root causes for hunger are related to the organization of production. Boserup considers population growth as a favorable factor for agricultural production. She recognizes population growth as a force favoring technological innovations that expands agricultural production thereby reducing vulnerability to food shortage and hunger (Millman & Kates in Degefa 2005).

Devereux also argues that famine or food shortage is not necessarily related to population growth. He reasoned out that, countries such as China, Russia and West Europe have histories of famine and that in spite of much larger populations, famine doesn't occur today in these countries.

Climate

Many scholars argue that climatic factors such as too much rainfall (flooding) or lack of rainfall (drought) cause crop failure and can lead to food shortage or famine. Some associate the recent incidence of famine with that of global climatic change. Climatic variability like drought or flooding have adverse impact and can cause reduced crop yield, livestock losses, and drinking water shortages. These have social consequences such as forced sale of household assets, ecological degradation, increasing price of food and therefore food become inaccessible to poorest households, unemployment, and out-migration, diseases out break, destitution, hunger or famine (Glantz Ribot in Zenebe 2001).

However, opponents of climatic based explanations argue that famine could occur with out any abnormal weather due to various socio-political and economic processes (Sen 1981).

2.2.2 Food Entitlement Decline (FED) theory

According to The Food Entitlement Theory, food availability at global or national level alone could not bring food security at household level. Thus, FED has contributed significantly to the shift of emphasis to household and individual level of analysis. A household may suffer from food shortage in a country where adequate food is available. Thus, food shortage becomes a matter of lack of access that is either inability to produce or being unable to purchase food. Households become food insecure because of failure in entitlement.

According to the entitlement approach, a growth in domestic production does not necessarily prevent famine or hunger as far as what is produced is not equally distributed and the entitlement system that determines access to food is not changed.

Sen argues that one is entitled to food through four possible sources of entitlement. It could be through trade, through production, through the application of ones labor or through gift and transfer. The ability of a person to command food is therefore determined by what he

owns (endowment) and the bundles of alternatives that can be obtained through exchange entitlement.

The strong points of FED approach is its potential capacity to identify which groups of people will be more vulnerable by various threats of availability or access to food. However, the FED model has also certain weaknesses and is subject to criticism. The main limitations are its failure to consider intra-household distribution of food, exclusion of entitlement through aid food and non- legal transfer of resources (Maxwell and Smith 1992, Devereux 1993).

Trade-based entitlements are according to Sen Amartya the entitlement of an individual where she/he can buy with the commodity or cash owned. On the other hand, Production-based entitlement describes ownership of what one produces using ones owned resources or using others resources through mutual agreed trade conditions. Own-labor entitlement explains about the sale of one's own labor and hence trade and production based entitlements that are related to one's own labor. Inheritance and transfer entitlement refers to one's right to own resources that are willingly given by others in the form of inheritance, remittance, gifts, food aid and transfer from the state in the form of pension food ration or social security (Sen 1981).

In general, based on their area of concern and interest, researchers emphasized on one aspect of the problem and overlooked the other aspects. For instance, proponents of FAD theory emphasis on food availability but availability alone did not ensure accessibility. On the contrary, the proponents of FED theory overlooked the importance of availability. The availability component is very crucial to ensure access to food.

2.2.3 Political Economy Explanations of Famine

Different authors provided some general explanations to food shortage such as ecological degradation, government policy failure, and war and civil strife which could be treated under political economy explanations.

Ecological Degradation

Tekola (1997) explained that environmental degradation can stunt food and agricultural development through a variety of adverse consequences such as soil degradation and deforestation, scarcity and pollution of water resources, loss of bio-diversity and atmospheric changes. All of these appear to be particularly relevant to African agriculture which is detrimental to food and agricultural development. Drought and desertification are aspects of environmental degradation that cause malnutrition, hunger and famine in Africa (Tekola1997).

Many authors try to relate the recurrence famine in Africa to the degradation of environment over long period. However, they differ in their explanations as to what causes environmental degradation. For some natural processes like climatic change or expansion of desert to arable land is responsible for natural resource degradation. For instance, according to Devereux there is an expansion of Sahara desert in to the arable land exposing vulnerable people to famine. For others inefficient utilization of natural resources result in environmental degradation.

Government Policy

When ever food shortage or famine occurred in a given country, the government is responsible for failing to prevent the crises. Some researchers claim that government policy failures or inappropriate development strategies are responsible for the recurrence of food shortage and famine or for underdevelopment in a broader context (Nicola Pratt 2003, Fassil 2005).

Nicola Pratt put policy failures in developing countries as:

> *Policies have been formulated as a means of guarantying political support, particularly in the run-up to elections. This favors large symbolic gestures, the distribution of largesse and promises of favors, but not, in general, promises to*

resolve structural problems with better policies. Policies are pursued that allocate economic resources inefficiency, with high opportunity costs from the point of meeting the real needs of food insecure. State intervention in supply of agricultural inputs, pricing and food distribution persists for political reasons. ··· intermittently, but on an occasionally massive scale, state resources are diverted unofficially for personal gain, through corruption and nepotism. Even in the face of massive threats to the food security of the population such occurrences are not subject to domestic accountability.

In developing countries like Ethiopia development policies do not always reflect the concerns expressed by the people at the grassroots (Tekola 1997). Tekola further noted that deficiencies have been observed in developing countries like absence of land use policies, the utilization of wrong criteria for fixing producers prices, the persistent requirement of collateral for granting agricultural credit to small farmers.

For some others rural poverty and vulnerability to famine are often the result of government policy which is designed to serve the urban sector and marginalizing the rural poor. For instance, government tax in agriculture may exceed government spending on agriculture. Degefa (2005) also noted that government polices to expand national parks and commercial farms have affected the marginal pastoral communities in Ethiopia as well as in other countries of western and eastern Africa.

Armed conflicts and Political Instabilities

According to some analysts, some of the present-day famines in Africa are the result of military conflicts that arise due to oppressive, unaccountable and non-participatory government (Fasil 2005). Fighting within and among countries has made it difficult for African farmers to settle down and carry out their agricultural activities (Tekola 1997).

Military conflicts also trigger a process that leads to famine as Fassil (2005) stated it:

Military conflicts have been among the factors which have not only contributed to the impoverishment of the rural population, thereby increasing their vulnerability to famine, but also likely been among the factors triggering a process leading to famine under the circumstances where the agricultural producers themselves have been often had to abandon their farming activities to participate in campaigns

War undermines countries ability of famine prevention by diverting resources for military spending; intensifies famine proneness by destructing infrastructures; threatens crop production and traditional coping strategies; and disrupts local and external responses to famine (Devereux 1993).

I will analyze the Ethiopian context in order to assess the significance of these factors in the present food insecurity situation of the country.

2.3 Livelihood Framework

In order to analyze food security constraints and assess household different strategies, I need a comprehensive framework which can address these factors. This can be given by the livelihood framework.

The origin of the livelihood framework is related to the debates about rural development. It comes with a shifting emphasis from natural resource issues and programmes to people-centred approaches that emphasis the promotion of increase security of the livelihoods of the poor.

The livelihood framework thinking originates from the works of Chambers and Conway in 1980s. It was first used as a development concept in the early 1990s. Carney (1998) defined livelihood framework as:

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or

enhance its capabilities and assets. Both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.

Devies(1996) provides a detailed account of the dynamics of the livelihoods of the poor in relation to food, as they respond to highly variable conditions (natural and human). Devies` conceptual framework is based on livelihood system and security, entitlements, vulnerability, resilience and sensitivity, and livelihood system diversity.

Livelihood system and security encompass a broader range of factors than household food systems and security to explain how and why producers pursue particular mixes of strategies to confront food insecurity. Entitlements explain different sources of food within households and livelihood systems while vulnerability explains the nature and intensity of food and livelihood insecurity. Resilience and sensitivity are useful in analysing changes in levels and intensity of vulnerability of food insecurity within different livelihood systems. Livelihood system diversity accounts for variations in the nature and intensity of vulnerability, depending on different ways in which people acquire access to food (Devies 1996).

In the context of food security, Devies emphasises the need to pay particular attention to the micro level analysis, the household. This characterises livelihood frameworks as a whole. Livelihood framework focuses on the household as the basic unit of analysis and built from that starting point to integrate the household into other levels with in and beyond the local community.

Livelihood framework emphasises the micro level analysis of how rural people earn a living, cope and survive with shocks and disasters. The core difference of the livelihood framework from other approaches (from the 1970s integrated rural development approaches, 1980s structural adjustment – farming system approaches and the 1990s strong emphasis on the environment and protection of resources) is that it looks beyond the local environment. It is neither bottom-up, nor top-down but stresses that all levels should work together. The primary objective of the livelihood framework is to understand how wider

policies, institutions and processes affect local livelihoods. This includes thinking about the wider issues of vulnerability, local power and influence. It potentially could also lead to better team working, the development of a broader and more intuitive understanding of local priorities.[3]

Policies, strategies and their implementation should recognise local differences, and must identify local priorities to deal with so that they can impact positively and bring desirable outcomes, such as increased resilience to disaster risks, and increased food and livelihood security.

Ashley and Carney (1999) pointed out that the livelihood approach is a holistic approach about the vulnerability context, livelihood assets, structures and processes, livelihood outcomes and strategies. The vulnerability context describes trends and variability in those factors that affects and disrupts different aspects of livelihoods (Blaikie 1994). The vulnerability context refers to the group of factors in the external environment which affects people's susceptibility to food and livelihood insecurity. It includes trends and shocks. Trends, for example, may include population pressure, environmental degradation, lack of rainfall, etc. Shocks refer to factors like crop or livestock pests and diseases, illness, conflicts, etc. Thus it is important to consider such kind of trends and shocks that make people vulnerable to food and livelihood insecurity.

As Blaikie (1994) described the risk of food and livelihood insecurity is a function of shocks (either natural or socio-economic in origin) mediated by resilience and its converse, vulnerability. Soussan, J. and Blaikie, P. (2000) noted that vulnerability has three coordinates: the risk of exposure to shocks and trends; inadequate capacities to cope with shocks and trends; and the risk of severe consequences of, and attendant risks of crisis, risk and shocks.

According to Carney (1998) livelihood assets are the means of production available to a given individual, household or groups that can be used in their livelihood activities. These

[3] www.aplivelihoods.org/18-03-05

assets are the basis on which livelihoods are built. The greater and more varied the asset base, the higher and more durable the level of the social security. Carney (1998) further noted that, there are five dominant forms of livelihood assets arranged in a pentagon. These are: natural capital (the natural resource stock), social-political capital (networks, membership of groups, and access to wider institutions of society), human capital (the skills, knowledge, good health), Physical capital (the basic infrastructure and production equipment), and financial capital (savings, supplies of credit and other financial resources).

Structures and processes are the legal, political, social, economic and institutional environments which link people and places in the regional, national and global system. This includes the nature and operation of government which has both direct effects and indirect impacts, the structure and strength of civil society, those non-state institutions and organizations that also regulate social and economic processes, the operation of markets and so on (Soussan, J. & Blaikie, P. 2000).

Institutional and organizational processes determine access to livelihood assets and are central to people's livelihood strategies and out come. The nature and operation of the government in this study include policies which affect people's access to resources, policies and strategies for food and livelihood security and their implementation processes.

Livelihood outcomes are outcomes that people seek to achieve. It includes improved food security, more income, reduced vulnerability and increased well-being. Peoples coping and survival strategies are undertaken therefore to achieve and secure these outcomes.

Recognizing and understanding the dynamics of the livelihoods processes is fundamental for the analysis of factors such as security and vulnerability. There is an increasing recognition that the livelihoods of households in the developing world are based upon a wide range of activities. People are not just farmers, or labourers, or factory workers. Most families base their livelihoods around complex strategies that seek to maximise the use of a bundle of resources accessible to them. Livelihood strategies are a set of decisions made on how to best employ the assets available (Soussan, J. & Blaikie, P. 2000). The more affluent

and assets the richer a household is, the more options it possesses in the face of shocks, and therefore the more resilient it is to disruption in its livelihoods base. Therefore, strengthening the households` asset base is important to secure their food and livelihoods.

In general, strategies and programmes for household food and livelihood security must recognize that peoples have different strategies. They should logically incorporate people's own definition of desirable outcomes; what sort of outcomes the poor aspire to achieve; and they must clearly sort out local specific constraints and strengths and be built upon the existing capacities. In a livelihood framework the active participation of the people is therefore also central.

Participation: It is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (Dale 2000). Unless the poor are given an opportunity to participate in the development of interventions designed to improve their livelihoods, they will continue to miss the benefit of any intervention.

Meaningful participation by the poor in development is concerned with direct access to the resources necessary for poverty alleviation and food security. The poor farmers need active involvement in decisions affecting those resources (e.g. land). The rural poor should also directly participate in the poverty reduction programmes of the government. Social, economic, environmental and gender inclusive participatory approaches leads to platform building for resource use negotiation and collective decision making which are valuable to achieve meaningful improvement of people's livelihood (Dale 2000). Institutions and development interventionists have begun to realize that new technology alone is insufficient to achieve positive response in the resource-poor and risk prone areas.

To sum up, the livelihood framework is centred on people and their livelihoods. It prioritizes people's assets (tangible and intangible); it emphasises the vulnerability context; and people's ability to withstand shocks.

2.4 Actor-Oriented Approach

An actor-oriented approach stresses on the interplay and mutual determination of "internal" and "external" factors and relationships. It offers valuable insights into those processes of social constructions. It is an important tool to understand the "social life" of development projects from conception to realization, as well as responses and lived experiences of variously located social actors. It enables to conceptualize how locales interlock with wider frameworks, resource fields and networks of relations (Long 2001).

The cornerstone of this approach is that, social life is heterogeneous and it is necessary to study how such differences are produced and social processes involved. Such a perspective requires a theory of agency and social action. Social action takes place within networks of relations and it is context specific. The actor-oriented approach emphasises the central significance of "human agency" and self-organizing processes, and the mutual determination of so-called "internal" and "external" factors and relationships. It concentrates on human dimensions; the role of actors, analysis of information links and social power relationships between them. How intervention can be planned, and how and why information is used or not used for different purpose is addressed (ibid).

As described by Long Norman (1997) and Douthwaite (2001), the actor-oriented approach seeks to understand how different stakeholders react to technical and social change by emphasising on interventions, life worlds, and interface concepts.

Intervention is an attempt from outside a system to organize and control production with it (Long 1989). The introduction of a new agricultural production system by the government is therefore an intervention into an already existing situation. The focal point of interest in the actor oriented approach is how people negotiate and transform this new production systems and technology (used here in the broadest sense of the word). According to Douthwaite (2001), intervention results in actual changes of the status quo and the expectation of further changes. These changes are structural discontinuities and they are what people react to when they decide how they are going to adopt and transform the new

system or technology and their social networks to fit into their own mental maps of reality or life worlds. One possible reaction is, of course, to ignore the technology and to try to maintain one's life world unchanged. This suggests that intervention mechanisms to improve household food should start from or build up on the existing local settings in which people cope with their own problems.

As stated by Douthwaite (2001), life worlds are realities that people adaptively construct for themselves. They are the sum of mental maps and models that people have built to allow them to cope with their environment and, as such, are made up of past experience and personal and shared understanding (Douthwaite 2001). Life world is a term used to depict the "lived-in" and "taken for granted" world of social actors. Social actors are not simply disembodied social categories or passive recipients of intervention but are active participants who process information and strategies in their dealing with various local as well as outside institutions and personnel. Everyday life is experienced as some kind of ordered reality and shared with others. The inter-individual action involves both face to face and distant relationships. Relationships range from personal links to more formally constituted groups and organizations (Long 2001). These relationships in every day life are important in the efforts of improving food security. Households have also developed networks of social relations. These social networks are composed of both direct and indirect relationships and exchanges. They may be formal or informal and transform and change over time. But they can affect food and livelihood security efforts positively or negatively.

The interface concept is linked to that of intervention. According to Long (1989), It implies face to face encounters between individuals or social units representing different interests and backed by different resources. Social interface is the critical points of intersection or linkages between different social systems or levels of social order, where structural discontinuities based upon differences of normative values and social interest are likely to be found. In other words, interfaces are the areas in which different social groups experience mutual friction and, if the introduction of a new technology is going to cause

problems or create opportunities (i.e. structural discontinuities); the interface is where they will be found (Long 1989).

Arce & Long (1992) suggested that, it is by identifying these interfaces and then studying the perturbations that occur as a result of the intervention that we can understand how interventions are modified by every day life, and vice versa. The interface allows us to identify all the groups that are involved in and influenced by a given new system without overlooking something important. Interface analysis focuses on the linkages and networks that develop between individuals or parties rather than individual or group strategies. In the efforts of achieving food security in Ethiopia, for instance, linkages and networks between different concerned actors including the households themselves is indispensable.

The concept of interface helps us to focus on the production and transformation of differences in world views or cultural paradigms. Interface situations often provide the means by which individuals or groups come to define their own cultural or ideological positions vis-à-vis those typifying opposing views. It provides rooms for discussion. Long (1992) stated that:

> *Opinions on agricultural development expressed by technical experts, extension workers and farmers seldom completely coincide; and the same is true for those working for a single government department with a defined policy mandate. Hence agronomists, community development, credit officers, irrigation engineers, and the like, often disagree on the problems and priorities of agricultural development. These differences can not be reduced to personal idiosyncrasies but reflect differences laid down by differential patterns of socialization and professionalization, which often lead to miscommunication or a clash of rationalities.*

According to Long, the interface analysis has a direct bearing on how one looks at policy processes. Whatever precise policy issues and implementing structures, it is essential to avoid framing problems and looking for solutions from within a framework of formal – logical models and rationalistic procedures. Such approaches accord too much weight to

external expert systems and undervalue the practical knowledge and organizing capacities that develop among field level practitioners and local actors. After all, it is the day to day decisions, routines, and strategies devised for coping with uncertainties, conflicts of interest and cultural difference that make or break policy.

An actor-oriented approach helps to focus projects on the behaviour of actors and stakeholders; would help make planning more systematic and transparent. It opens up more ways forward and makes clear assumptions and rationales for different types of interventions, and gives rise to indicators for learning and re- planning purposes and for more formal review activities. An actor-oriented perspective has a number of implications for the study of processes of interventions, whether in the field of development or organizational change. Despite the many critical analyses now available development intervention is still often visualized as a discrete set of activities that takes place within a defined time space setting involving the interaction between so-called "intervening" parties and "target" or recipient groups (ibid).

One important reason for using the actor-oriented approach is that it helps open up a discussion about the feasibility of different actions within the current social and political context. It is a useful tool for building an action plan from the analysis of a particular situation that is action in context. This considerations lead to the conclusion that we need to deconstruct the concept of intervention so that it is recognized for what is fundamentally is, namely, an ongoing, socially constructed and negotiated processes, not simply the execution of an already specified plan or framework for action with expected outcomes. Long et al (2002) stated that:

> *Policy makers often are not looking for the best way or most efficient alternative for solving a problem. They are instead searching for supporting for actions already taken, and for support that serves the interest of various components of the policy shaping community. It is not enough then to modify or seek refinements of orthodox views on planned intervention. Instead, one must break with conventional models, images and reasoning, and open up the issues to interface analysis.*

Policy analysis still seemed to focus on a mechanical model of relationships between policy, implementation, and outcomes; essentially linear in nature, implying some kind of step-by-step processes. Policy was formulated, implemented and then followed by certain results after which one could evaluate the process in order to establish how far the original objective has been achieved. However, this kind of separating policy implementation and outcomes is a gross oversimplification of a much more complicated set of processes which involve interpretation or transformation of policy during implementation processes (Long 2001). This suggest that, especially in countries like Ethiopia, where both the socio-cultural and physical features of the country are so diverse that policy implementation processes should require interpretations and transformations according to the contextual situation.

According to Long (2001), there is no straight line from policy to outcomes. Outcomes often result from factors which can not be directly linked to the implementation of a particular programme. Furthermore, policy implementation should not be restricted to the top-down study of planned interventions by the government, development agencies and private institutions. Because local people also formulate and pursue their own projects which may clash with the interest of government authorities.

2.5 Analytical Model

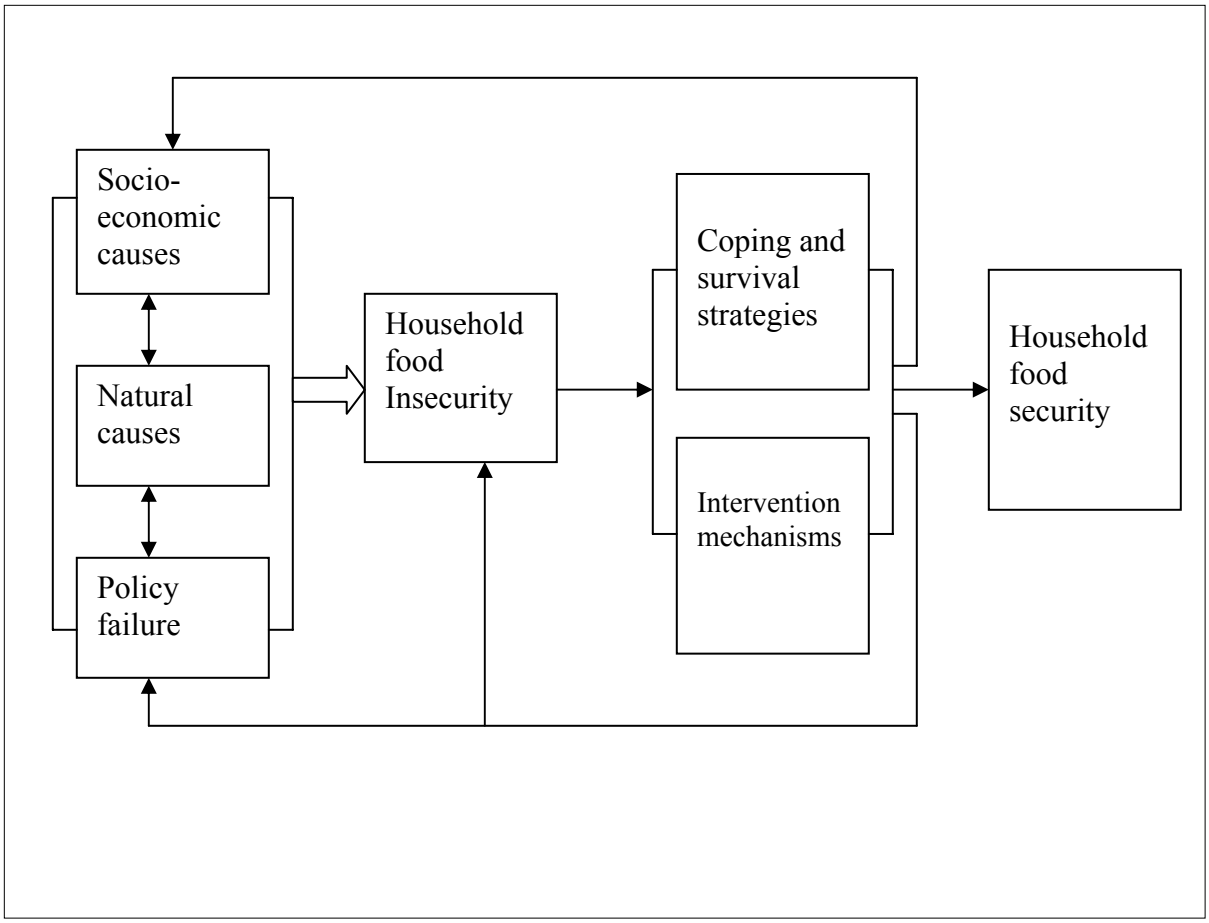


Figure 2.1: Analytical Model

The model shown above in figure one is used as a tool to summarize and analyze most of the data used in this study. The most important general factors responsible for household food shortage are socio-economic constraints, natural causes, and policy failures. Food insecure households have their own coping and survival strategies. The government has also its own intervention mechanisms to address the problem. If government intervention is not appropriate, it can aggravate the problem. As households also become more and more vulnerable, some of their strategies become unsustainable and constrain their long term livelihoods.

Both intervention mechanisms and coping strategies are to achieve household food security. If interventions properly address those causes by considering local differences and are mainly based upon people's strategies, they would likely achieve reduced vulnerability, more household income, increased wealth, and improved food security.

2.6 Conclusion

The food availability decline (FAD) theory attributes food shortage to an aggregated decline in food supply. People starve because of the decline in food availability below the minimum necessary for survival in a given area. As opposed to the FAD, the food entitlement decline (FED) theory views food shortage as a crisis that occurs when people's entitlement decline. Food shortage is a lack of the ability to command and obtain food than a decline in general availability. Some authors also provided that inappropriate development policies and strategies are responsible factors for the recurrence of food crisis.

The livelihood framework is a holistic approach which emphasises issues that affect people's livelihoods such as policies and institutions, trends and shocks, and how they respond to these threats and opportunities. It assesses the assets and resources that help them to thrive and survive and what out come they aspire to achieve. It puts people at the centre of development instead of national statistics or income.

An actor-oriented approach provides the concepts of intervention, life worlds and interface which have implications for the designing and implementation of development projects. The approach sees policy implementation not as a top-down and step-by-step execution of an already specified plan but as a socially constructed and negotiated process which require interpretation and transformations according to the contextual situation.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Research Techniques

'*Research is the processes of enquiry and discovery*' while methodology refers to a coherent set of rules and procedures which can be used to investigate a phenomena or situation (Kitchin & Tate 2000). For social science research to be able to answer the given social problems in a scientific way demands investigative and scientific research technique which is relevant to the specific problem. Based on this consideration a researcher selects and sets the methodological approach, qualitative or qualitative prior to entering into the actual processes. This implies that exploring, describing and explaining the problem raised in the research question and meeting the objective of the study at hand needs an appropriate methodology (ibid).

Kitchin & Tate (2000) stated that:

> *within the bounds of any epistemological and ontological considerations, and the nature of questions to be answered the choice of methodology is open,…you need to weigh up carefully the advantages and disadvantages of all methods, regardless of whether they are qualitative and/or quantitative in nature, and decide on which will provide the most appropriate answer to your question within the constraints of the adopted approach*

In this study, I mainly applied the qualitative methodological approach. To give some reasons as to why I employed this technique as a basic tool of research, it is important to note some of the merits of the qualitative methodological approach and its relevance to the research problems of this study.

The qualitative approach emphasises on processes and meanings that are not quantitatively measured or examined. However, it does not mean that it is totally devoid of quantification of data. Statistical forms of analysis are not seen as central but it does use some forms of quantification (Masson Jennifer in Zenebe 2001).

The qualitative approach is rich in information. It consists of detailed descriptions, in depth inquiries and of capturing people's personal perspectives and experiences (Crewswell 1994). It is possible to see the research problem in-depth by utilizing this method. Qualitative research is not based on rigidly standardized methods of data collection; it is based on methods that are flexible to the social context in which the data are produced. Thus, it gives the chance to be reflexive based on the situation that the researcher faces in the field. Furthermore, a qualitative approach also relies on multiple methods, i.e. it involves the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials–interviewing, discussion, observation and photography, visual texts, and personal interactions and experiences. So, it is multi-method in nature. It doesn't privilege any single methodology; it rather advocates the application of multiple methods in a single study.

A qualitative methodology sees the social world as something that is dynamic and changing, always being constructed through the interaction of cultural, economic, social and political processes. Unlike quantitative approach it does not start with the assumption that there is pre-existing world that can be known (Limb & Dwyer2001).

Causes for household food insecurity are quite complex and attributable to natural, political and socio-economic factors. They also vary from place to place as well as from household to household. I believe that methodologically these call for a detailed understanding of the everyday life of people and of the processes of social practice.

The different strategies that households employ to mitigate the impact of food crisis based on their own natural, cultural and socio-economic settings also requires a detailed understandings of their life worlds. I believe that households' life world is so complex that it would not be easily testable through pre-codification.

Moreover, I believe that qualitative methodology is best employed to evaluate an intervention program. Because it does inform the basic social processes related to a program under evaluation. Methodologically the concepts in the actor-oriented approach requires a detailed understanding of every day life and of the processes by which images, identities and social practices are shared, contested, negotiated, and sometimes rejected by various actors involved (Long 2002).

In general, I strongly believe that a qualitative approach is more useful to understand the complex factor that make households vulnerable and their strategies which requires a detail understandings of everyday lives and processes involved. Qualitative approach helps to assess the impacts of intervention mechanisms on the lives of the poor. It is appropriate to understand how the local people perceive government policies and their implementations.

3.2 The study area

Enebsie Sar Midir rural district is selected for this study. Some of the general specifications taken into account for the selection of this study area can be mentioned. First, it is one of the food insecure districts along the Blue Nile River Valley. Most people in this district are either seasonally or chronically food insecure. As Rami Hugo, UN Assessment Mission (2002) described, four districts in East Gojjam Zone along the Blue Nile River valley are chronically food insecure. These districts face severe problems and receive food aid. One of these districts is Enebsie Sar Midir. Second, although most people are food insecure along the Blue Nile River Valley in East Gojjam Zone, there has never been a study conducted on food insecurity in this area so far. Most research works on the issue focus on the famine prone areas of north-eastern Ethiopia. Third, the relief features of this district and consequently its agro-ecological zones are so diverse that it represents much of Ethiopia from the lowland to the highland parts of the country. Fourth, as I grew up in the area, there was no communication barrier between me and the local people to interact and deal with all matters related to the research activities.

With regard to the selection of peasant associations (PAs) for the study, I had a discussion with experts and development agents in the District Rural Development and Agriculture office. The most important factors considered for the selection were the agro-climatic zone, the degree of the severity of food shortage problem, and accessibility. Accordingly, three PAs were selected from the three different agro-climatic zones of the district such as lowland (kolla climate), middle altitude (woyna dega climate), and highland (dega climate). Debre Birhan (kebele 03), Debre Kidusan (kebele 09), and Debre Mewi (kebele 17) PAs were selected for the middle altitude, lowland and highland PAs respectively. Debre Mewi PA in the highland and Debre Birhan PA in the middle altitude represent the most vulnerable areas in each agro-climatic zone. However, due to accessibility problem, Debre Kidusan PA which was selected from the lowland PAs does not exactly represent the most vulnerable PAs in the lowland kolla climate.

3.3 Selection of Respondents

Limp & Dwyer (2001) indicated that gaining access to a research community and recruiting the appropriate individuals is crucial to the viability of the study. In qualitative research it is the depth and richness of our encounter rather than the number of people who participate in the study that matters. Qualitative researchers usually employ illustrative sampling rather than the random sampling techniques which are used to select a representative sample of a population adopted by quantitative techniques. Limp & Dwyer (2001) pointed out that choosing who to recruit is usually a theoretical motivated decision in which a researcher draws on his understandings of the issue to decide which angles or perspectives he needs to explore.

In this study I employed purposive sampling in which the subjects selected are supposed to meet the study needs. In each PA I interviewed respondents belonging to different wealth category i.e. the poorest or destitute, poor, medium, and rich including men and women. In the study area there is such a wealth classification of households and commonly used by different offices including Agri-service Ethiopia, the only NGO in the district as well as the communities themselves. I selected my respondents from different wealth categories. Most

of them were from the poor and poorest category. This is mainly considering the fact that the participant had to be a source of information that had experienced the problem of food shortage and could contribute his/her valuable experiences.

Thus, after I discussed the research objectives and research questions with my research assistants and the development agents in each PA, respondents who are from different wealth categories that include both men and women were selected purposefully for the interviews and focus group discussions.

3.4 Sources of Data

In this study, I utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, field observations and photography. Secondary data were obtained from government Bureaux and offices, non-governmental organizations, Universities, and from internet addresses.

3.4.1 Primary Data

Most of the data required to answer the research questions were collected from primary sources. To generate the required data from the primary sources, different qualitative methodological approaches such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations and photography were employed. These techniques were used to get the views and understandings of households about what causes the problems, about their coping and survival strategies and as to how the government has addressed and responded to the problem.

Interview

The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the situation from the subject point of view, to unfold the meanings of peoples experience and uncover their lived world. Interviews allow researchers to study subjective meanings and motives. They are a means

of understanding people's opinion or attitudes. They give the subjects of the research much more scope to speak for themselves than the survey questionnaires (Steinar Kvale 1996, Johnston et al 2000).

Interviews with the selected 30 households (10 in each PA) were conducted and the necessary information was obtained. It includes information about household food insecurity problems, about their strategies, about how the government intervenes and responses to the problem, and how responses and interventions have been effective and changed their quality of life had been obtained.

Interviewed households are from different wealth category. 10 households from the poorest (destitute), 10 households from the poor, 6 from the medium category, and 4 households belong to the rich category.

PA	Poorest	Poor	Medium	rich	total
Debre Mewi	3	4	2	1	10
Debre Birhan	3	3	2	2	10
Debre Kidusan	4	3	2	1	10
Total	10	10	6	4	30

Table 3.1 The Number of Interviewed Households Per Wealth Category and PA.

There had been also in-depth discussions about these issues with kebele executives and development agents in each PAs.

Picture 3.1 photos showing interview sessions.

Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion is a group session moderated by a group leader or a researcher. It allows the participants not only to speak for themselves but also to negotiate their own shared views. It allows the subjects to collaborate actively rather than to respond passively and it favours a collective approach to the production of knowledge (Johnston et al 2000). The advantage of group discussion is that it allows meanings to emerge in a less directed way. It is a creative encounter in which participants share and test their ideas with in the group (ibid).

Focus group discussions were held in each PAs to enrich the first hand data collected through interview. Two group discussions (a males and a females group) were organized and held in each selected PAs. The group consisted of seven to ten participants within each gender group. Discussion with district concerned officials, such as district council, information office, rural development and agriculture office including with some experts was also held.

Observation

Mikkelsen Britha (2002) suggested that observation provides important information during all phases of a study. *'Observation of physical structure, social difference, behaviour, action and symbols in solitude or with other whom observation are discussed, provides important information'* (ibid).

Observations of the people's way of life, their assets and resources, the ups and downs to overcome their daily struggles, their activities for living, etc, would provide valuable and supportive information. Having a good look at the physiographic configurations, physical and socio-economic infrastructures, the land use, housing conditions, the different economic activities people are involved with would provide valuable contributions to understand the existing real situations and the overall situation of the poor. Thus, in this study an attempt was made to carefully observe every situation and understand them fully.

3.4.2 Secondary data

Secondary data contribute a lot to meet the research objectives. They are supportive in any research processes. They are used to supplement primary data generation or where primary data generation is impossible. However, most secondary data have limitations and were recorded usually with other purposes in mind (Kitchin & Tate 2000).

Secondary materials such as published books, articles, journals, maps and bulletins about the research topic had been collected and assessed from relevant organizations and institutions mainly from Addis Ababa University, and bureaux and offices at national, regional and district level. Annual reports of bureaux and offices as well as policy documents about agricultural development and food security were also among the secondary data collected and utilized. Furthermore, publications related to food security were obtained from food policy and development journals, from the websites of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other organizations.

3.5 Data Analysis

Analysis of data provides sense for the data collected during the field work. In qualitative research data analysis is not separated from data generation. It often occurs whilst data are generated (Kitchin & Tate 2000). In qualitative data analysis, researchers have their own approaches to make sense of data gathered through qualitative methods. The core of qualitative analysis consists of description of data, classification of data and seeing how concepts are interconnected (ibid). Qualitative analysis involves developing the meanings, bringing the subjects` own understanding into light as well as providing new perspectives from the researcher on the phenomena (Steinar Kvala 1996).

In this study, the analysis was conducted on the basis of food security strategies and programmes, national policies as well as implementation of the programmes and their outcomes. Interviews and focus group discussions were analysed by direct quotations, transcribing and organizing of the collected data from different sources. Furthermore, interpretations of the observed and perceived realities were utilized.

3.6 Issues of Validity and Reliability

Validity is the degree to which a study actually measures or reflects what it intends to measure while reliability refers to the consistency and conformability of a research finding. It is the agreement of information obtained on different occasions or tools.

In qualitative research one of the difficult tasks is achieving valid and reliable results. Because, a given research inquiry cannot be carried out without problems. There were some factors in this study that can affect its validity and reliability. One of the problems was the wrong perception of respondents. Some of the respondents were suspicious of the study, associating it with the political crisis existing at the time of research period as some of the study issues are politically sensitive like government policies. For instance, one respondent in Debre Birhan PA initially refused to talk about anything related to government. But, finally with the help of my research assistants we convinced him and

reached a consensus and started the interview. Thus, even though I repeatedly explained the objective of the research, some might have withheld some vital information because of their suspicion and fear.

The other problem was related to secondary data. Secondary data that are aggregated at district level have been limited. Moreover, available reports at district level are not reliable and well documented. Some of the available data varies from source to source on the same issue.

In addition, lack of transport service to the rural PAs also affected my short time and constrain me not only to accesses remote PAs particularly in the lowland areas but also from getting a deep insight about some of the situations as I had a shortage of time.

However, in spite of the above mentioned problems, I tried to maintain the reliability and validity of the study through different strategies. I was able to establish good relations with the respondents. My two research assistants who are from the studied PAs played an important role in creating good trust and smooth relations. I discussed the purpose of the research including other relevant issues and was able to create smooth relationships with respondents. I utilized different qualitative techniques such as in-depth interview, group discussions, observations and photography. I used different groups of informants: respondents from different wealth category (i.e. poorest, poor, medium, and rich) of men and women, community leaders, extension agents and experts, and different government bodies. Thus, I could obtain multiple evidence for the analysis and cross-check the data generated. Counterchecking and crosschecking being important strategies in qualitative research.

I involved three respondents who had given me important information but lacked consistency in their information in the group discussions and tried to see their view in the discussions. I tried to make informal discussions with different groups of people in the area which had valuable contribution for counter-checking the data generated. Moreover,

discussing the issue by being in the field and observing what is happening there makes the research result more credible and trustworthy.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

Among the problems that I encountered while conducting this research, the first challenge was lack of transport service to the rural communities. I had a plan to include one PA from each of the three main agro-climatic zones (Dega, Woyna Dega and Kolla) of the district. However, during the rain days in summer there was no transport at all to reach the PAs found in the Kolla and Dega agro-climatic zone, which are too far from the district capital. I selected the nearest PAs reflecting the required agro-climatic zones. But still, the nearest PAs required on average about two hours walk on foot and walking there was very difficult during the rainy and muddy summer. Nevertheless, with great effort by walking on foot and sometimes by staying with the local communities, I managed to collect the required data from each of the agro-climatic zones of the district. However, these PAs are relatively near to the available infrastructural services and may not exactly represent the remotest PAs.

The second problem was created be some conflicts and unrest between the government and opposition parties in the country in relation to the May 2005 election during my research time. When I reached Addis Ababa and started my work the conflict broke out in Addis Ababa. Thus, I decided to go to the Amhara region where my research belongs as I was unable to work in Addis Ababa. But, unfortunately by the time I reached in the region's capital Bahir Dar the same had happened just after four or five days of the Addis event. Then I decided to go to the district, in my particular research area and went to the district centre. At the district level the situation was relatively stable and I soon started my work. However, discussing political issues like government policies and programs with most people was felt uneasy and had to be engaged carefully.

The third main problem I faced was time constraint. Walking on foot during rainy summer from one PA to another for every task of data collection is not only a difficult task but also

time consuming. Moreover, farmers during this season were busy on their farm activities and some respondents required appointments for the interview on days that they would not be working. In-depth interviews also by its nature takes more time as respondents are free to elaborate the forwarded questions. However, in spite of all these constraints, all the necessary data have been collected.

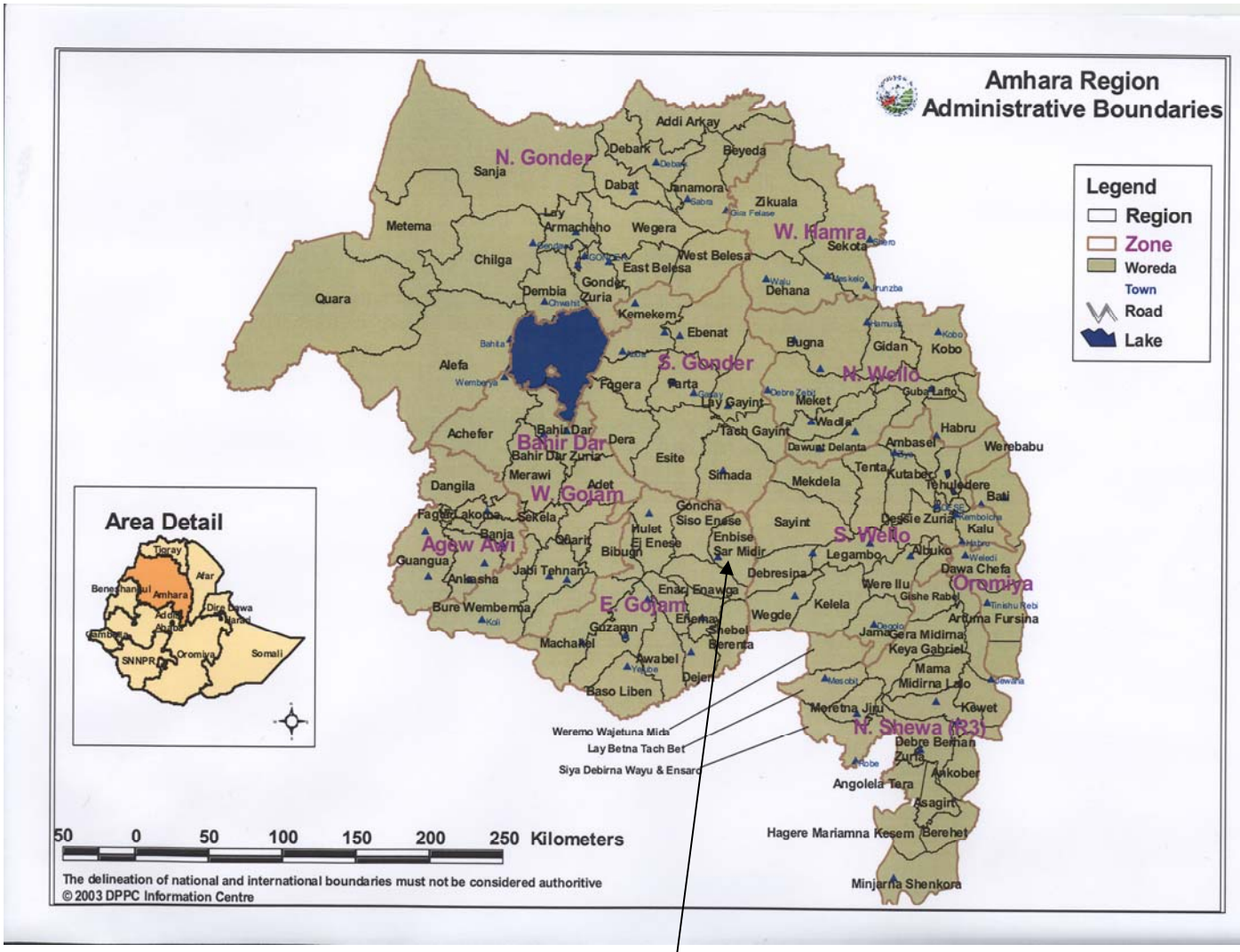
CHAPTER FOUR
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

This chapter describes the study area, Amhara region in general and Enebse Sar Midir district in particular. It provides the physical features, resource bases, demographic characteristics and socio-economic standards.

4.1 The Amhara National Regional State

The Amhara National Regional State (ANRS) was established in 1993 as one of the nine regional states of Ethiopia. It is located in the north central and north western parts of the country. Geographically, it is located between 9˚ 21' N – 14˚ 00' N and 36˚ 20' E – 40˚ 20' E with a total area of 170 752 square kilometer. It is bounded by Afar region in the east, Benishangul Gumuz in the south west, Oromiya in the south, Tigray region in the east, and by the Sudan in the west. Administratively it is divided into 11 zones, 105 districts and over 3000 kebeles. Having a population of more than 18.5 million the region accounts for 25.5 percent of the total population of the country and is the second most populous region next to Oromiya region (BoFED 2004, ANRS 2003).

In terms of area the region covers only 15.4 percent of the total area of the country while in terms of human and livestock population it accounts one-fourth and one-third of the total human and livestock population of the country. Livestock and human population are concentrated in the highland parts of the region, especially in between 1500-3000m.a.s.l. which is known as Woyna Dega (temperate) agro-ecological zones. Out of the total area of the region, cultivation and grazing land accounts 27.2 % and 30 % respectively; forest, shrub and woodland accounts 14.7%; water bodies 3.8% , waste lands 19% and built up areas 5.3 % (Mesfin 2004).



The Study District

Map 4.1 Amhara Region

Source: DPPC 2003

4.2 Physical Conditions of the Region: Topography, Agro- ecological zones and Climate

The topography of the region is characterized by diverse features constituting lowlands, extensive plateaus, numerous mountains, river valleys and gorges. The lowland (500 - 1500 m.a.s.l.) which is called kolla (tropical) agro-ecological zone covers mainly the western parts of the region towards the Sudan border and the eastern parts bordering the Afar region. The highland areas are dominantly rugged and mountainous. The region has many of the highest mountains in the country including Ras Dashen (4620m.a.s.l.) the highest peak in the country (Regional Bureau of Rural Development, 2003).

Agro-ecologicaly, the region constitutes Low Kolla or Berha (desert) below 500m.a.s.l, Kolla (tropical) 500 -1500m.a.s.l, Woyna Dega (sub tropical)1500 – 2300m.a.s.l, Dega (temperate) 2300 – 3000m.a.s.l, Wurch (cold) 3000 -3700m.a.s.l, and High Wurch above 3700m.a.s.l. The areal coverage of each agro-ecological zone in the region is 3%, 22%, 44%, 27%, 3.5% and 0.4% for Low Kolla, Kolla, Woyna Dega, Dega, Wurch and high Wurch respectively (ibid).

The climatic condition in the region is a direct reflection of its altitude. The recorded annual mean temperature of the region ranges from 12.4˚c in some highland areas to 27.8˚c in Metema which is Arid Kolla. The annual mean temperature for most part of the region is between 15˚c - 21˚c. Relatively high temperatures are observed at some lowland and valley areas which are Low Kolla or arid climates while low temperature is observed in high mountainous areas (ANRS 1998).

The highest rainfall in the region occurs during summer season which starts in mid June and ends up in early September. The mean annual rainfall in the region ranges between 598.3 mm and 1692 mm at Lalibela and Chagni respectively. The southern plateau and central parts of the region receive on average about 1000 mm of annual rainfall while the

north eastern and north western parts of the region adjacent to the Sudan, Tigray and Afar regions receive the lowest amount of rain fall, less than 700mm (ibid).

4.3 Demography and Socio-economic Settings of the Region

The total population size of Amhara National Regional State in 2004 was projected to be 18.15 million with a growth rate of 2.9% per annum. 89% of the total population is living in rural areas and is mainly engaged in agriculture. The average population density of the region is 106 persons per sq. km. West Gojjam and East Gojjam Zones are relatively densely populated while North Gonder is a sparsely populated zone (BoFED, 2004).

The proportion of population under the age of 15 years is 43.1 percent of the total population in the region. On the other hand the proportion of population aged 65 and above is only 3.9 percent while the proportion of active labor force (16 – 64 years) is 53 percent. Both fertility and mortality in the region are very high. On average a woman bears 6 children in her productive lifetime. The average life expectancy at birth is below 50 years (ibid).

The dominant ethnic groups in the region in terms of population size are Amhara, Oromo, Agew and Tigre. Orthodox Christianity and Islam are the dominant religions. The region is endowed with both cultural heritages and natural features attractive for tourism. In terms of economic activity, agriculture is the dominant economic sector in the region on which nearly 90 percent of the population derives its livelihood. It is the major source of food, raw materials for local industries and export earnings. Agriculture in the region is characterized by subsistence–mixed farming with crop cultivation and animal husbandry. Farming in the region is based on traditional means of production and dependent on rain-fed crops. The amount and reliability of rainfall determines the volume of production.

The Amhara region is endowed with ample water resources. It has three main river basins, Blue Nile, Awash, and Tekeze. The Blue Nile and Tekeze river basins cover approximately about 199,812 and 88,800sq.kms respectively. Moreover, there are many lakes found in the

region, including Lake Tana which is the largest body of inland water (3,620sq.km) in the country (BoFED 2004). These huge water resources are a major potential for fishery and irrigation development.

Picture 4.1: Photos Showing Blue Nile River Viewed at Bahir Dar and East Gojjam Zone

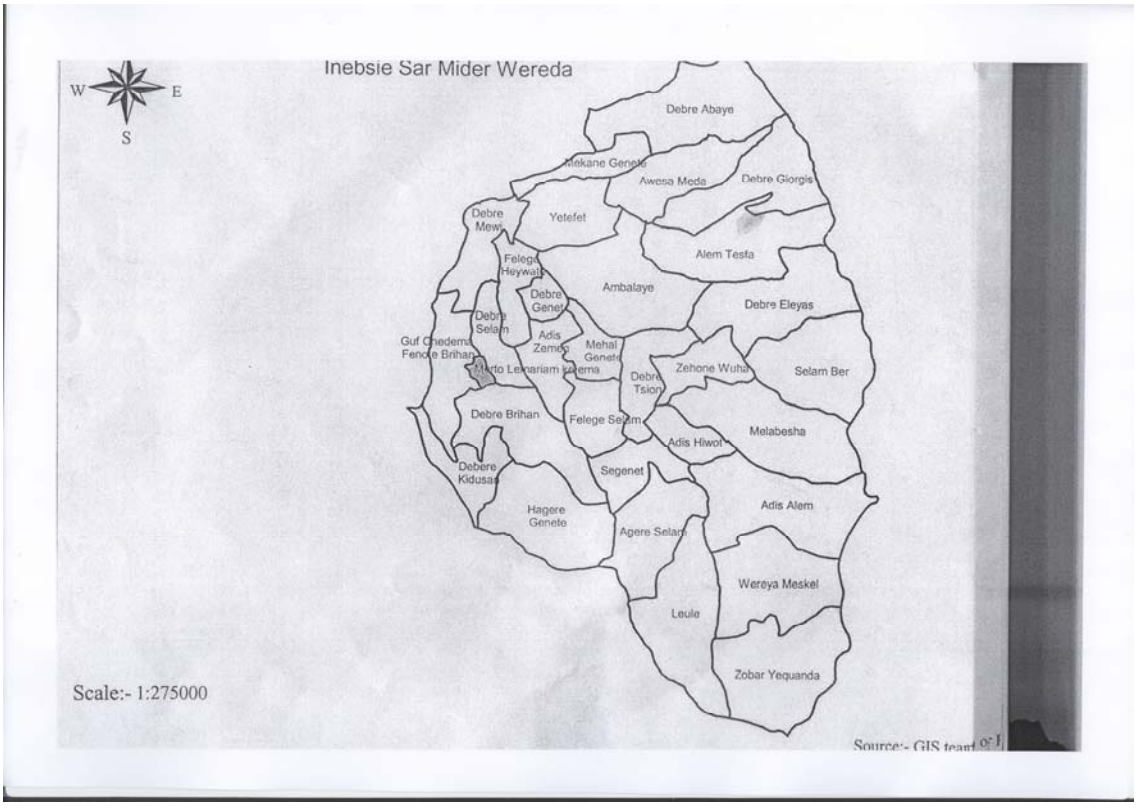
According to BoFED report, the region has poor and insufficient health services. The health service to population ratio in the region is one hospital for 1.3 million people, one health station for 337,400 people and one clinic for 28,500 people. In terms of education, the Amhara region has a low level of enrollment ratio even as compared to national level. Primary schools gross enrollment ratio in the region is 64.2 percent. Enrollment in the first

cycle secondary is only 13.4 percent and secondary education mere 6.3 percent. In the region infrastructural services like telecommunications, road network and transport services are very much limited. For instance, according to BoFED (2004) telephone coverage is about 305 per 100,000 populations and the regional road density is 35.4 km per 1,000skm (BoFED 2004, Bureau of Rural Development 2003).

4.4 District Profile

4.4.1 Relief and Climate

Enebse Sar Midir district is one of the 13 districts of the East Gojjam Zone of the Amhara Region. The capital of the district, Mertule Mariam is found 195km from Debre Markos, the capital of East Gojjam Zone to the north, 180km from Bahirdar (the regional capital) and 365 km from Addis Ababa to the north.



Map 4.2: Map of Enebse Sar Midir District

Sources: BoFED

The district has a very diverse topography constituted of mountains, river valleys and scattered plains separated by deep cut gorges and steep slopes. It has a very rugged and undulated terrain on about 45% of the total area. Plains, mountains and valley relief features constitute the remaining 20%, 30% and 5% respectively. The altitude of the district ranges from below 1000m.a.s.l. at the bottom of the Blue Nile River Valley to 3660m.a.s.l. at the top of the Aba Miniyos Mountain. In the lowest parts of the area the climate is tropical (Kolla) while in the higher the temperate (Dega) climate prevails and at the intermediate altitude the climate is subtropical (Woyna Dega). Thus, the climatic zones of the district are classified into Dega (above 2500m.a.s.sl) refers to highlands, Woyna Dega (1500-2500m.a.s.l.) refers to the intermediate and Kolla (below 1500m.a.s.l.) refers to that of the lowlands. The Kolla agro-climatic zone constitutes 53% of the total area of the district while Woyna Dega and Dega agro-climatic zones constitute 33% and 14% respectively (Rural Development and Agriculture Office report).

Table 4.1 Agro- climatic zones of the Enebse Sar Midir District

Climatic Zone	Altitude	Total Area	%of the total area
Dega (temperate)	2500 – 3660m.a.s.l.	11, 863.46 hectare	14
Sub-tropical	1500 – 2500m.a.s.l.	27,963.87 hectare	33
Tropical	950 – 1500m.a.s.l.	44,911.67 hectare	53

Source: District Rural Development and Agriculture Office.

Enebse Sar Midir distict has mean annual temperature of 15 – 20 ˚c. Areas in the middle altitude range have favorable weather while the high and lowland climates are characterized by cold and hot weather respectively. Such big variation in climate between the lowland and highland areas is observed within 20kms distance only.

Rainfall in the district is characterized by one rainy season. The area is known by having unimodal rain pattern that covers June to September. Small rains occur in May and October

at the beginning and end of rainy season. There is a high concentration of rainfall in July and August. The amount of rainfall generally varies with altitude. The highland portion of the area in general receives rainfall as high as 1200 to 1400 mm while the lowland areas receive annual rainfall between 900 – 1000 mm (ibid).

4.4.2 Administration, Population and Socio-economic Activities

Enebse Sar Midir district is sub-divided into 32 administrative kebeles. Two of the kebeles are found in the district capital while the rest are PAs or rural kebeles. Kebeles are the lower strata of the government administration organ which are responsible for all political, social and economic matters in its span of control. Each Kebele is expected to have on average about 1,000 households or 5,000 people. Kebeles are responsible to the district council. Each kebele in turn consists of smaller villages called Gots. These Gots are not formal institutions, however, the people in a Got belongs to the same church congregation and the same catchments area. In a kebele there are many groups of people called "Mengistawi Budins". These "Mengistawi Budins" belong to the same Got and have about a group of ten people.

Population

The total population of the district was estimated at 152,579 (76,770 female, 75,809 male) in the year 2005. Of the 152,579 total populations, only 8.2% or 12,523 populations (5,658 male and 6,865 female) were urban dwellers. The average household size of the district was five persons and most households have more than four persons. Households who had less than four people constitute only 20% of the total population, most of them are widows. In general there is a high number of female population than male in the district because of higher number of male out migration.

Table 4.2 Total Population of the Enebse Sar Midir District by Area of Residence, 2005

Urban + Rural			Urban			Rural		
Male+Female	Male	Female	Male+Female	Male	Female	Male+Female	Male	Female
152,579	75,809	76,770	12, 523	5,658	6,865	140,056	70,151	69,905

Source: Population Unit, BoFED

Table 4.3 Household sizes of the Ebebse Sar Midir district

Small household size	1- 3 persons	Constitutes 20%
Medium household size	4- 5 persons	Constitutes 60%
Large household size	More than 5 persons	Constitutes 20%

Source: District Administrative Council

More than half of the population of the district (55.84%) is settled in the lowland or kolla which constitutes the largest area of the district while 16.64% and 27.52% of the total population are settled in the Dega and Woyna Dega parts of the district respectively (Rural development and Agriculture Office). Reports indicate that both fertility and mortality rates are very high in the district. Marriage at early age is common and widely practiced. The mean age at first marriage for female is 13 years and for male 18 year. 96% of the residents in the district belong to the Amhara ethnic group and 98% of the populations follow the Orthodox religion. There are a few Muslims in the lowland Kebeles. There are 120 Churches and two Mosques in the district. The Muslim communities are mainly engaged in off-farm activities such as weaving. Amharic is the only language for communication (Agri Service Ethiopia Enebse Sar Midir Program Office Base Line Survey 2004).

Economic Activities

People living in the area practice farming in combination with some livestock raising. Agriculture is the single most dominant means of livelihoods of the population in the district. There are some people engaged in business activities and in handcraft. However, these constitute only a very small proportion, agriculture both crop cultivation and livestock raising remain to be the overall dominant economic activity.

According to the District Rural Development and Agriculture Office, the main crops grown in the study area are teff, wheat, beans, barley, maize, chick peas, sorghum, lentil and beans. The type and pattern of crop cultivation is affected by altitude. Barley, wheat, beans and peas are the major crops in the highlands while sorghum, maize and haricot bean are widely cultivated in the lowland Kebeles. Below 1900m.a.s.l. maize is the dominant crop. Teff and check pea are common in the altitude between 1900-2300m.a.s.l. Where as above 2600m.a.s.l, there is a dominance of bean and barley.

At every altitude households try to plant all those crops considered suitable for the area. All farming activities except plowing and sowing are carried out by both men and women. Plowing and sowing are exclusively male works. All activities pertaining to produce crop into food is performed by women. Livestock raising is the other important economic activity performed in combination with crop production. According to District Rural development and Agriculture office, the district had 60,520 cattle, 46,530 sheep and goats, 38,510 poultry, and 4,504 traditional beehives in 2004. When this is compared to the total population of the district in the same year i.e.148 199, and given the fact that at normal circumstance a household needs at least two oxen, a cow, a donkey, and sheep or goat; the livestock resource is not sufficient to meet the minimum requirement of households.

Social Services

There is no safe and adequate water supply to most rural communities in the study area. In the highland PAs, springs serve as a source of drinking water while the lowland kebeles are

using the seasonal streams and rivers as the source of water. According to Agri-service Ethiopia information, there are 35 hand-dung wells and 22 on the spot developed springs in the district. Most have been developed by NGOs like FINNIDA. Gravitational spring water is available for the district capital, Mertule Mariam. However, this gravitational spring water which had been developed many years ago is no more sufficient for the increasing population of the town.

The District Education Office report indicates that there are 30 poorly furnished primary schools, one high school, and one vocational and Agriculture College in the district. Primary education coverage is only 51%. About 50,000 adults (24,000 male and 26,000 female) are illiterate and have no access for education. This is mainly because parents need children's labor for their farm activities and they also lack the resources to send their children to school. The number of registered students for the 2005 academic year was 27,728. However, there is a high dropout rate. Primary school drop out was 70% in 2002, i.e. of those attending formal schools 70% were unable to continue their secondary education. In addition to the parents economic problem there is also a problem of school inaccessibility particularly at high school level. There is only one high school in Mertule Mariam town which is too far for most of the population.

The district has one health centre located at the capital, Mertule Mariam and there are nine health posts in the entire district. There is also one private clinic in the town. The health service coverage in the district is estimated at 45%. Both health service institutions and health professionals are very much limited in number. In general, the health service in the district is of low quality and inadequate. The major diseases in the area are: tuberculosis, hemorrhoid, malaria, pneumonia, intestinal parasites and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS (BoFED 2004).

The district has no banking service. It gets the service at Motta town which is 67 km away in the North West. The district capital Mertule Mariam is connected by all weather road to the main road of Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar that passes through Motta. There are rural

postal and telephone services in Mertule Mariam, however both services are in a very poor status from a technological and efficiency point of view.

4.4.3 Soil, Vegetation and Water Resources

Soils

Most of the soils in the area seem to have been weathered from basaltic bedrock formed during the tertiary era. The soils of the area are classified into five main groups. These are: the shallow red to light red brown soils on mountains and hill sides; the red- brown soil on medium slopes; the brown to dark soil in the rolling plains; the black soil in the lower parts of the plateaus; and the grey alluvial soils of the lowland. The red-brown to dark brown soils are excellent for agriculture particularly for grain crops (Mertule Mariam Community Forestry and Soil Conservation Training Centre).

According to Agri Service Ethiopia Enebse Sar Midir program Office Baseline Survey (2004), the most common soil type in the district is red soil which accounts for about 65%. The second important soil type is grey soil (25%) also locally known as Nechate and the third one is Black soil which accounts for 10% of the total mass. The textural classes of the soils within the area are directly related to slope. Steep slopes are dominated by sandy soils while flat areas by clay soils. This is because small particles are easily removed by the action of running water and deposited at the lower level with flat topography.

Natural Vegetation

The natural vegetation that can be expressed in an area depends upon the physical conditions. The natural equilibrium of plant associations can only exist in the absence of human interference. When people remove trees and use the land for cultivation, cultural vegetation dominates over natural vegetation. As a result, both the physical conditions and the type of species that might have existed change and the question of land use comes in.

In Enebses Sar Midir district the highland and middle altitude parts of the district have lost their vegetation covers. There are only small patches of woody vegetation which is characterized by homestead and scattered field plantations of Eucalyptus trees and small bushes. Relatively, the lowland part of the area has better vegetation coverage. However, only the bushy type of vegetation is dominant. Eucalyptus and other tall tree species are almost non-existent in the lowland.

In general the district has lost its natural vegetation cover. It has only 1.68% of its area covered with some protected bush land (0.38%) and eucalyptus plantation (1.3%). Eucalyptus tree is dominantly planted and used for construction purpose and fuel wood (District Rural Development and Agricultural Office).

Water resources

The district is endowed with many perennial springs, rivers and seasonal streams. There are five main rivers called Cheye, Guansa, Waten, Feresmada, and Minda. According to the District Rural Development and Agricultural Office, the district is also rich in underground water resource. Two crater lakes called Lie Bahir and Tach Bahir are also available for water supply in the district. All rivers and streams in the highland and lowland catchments drain into the Blue Nile River. The Blue Nile River is a natural border separating this district from South Wollo Administrative Zone. Most lowland PAs are found within the Blue Nile River Valley.

4.5 Conclusion

The above short description gives an overview of the physical, demographic, and socio-economic situation of the Amhara region in general and the study district in particular. The region is rich in natural resources and it is a high potential for agricultural growth if the resources are properly utilized. Among others, the region has different agro-ecological zones, and abundant water resources which are important resource bases for increasing agricultural production. The different agro-ecological zones have potentials for growing a

variety of crops. The abundant water resource together with the fertile plain land in the lowland areas is a huge potential for irrigation development.

Although the region seems to have high potential for agricultural growth, its infrastructural and socio-economic development is very low. The low level of socio-economic development and limited infrastructure is far worse in some remote areas like Enebse Sar Midir district. The Enebse Sar Midir district lacks important infrastructures like roads, electricity, and other communication infrastructures. Social services like health, education, and water, etc are also far below average. In the absence of these facilities and infrastructures, it is difficult to achieve food security or bring any development in general.

Therefore, the Amhara region, particularly the most inaccessible districts like Enebse Sar Midir are fully in need of infrastructures and social services such as roads, schools, health centers, water services. It is important to develop these facilities in addressing any development program including food security. The proper management and utilization of the available natural resources potential is also indispensable to enhance agricultural productivity and achieve food security.

CHAPTER FIVE

UNDERLYING CAUSES FOR HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY IN ENEBSE SAR MIDIR RURAL Communities

5.1 Introduction

Ethiopia is the world's largest food aid recipient country and relief food aid has become an institutionalized and accepted public policy. It appears that the government including international communities has focused on emergency aid programs than addressing the root causes of the problem. The country has the potential to overcome the problem but the underlying problems should be clearly understood and efforts should be directed towards curbing these underlying causes than futile attempts of treating the symptoms.

Therefore, it is essential that the root causes that made households vulnerable in a given particular area should be clearly identified and understood. Once the underlying problems are clearly understood, intervention mechanisms to the cause should target to these problems and could be successful. This chapter does it for in Enebse Sar Midir rural communities. First, the food security situation of the country at different levels is discussed based on the available data. Then, the underlying causes which include natural factors, socio-economic limitations, institutional weakness and inappropriate policies are assessed.

5.2 Food Security Situation in Ethiopia

Food availability in Ethiopia is mainly determined by the country's domestic production. However, domestic production has failed to meet the food requirement of the people. Different surveys and reports in the country show that a large proportion of Ethiopian population has been food insecure. The country has been food deficient since the 1960s. Different sources show that the number of people affected by famine had tripled between 1973/74 and 1984/85, rising from three millions to more than eight millions. Different

statistics in Ethiopia showed that a large segment of the population in the country is either seasonally or chronically food insecure. In 2000, Ethiopia had 30 millions people who lacked adequate food with rising number falling into permanently insecure and the country has become the world's largest food aid recipient (Yohannis 2002:P.350).

It was reported that agricultural performance in some years such as 1975, 1979 and 1996 was good; especially 1996 was a good cereal production year capable of fulfilling the existing food requirements. This indicates that although the existing situation is very grim, the country has still a potential to boast its agricultural production. In 2001 there had been reasonable good production for the next year supply. Nevertheless, according to DPPC crop and food supply assessment of 2002- 2003, the number of chronically food insecure people who require food assistance in 2002 was estimated at 5.2 million. The assessment report further indicated that in 2003 the total number of people affected had increased to 13.2 million requiring food aid than originally estimated at 11.3 million. There had been many new incidents in hitherto food secure areas which clearly show the widespread nature of the crisis. According to Fassil (2005), the famine affected population of the country in 2003 was more than 14 millions which is equal to the total population reported as being affected by famine in seven countries of southern Africa (namely Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe) during the same year. The rain has returned in relative abundance after 2003, giving a better prospect for good harvest. However, 7.2 million people still require food assistance. Even under normal production years the country experiences a shortfall in food production to about 25 percent of what the country's people actually need (Fasil 2005:P.1-10).

In general, although there is a variation within the country across the regions, the overall production trend in the country has been markedly negative. Millions of Ethiopians in each year lack adequate food supplies and are dependant on food aid. Data from different sources show that the per capita food availability shows a declining trend. This is because food production and productivity has declined and fluctuates overtime while the population of the country is growing very fast.

5.2.1 Regional Situation

The Amhara region is one of the most food insecure regions in the country. The region has the largest number of food insecure population in the country (see appendix 2).The region has suffered from both transitory and chronic food insecurity problems. Data from the region's food security program document (1998) shows that the total supply of food from local production, food aid and other food sources for the five years of 1992/93-1996/97 on averages was 27,720,565 quintals. The demand during the same period at 2.25 quintals per capita was 31, 688,107 quintals. Thus there was a net deficit of 3,967,542 quintals on average during the same period. On the other hand, according to the BoFED (2004), the four years (2000- 2003) average per capita food availability of the region was only 1.7 quintals. Although this food balance approach disguises the food situation at household level, it shows food availability and the regional situations in general.

Assuming 2100 kilo calorie or 225 kg of cereals per persons per annum, domestic production on average met only 62 percent of the demand while food aid channeled through DPPC or NGOs accounted 4.3 percent. Therefore, the food availability ratio was 66.3 percent (Bureau of Rural Development Survey 2003). The other basic indicator of the prevalence of food security problem in rural areas is the capacity of a household to cover the annual food requirement from own production. Based on analysis made in this regard by The Bureau of Rural Development, only 4.1 percent of households in moisture deficient and 28.2 percent in sufficient rainfall areas cover their food requirements. On the other hand, 24.6 percent, 44.0 percent and 31.4 percent could cover their annual household food requirements from own production for about 3, 6, and 9 months respectively. It should be also noted that this is the general picture and the situation is worst in moisture deficient areas.

It was indicated that 2,455,242 inhabitants who accounts for 17 percent of the total population of the region (in 2002) has been chronically food insecure. According to Bureau of Rural Development survey made in food insecure districts (2003), 76 percent of the

households indicated that they faced food shortage within the last five years time period. Available literature about the food security situation of the region in general indicates that quite a large proportion of the region's population is unable to produce adequate food for the whole year.

5.2.2 District Food Security Situation

Enebse Sar Midir district is one of the districts of Amhara Region that have been affected by famines and food shortages repeatedly. Different reports indicate that the problem of food shortage in this district has been increasing over time. According to the District Rural Development and Agriculture Office, the number of affected people who depend on relief assistance increased from 22,959 in 1997 to 92,600 in 2003. The district had been severely affected by the famine of 2003. The BoFED baseline survey in 1996 indicated that 31 percent of the population in the district was not able to produce sufficient food for the whole year and those who earn income from non agricultural sources in the urban area only 75 percent have a monthly income which lasts throughout the year. Reports also show that the food shortage problem of the district increased very fast during the past ten years.

People in the area practice the traditional farming system. They use drought animals to till their land. Thus, land and oxen ownership are important criteria for wealth ranking in the community. Accordingly, rich people in the area are those who have 1.0 - 1.5 ha of farm land, two oxen, one cow, one donkey, four sheep or goats, and enough food for the whole year and enough seed for the coming planting season. Those who have 0.75-1.0ha of farm land, one ox, one cow, one donkey, have not enough food for the whole year, have not enough seed for the coming planting season and can be forced to sell their ox or cow are medium level households. On the other hand households in the poor category are characterized by having 0.5 – 0.75ha of farmland, having no livestock in most cases, having not enough seed for planting and often exposed to hunger between March and the next harvest (November /December). Those who have only a small house to live in and no any reliable sources of income are considered the poorest of the poor or destitute. Such

people are making their livelihoods by selling their labor or begging (District Rural Development and agriculture office).

Based on the above wealth or poverty groups, the general picture in the area shows that 29% of the community belongs to the destitute category, 32% to the poor category, 29% belong to the medium and 10 % rich (District Rural Development and Agriculture Office Report 2004). If people just have some livestock without having sufficient food for the whole year, they are regarded as medium level in their wealth status. This clearly shows as to how poverty and food shortage in particular are deep-rooted in the community.

According to Agri Service Ethiopia Enebse Sar Midir district program office survey in 2004, the annual average quantity of food available for an individual family member is 1.3 quintal. In other words the value of the quantity of food available for an individual which is computed by considering all possible costs and income from crop yield, value of livestock products and sale of live animals is equivalent to 25 USD. When this is compared to the DPPC standards on food requirement of an individual for a year, there has been a food gap of 0.5 quintal for an individual or 2.5 quintals for the household in the area. However, the level of food gap can rises as high as one quintal for an individual or 5 quintals for the household when it is compared with the standards of the World Food Program.

5.3 The Underlying Causes for Households Food Insecurity

The root causes for food insecurity in Ethiopia at national or regional and household level is quite complex. It is a combination of both natural factors and man made processes. The underlying factors in general can be grouped under three main types as natural causes, socio-economic factors, and policy failures.

5.3.1 Natural Causes

Among others, drought and environmental degradation are important natural factors that make households vulnerable to food shortage in the studied communities. The pattern of

rainfall in Enebse Sar Midir district is inadequate for rain fed agriculture. Rain starts late after the normal planting season has already gone and stops early when the cultivated crops are at their vegetative stages of growth. Sometimes there is a total absence of the short rain, only little showers in the whole rainy season. The community recognizes such extreme situation as seasons of drought.

Therefore, there is a clear moisture stress in the area with its adverse impact on farming practice. All respondents in Debre Kidusan PA and some respondents in Debre Birhan PA explained that inadequate rainfall or drought is the most prominent problem which causes failure to their agricultural products and livestock. Shortage of rainfall or drought has occurred repeatedly and hindered their agricultural practices particularly in the lowland PAs. In the lowland parts of the district along the Blue Nile River Valley drought is more severe and frequent. One of the focus group participants in Debre Kidusan PA explained this situation as follows:

> *Drought following the shortage of rainfall is our main problem that exposes us to food shortage. The distribution of rainfall has become abnormal. It starts very late in June and ends up too early in August. This late onset and early stopping makes its duration very short. Sometimes there may be also a total absence of rainfall. In general, its duration has become shorter and shorter year after year. This insufficient rainfall or abnormal distribution results in a crisis in our farming practice.*

All the group participants supported this view. They also said a slight change in rainfall would result in great loss of productivity in agriculture. One of them said: *"Little changes in the amount of rainfall or in its seasonal occurrence results in high production loss"*. However, the experience in the community is not only a slight change but a total absence of rainfall, especially in the lowland PAs of the district. In the lowland PAs where the climate is *Kola* farmers' main crops are maize, millet, and sorghum. They normally start to grow these crops during the *belg*[4] rains in March and April. However, some respondents said that nowadays *belg* rains fell only once in four years. If there is no *belg* rains farmers used to

[4] an expression for the short rainy agricultural season from March to June

grow crops like chickpea, lentils, haricot bean that are planted at the end of the rainy season. Nevertheless, the rain is not only becoming late in its onset but it also ends up early and affects their farming practice.

The other serious problem in the area as well as in the country in general is natural resource degradation. Natural resources like soil and forests are vital resource bases upon which rural farmers depends for their survival. However, these resources are getting depleted over time at an alarming rate and affects farmers' agricultural production and productivity.

In many developing countries like Ethiopia environmental degradation is very severe and agricultural growth is constrained by deteriorating natural resource base. Data from different sources show that deforestation and soil erosion are very high in Ethiopia. Ethiopia provides a well known example of a severely degraded environment together with a decreasing agricultural productivity. Ethiopia's economy is solely depends on agricultural activities. Land degradation is highly affecting the production and productivity of the sector (Mesfin 2004).

Agriculture is the sole source of livelihood for more than 90 percent of the population and accounts for about 70 percent the GDP in Amhara Region. Agricultural production and productivity are constrained by land degradation. As a result, the region becomes one of the areas where critical food shortages and recurrent drought are severe (ibid). Soil erosion is one of the most prominent problems in Enebse Sar Midir district, especially in the highlands and in middle altitude PAs. The topography of the district is very rugged, dissected and mountainous which aggravates the problem of soil erosion. As the following pictures show in the highland PAs the sides of very steep mountains are farm plots. This in turn is a responsible factor for the occurrence of severe erosion.

Picture 5.1 Photos showing degraded farm plots on mountain sides and gully erosion.

Deforestation, erratic rainfall and frequent cultivation are also responsible factors for the crisis. Information obtained from the Agri-service Ethiopia Program office in the area also shows the critical nature of the problem. According to the office, in some highland PAs, up to 70 percent of the land mass is exposed to severe erosion. Soil degradation appears to be one of the core problems of the district. According to my observations, gully erosion is dominant and gullies are still being formed in large parts of the highland PAs. (See the above picture how gullies are being formed).

The prevailing high level soil erosion is seriously affecting crop and livestock production. Quite much agricultural land is getting out of production as a result of severe soil

degradation. One of the key informants explained his desperation by showing his severely degraded farm plot as:

> *Here in this kebele our main problem is land degradation. The soil has been eroded continuously. As a result, it has lost its fertility and become unproductive. This is my farm land but as you see it is highly degraded. Being on the steep slope of the mountain when heavy rain comes, it will flood and wash away the soil. The soil has lost its nutrients. In the past years I had sufficient production but now I can't harvest sufficient product that can feed the family for the whole year. No more sufficient harvest. No more.*

In general, the ecology in the area has become more fragile than ever resulting in a decline in agricultural production and productivity, frequent food shortage, drought and famines. In the highland PAs there is a serious impact of land degradation on farmers' agricultural production and productivity. The area is devoid of natural vegetation. Farmers cultivate areas with steep slopes continuously. This, together with the torrential nature of the rainfall degraded the soil and affect farmers' production. Consequently, they are exposed to food shortage.

Natural causes such as hail storms, landslides, animal diseases, crop pests and weeds are also other natural constraints which affects agricultural production and productivity in the district. The majority of respondents in the highland PA explained that hail storms are one of their main problems. My observation of different pictures and video recordings of the damaged cultivated crops in the past years from the District Information Office also confirmed the situation. In some years the damage was so heavy that people had been depending on relief aid. People attempt to prevent it with some traditional ways such as by abstaining from work for some days and by having a traditional prayer who would pray to prevent hail storm from coming.

Crop pests and animal diseases are also other limiting factors of households' agricultural production in the area. These problems are prominent particularly in the lowland PAs. All respondents in Debre Kidusan PA indicated that crop and animal diseases had occurred as

an epidemic in many years and affected their food or their livelihood in general. Most respondents also indicate that government's efforts to prevent pests and disease has been very limited. Lowland PAs are found far from the district capital where there is no transport facility. This has limited these remote PAs to access the available services at Mertule Mariam town. The PAs do not have any veterinary facility. They do not also get chemical sprayings when their crops are attacked by pests.

Available information in the Region's Food Security Coordination and Disaster Prevention Office also indicate that crop damage by pests and disease is widespread and occurs every year in the region. According to the office, some 475 thousand hectares of cultivated land is annually devastated by pest and about 665,000 quintals of cereals production is lost in the region.

5.3.2 Socio-economic Factors

Social factors such as population pressure, traditional farming system and practices, and economic limitations like poor infrastructural services, shortage of farm land and other productive assets are also factors responsible for the households' food insecurity in Enebse Sar Midir district.

One of the main socio-economic problems in the area is population pressure. Many scholars attributed the cause for the under development of the country in general or food self insufficiency in particular to the high rate of population growth. The main idea is that the country is overpopulated given to the traditional and subsistence way of farming system. The high population growth contributed to the prevailing food insecurity and poverty in the country. In Ethiopia the rapid population growth coupled with a stagnation of agricultural technology makes it difficult for agricultural production to keep pace with the rising demand for food.

Next to Nigeria, Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa with an annual population growth rate of 2.9 percent. In 2004 the population of the country was estimated

to be 71.066 millions. The size of the population is growing by around two million people every year (EEA 2003/4:P.130). The demographic situation in the Amhara region shows that the total population has reached 18.15 million which accounts for 25.5 percent of the total population of the country while in terms of area the region contributes only 15.4 percent. In terms of population density, West Gojjam and East Gojjam Zones are densely populated having 179 and 153 persons per square kilometer respectively.

In a situation where there is advancement in technologies and efficient utilization of resources population growth can further stimulate the whole development process. However, if the level of technological development is low with inefficient utilization of resources population growth could be a deterring factor to development in general. It can reduce household savings and per capita income. It also absorbs limited resources and puts pressure on existing amenities.

An interview with the district council chairman showed that the district is overpopulated as compared to its area size, especially when population is compared to the cultivable land or to the existing traditional means of farming practice in general. DAs and experts in the District Rural Development and Agriculture office also support this view. They all agree that there is serious population pressure in the district. According to my observations, the relief feature of the district is so rugged and mountainous that a large proportion of it is not suitable for farming. However, due to the existing population pressure people are cultivating marginal areas like very steep slopes. Most respondents have large family size. There are many households having family size above ten. There are many young farmers who have their own families and children but who are landless. Most respondents are now well aware of how increasing family size with little available productive resource leads the household to food shortage and want to control their family size. However, most of them lack the knowledge or access to services.

The other main food security constraint is poor infrastructural services. Infrastructural services such as micro-finance, marketing, transport communications are essential to achieve household food security in particular or for poverty alleviation in general.

However, there are marketing problems, weak micro-finance services, and lack of transport communication in the study area. As Sen argues once command to food is determined not only by what he/she owned (endowment) but also by a bundle of alternatives that can be obtained through exchange entitlement.

Services like micro-finance would help the resource poor to generate income and create assets. According to AEMFI (2003), micro-finance is a small scale financial service rendered to the rural and urban poor. It provides credit for self employment and small business, and includes savings and technical assistance. Access to credit can help the economically active poor to gain business enterprise or expand and diversify their enterprises, build up their income opportunities and increase their incomes. Credit is one of the accelerators in the process of agricultural transformation. Availability of sufficient credit play important role for rural agricultural development activities (AEMFI 2003:P.1-14)

Most respondents in the studied PAs indicated that credit could help them to improve their food security status or to improve their agricultural production and productivity. For instance, one of the key respondents said: *"I use credit for buying and fattening cattle for sale, for petty trading, buying seeds, fertilizers and other agricultural inputs. However, credit services are limited in the area"*. On the other hand, some other respondents said that they can get credit if they need. For them the main problem is the high interest rate they are asked for with the credit.

There are some credit services provided by the government. The Amhara Credit and Saving Institution and farmers cooperatives deliver the service. Nevertheless, most respondents agreed that, although credit services are indispensable to improve their food security situation, the available services are limited compared to demand. Furthermore, the existing credit services have also high interest rates. Respondents in Debre Mewi and Debre Birhan PAs also indicated that they could get credit only if they were members of farmers' cooperatives. However, they have had bad experiences when being members of farmers' cooperatives in the past regime. Thus, they prefer not to get the credit than being a member

of cooperatives. On the other hand officials explained that credit services are available for users and many people including farmers are using the service. They said many people have improved their lives using the available credit services. However, what the officials are referring to very few concerned beneficiaries. They didn't consider the population at large.

The absence of marketing facilities, the lack of transport communications and inadequacies of water supply, health and education services are also other impediments to achieve food security. The market places in the district are only Mertule Mariam (the district's capital) and there is a little market at a small village called Dibo. Thus, a large proportion of the population in the district has limited access to market.

The price of food crops falls sharply in the years of good harvest. On the other hand, price rises sharply in the years of poor harvest and food become inaccessible to most small producers who need to buy additional food. Prices also vary considerably even within a year just before and after harvest. Farmers have different social, economic and cultural obligations to fulfill soon after the harvest and the bulk of product is sold immediately. Therefore, price falls considerably just after harvest and price raises high just before the next harvest. All respondents in the visited PAs stated about the market problem. They said the market is very volatile to slight changes of production in the area. Some of them also told about how it affects them when they have good production. One respondent explained the situation as follows:

> *If the weather is favorable and we got good harvest, the price falls very much in the market. We don't have good storage facilities and the product may be spoiled in this warm lowland. Therefore, we are forced to sell our product in a very cheap price. Thus, the price in the market is not rewarding when we have good production. Now we used to cultivate vegetables and fruits for the market using our irrigation schemes. However, the prices always worry us.*

All respondents agreed about the market problems. The majority of participants who are food insecure emphasized on the increasing prices of food. They said food items become inaccessible as the price rises sharply with in a slight change in availability. They indicated that the prices fluctuation have great impact on their food security situation. The poor farmers are barely self-sufficient for their food. They will be affected by slight changes of availability and rising prices in the market.

EEA (2003/04) also indicated that there is a weak market integration between regions in the country which is affecting both surplus and deficit area. Some parts of the country suffer from food shortage while ample food is produced in the other parts of the county to the extent that surplus led to low prices. This is due to weak market linkages (poor communication) and underdeveloped storage facilities. It is a paradox in the country, according to EEA, that years of good harvest are followed by food shortage crises.

In addition, farmers do not have access to other consumable agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides and improved seeds which are essential to increase agricultural productivity. In the studied PAs farmers have a keen interest to use fertilizers and improved seeds. Their access is, however, constrained by high prices and unreliable supply. All respondents complain about the increasing price of fertilizers. They said it is beyond their capacity to buy 100kg of fertilizer at about 400 birr. The price has increased over time. One of the respondents said:

> *I used fertilizer in the past years and I got good harvest. But now the price of fertilizer is too high for me to buy. Thus, I didn't use it for the last two years. The problem is that once we started to apply fertilizer on our farm plot, it becomes unproductive without it.*

It is not only fertilizer but also all other agricultural inputs are unaffordable for poor farmers. For instance, one of the focus group participants in Debre Birhan PA said: *We found out that pedal pump is important to pump water from ponds and cultivate fruits and vegetables as we have shortage of irrigable water. However, for us poor farmer it is unaffordable to buy a pedal pump with a cost of 900 birr.*

All the other participants supported and strengthen this view. Although agricultural inputs are indispensable to increase farmers' production and productivity, farmers are too poor to buy and use such agricultural inputs. To make the situation worse the prices of agricultural inputs are increasing.

The other contributing factor to food insecurity is lack of transport services. This also leads to an insufficient integration of food markets. Enabse Sar Midir district lacks the required road network and transport services. Almost all PAs in the district have no access to road network. The district capital Mertule Mariam is connected by an all-weather road (which passes only through one PA) to the main road of Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar. Only a few PAs are reachable even in dry season. The lack of a proper road network is the most important development constraint that has a pronounced impact in the overall development endeavor of the district in general. For instance, the delivery of agricultural extension services to the rural communities is difficult due to the lack of transport communication and the remote rural communities do not have easy access to the market.

The rural population depends on crop cultivation and animal husbandry for their living. However, productivity in these sectors has been low and unable to fulfill the requirements. One of the reasons for the low agricultural productivity is the fact that the means of production used are very traditional. The traditional farming system is inefficient. In the traditional farming system there is a lot of pre and post harvest food losses. In the absence of agricultural technology improvement and modern farming techniques, people continue to practice predominantly rain fed, traditional and inefficient methods of farming used for centuries without any technological improvement.

The other factor that should be considered with regard to food security is traditional practices. There are good and beneficial traditional practices like supporting extended family, social gatherings such as *Debo*, *Ekub, Idir* etc (see section 6.3) that should be promoted and strengthened. However, there are also many harmful traditional practices that

have significant impact on households' food security as well as on the health of the family especially on children and women.

Celebrating many days of the month as "non-working days", marginalizing handicrafts, big memorial feasts, and wedding parties are among others, the prominent traditional practices in the study area. Many days of the month are celebrated as "non-working days" during critical working times like sowing and weeding seasons. If such sowing or weeding activities are not accomplished in time, it will have adverse consequences on production and productivity. There are also big memorial feasts and wedding parties. People have different social, economic and cultural obligations to fulfill soon after harvest. Social obligations such as memorial feasts for the deceased family or wedding parties should be celebrated considering the available household resources. For me these social obligations also took huge proportion of households' food resources and contribute to seasonal food shortage after five or six months of harvesting period.

Shortage of farmland and other productive assets is the most important limiting factor for farmers in Ethiopia. For rural farmers in Ethiopia food availability is highly determined by their own agricultural production and available assets mainly livestock. Therefore, land ownership and landholding size is crucial for farmers' food security situation or for their livelihood security in general. Available data show that the per capita landholding size in the country is ever diminishing mainly due to increasing population size and inability of the non-farm sector to provide employment. According to EEA (2002), though it varies from region to region based on the regularity of the rainfall and soil fertility, a rough estimate about the minimum area required to produce food for the household with the current average productivity of cereals is, one hectare per household. However, many farmers in the country do not have one hectare of farm land.

Shortage of farm land and lack of livestock have contributed significantly to households' food insecurity in Enebse Sar Midir rural communities. Both population increase and the rugged, dissected and mountainous nature of the land in the area are responsible for the severe shortage of farm land. Information obtained from Agri Service Ethiopia Enebse Sar

Midir Program Office shows that in Debre Gomt Kebele farmers who owned 0.25, 0.75 and 1.5 hectare of land constitute 25, 45 and 30 percent respectively. According to the District Rural Development and Agriculture Office, more than half of the population of the district has less than one hectare of farm land which is insufficient to feed an average family size of five.

Land redistribution in the district was conducted in 1997. However, there are still many households without any farmland. Most of them are young households who form their own families. According to Agri Service Ethiopia survey (2002), 12.5 % of households in the district have no farm land. This proportion could be higher in the highland PAs where land shortage problem is quite higher. Most landless farmers are either daily laborers or servants employed to other households on contract. Though they have the labor and capacity to work, they become destitute because of lacking the vital resource base, farm land. One respondent's view is illustrative:

> *I am 26 and I have two children but I don't have any farm land. I didn't get any during 1997 shigshig (redistribution) since I was living and working with my parents. During that shigshig I was above 18 years and had the right to get land but officials didn't give me any. On the other hand they took my father's land because he is "Burocrasi"[5]. If my father didn't lost most of his land I should have got some from him. We are farmers, our life depends on farming. We have no other main sources of income. How we can survive without land? Every time they promised us but we couldn't get and we are suffering. If I have land at least I can produce for the survival of my family.*

This clearly shows as to how people in the area depend on land for survival. The other important survival asset for rural farmers is livestock. Food insecure rural people in the area particularly those chronically insecure in most cases lack these assets or have very few of these assets. Asked about their livestock possessions most respondents said that they have only a few livestock while some even said that they don't have any livestock at all. This is because households are forced to sell their livestock each time they face food

[5] Those who served as local officials during the past regime are called in the area Burocrasi

shortage. The other contributing factor is also shortage of grazing land. Rural farmers without any livestock mean they are highly vulnerable. Land and livestock ownership are the two most important wealth status indicators. Most of the people without land and livestock in the studied rural communities are destitutes.

5.3.3 Government Policy Failures

The other responsible factors for the recurrence food shortage or poverty and underdevelopment in general are institutional weakness and inappropriate policies. When ever food shortage or famine occur in a given country, the government is responsible for either causing the crisis or failing to prevent it. According to Fasil (2005), famines in Africa are mainly the result of military conflicts and civil strife. It is certainly true that the Ethiopian history has been characterized by warfare and military strife. It is difficult to make progress in famine relief and in prevention while conflicts continue to drain both human and capital resources. It is not easy to separate the effects of wars from all other famine induced forces (ibid). Tekolla (1997) also noted that civil wars and recurrent coups have been the phenomenal features of Africa's food and agricultural crisis since the 1970s.

Natural causes like drought and hail storm may not be prevented but their impact can be prevented. There are many countries that had experienced natural causes like drought but were able to prevent it without causing hunger and famine. Natural causes could constrain economic development in a long term scenario but could not necessarily cause famine and hunger. The main problem is inability of the existing institutions to develop appropriate strategies and response mechanisms. Different reports show that drought has caused food shortages and famines in Ethiopia. However, efforts made so far to prevent the cause has been insufficient and ineffective. EEA (2003/04) stated that in Ethiopian circumstances lack of appropriate development polices and strategies is one of the main factors which results vulnerability to disaster.

Lack of participatory approaches to development programs at the grassroots level is a major limitation of programs implementation in the study area. Development programs are

most often implemented in a top-down approach with rural people. Programs are planned at the top and do not reflect the concerns at the grassroots level. Consequently, most often programs failed to bring the desired change. All interviewed household heads indicated that what the government has been done by the name of food security program is different from their need. One of the key respondents in Debre Kidusan PA said "*most often what the government is doing is quite different from what we need"* The respondent reasoned out by saying:

> *For instance, the water harvest program which the government now gives due attention and become its area of focus has been implemented in mass. However, in our area it has not been useful. Rather what we need and would be appropriate to our area is irrigation project. We need government's support in our irrigation developments*.

Some DAs and experts in the district also shared farmers' view in this regard. One expert in Rural Development and Agriculture Office said:

> *Programs and strategies are planned and designed at the center and tried to implement at different localities in campaigns without taking into consideration local differences. This is a main problem. Even programs are copied from other countries experience and tried here in mass without any pretest and modification.*

Moreover, planning and policy making are persistently politically oriented. For instance, one of the key respondents told me as what had been done by the name of land redistribution the following:

> *There is a problem of relating every development efforts to politics. In 1997, a lot of farm plots were taken from Burocrasi (those who had been served as local official in the past Derg regime) and given to the new political members and staunch supporters of the current government.*

What the majority of respondents agreed upon and has been mostly observed is that policy making and planning development programs are politically motivated with due regard to gain more political support and keep governments political promise than to bring a change

in the life of the poor. First and foremost, officials are appointed based on their political loyalty and they are evaluated accordingly. Second, those who are mandated to lobby farmers at the grassroots are most often not competent enough and are politically biased. At the lower level they are incapable and irresponsible to farmers. Thus, there is institutional weakness and lack of capability in the implementation of development programs at the lower level. As a result, program implementation often results in a failure. All the above mentioned socio-economic constraints are also related and emanate from government weakness (this is discussed more in chapter seven).

5.4 Conclusion

A large segment of population in Ethiopia is chronically or seasonally food insecure and that number is increasing over time. It is a fact that, the country's name is synonymous with poverty and food insecurity. The underlying causes for households food shortage in the country are quite complex. It is induced by natural factors and compounded by man made processes. A combination of natural factors, socio-economic limitations, and institutional weakness and inappropriate policies are altogether responsible factors. However, factors particularly natural causes vary from place to place. In the highland areas the prominent problems of farmers are environmental degradation like erosion, loss of soil fertility, and hail storm while in the lowland areas drought, animal disease and crop pests are dominant natural problems.

There are also socio-economic limitations which are prominent in both highland and lowland areas. These include population pressure, shortage of farm land and other productive assets, poor infrastructural services such as marketing, consumable agricultural inputs like fertilizer, transport and credit services, and traditional farming systems and practices. There are also clear institutional weakness and inappropriate policies which aggravate those underlying natural causes and socio-economic constraints.

CHAPTER SIX
COPING AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF FOOD INSECURE HOUSEHOLDS

6.1 Introduction

Households are not passive victims of the problem of food shortage. Based on their capacity or available capital and opportunities they try to implement different strategies to handle the stress situation. There are different classifications of these strategies that a household adopt to minimize the impact of the crisis. Blaikie (1994) divided these households' strategies as preventive, impact minimizing, and recovery strategies. For others authors the three household strategies as insurance strategies, crisis strategies, and distress strategies.

For me, these strategies are either coping or survival. Strategies used by households in response to declining availability or entitlement of food in abnormal seasons of the year are coping strategies. These households' strategies are used to minimize the impact of livelihood shocks. On the other hand when households are becoming more and more vulnerable, their strategies are limited to survival or to combat destitution and death. Those strategies that are used to combat destitution and death are survival strategies.

6.2 Coping Strategies

The main coping strategies adopted by rural communities in Enebse Sar Midir are selling of assets, petty trading, wood selling, agricultural diversification, and handicrafts.

Livestock byproducts such as meat, milk, butter, egg, honey etc. will be consumed during normal times but when there is food shortage people tend to sell these items. Moreover, animal sale is an important mechanism for coping food shortage in the area. For instance, one of the focus group participants in Debre Kidusan PA stated how they depend on their

livestock: *Our livestock is everything to us. They are our means of production. We use their by-products for food. When we face food shortage or if we have any financial constraint in general we mainly depend on our livestock.* Other participants also supported the view and they added that first small animals such as goats and sheep including poultry will be sold. If the problem is not solved by disposing of these animals, they will sale cows, oxen and even other available assets including their jewelry.

The lowland PAs have better livestock resources and livestock raising is an important occupation for many lowland farmers. However, livestock production and productivity is constrained by disease, shortage of animal feed and poor veterinary services. Although livestock sale is an important coping mechanism during food shortage, it is not only challenged by declining numbers and quality but also by declining market price during food crisis. During the times of food shortages most food insecure households tend to sell their livestock. On the other hand buyers become very few. Thus, the price of livestock decline significantly. Furthermore, the problem of market access is the other challenge for most PAs in the district. There is one main market place at the district capital, Mertule Mariam and a small market at Dibo. But, these are very remote for the lowland and highland PAs where in most case the problem is worse. Especially, a lowland PAs like Debre Kidusan is found along the deep gorge of Blue Nile River Valley making it difficult for some animals to climb the cliff and reach the remote market places.

However, selling of available assets including livestock repeatedly as a coping strategy weaken households' resource base and exposes them to permanent food insecurity. Once households faced the problem and have sold assets of what so ever, it will take some years to recover these assets. This indicates that if seasonal food insecurity occurs repeatedly, it depletes the available resource base and exposes households to permanent food insecurity.

Households in the studied communities also engage in petty trading, mainly when they face food shortage. Women and young children are the first to involve in this activity at first. However, men also involve particularly when the problem is getting worse or when food insecurity is chronic. Such petty trading is usually performed with very small capital.

Trading items for women are usually farm products such as butter, coffee, and fruits. Farm products are brought from producers and transported to the market place. It is by taking agricultural items from the source to the consumers that they increase the price of these items and got some marginal profit.

Women also involve in the production and sale of local alcohol drink called *Areki* while Children usually participate in retail trade. Children buy non-farm products like soap, sugar, and salt, diesel oil which is used as sources of lightening from the wholesalers and sell these items in retail. Children also involve in trading hen and eggs. Men involve in trading with every item but mainly in grains and livestock trading. They took items from one market place to another and got some small profit from market price differences. Petty trading has been very helpful for food insecure households. However, getting the small initial running capital is not easy for them.

Selling of fuel wood and wood for construction is the other important means of coping to food shortage crisis in the study area. People in highland PAs cultivate eucalyptus trees in their garden and depend on it for their fuel wood and construction purposes. In addition, they sell the wood for fuel and construction purposes particularly in times of food shortages. In the lowland PAs fuel wood sale is an important source of income for chronically food insecure households. People in the lowland PAs do not have eucalyptus plantation. Fuel wood is collected from the existing bush forest and sold in the market. Some also prepare charcoal from the bush forest and sell it in the town of Mertule Mariam. However, the available bush land has becoming devoid of any trees for fuel wood collection and charcoal burning.

Picture 6.1 Photos showing fruits and fuel wood for sale

One respondent in Debre Mewi PA explained how he depends on his eucalyptus plantation as follows:

> *I have no sufficient land. I have only three timad of degraded farm land. I lost my livestock. Some died due to disease. Now there is no grazing land either. At present my important asset is my eucalyptus plantation; I depend on it for everything. I grew it along the river course. I have some in my garden. I used my eucalyptus plantation for several purposes. I used it for construction, for fuel wood, for my different agricultural instruments. I sell it for fuel wood in the town of Mertule Mariam. I have many customers. I sell it for construction purposes for individuals and organizations as well. I have benefited from my plantations. Now it is my important source of income, it saved me from many crises.*

The highland PAs like Debre Mewi have good potential for eucalyptus plantation. Otherwise, the land is very mountainous and severely degraded. People are cultivating very sloppy areas for long without proper care to conserve fertility and the soil become extremely eroded and become infertile. Thus, such potential resources in the area like cultivation of extensive eucalyptus plantation should be encouraged. It is one important available asset in the area.

Agricultural diversification is also an important coping strategy. In all the PAs visited respondents explained that agricultural production in small plots of land with decreasing productivity and increasing family size is no more sufficient to feed all the family for a whole year. Thus, peoples are coping with the problem by using different agricultural practices. Farmers try to increase their agricultural production by cultivating two crops in one rain season. They practice multiple cropping, use irrigation. They cultivate cabbages, potatoes and maize in their garden when the rain starts in May and June so that the cabbage will be consumed first in June, then the potatoes and finally the maize will be available for consumption. People in the study area are highly dependent on these food items during the months of June to October and November or up to the next harvest particularly food insecure households (see figure 6.1).

Farmers cultivate short season crops like *Semereta* (a barley crop which is cultivated early in *belg* rains) when the *belg* rain starts in May. *Semereta* will be harvested in August and as soon the *Semereta* is harvested, they cultivate a late season crops such as chick-pea, lentils, and haricot-bean. These crops can resist drought if small amount of rain is available while cultivated in August. However, the problem with this strategy is that over time the rainy season is getting shorter and shorter. If it starts early, it ends up early. It is difficult to get both *belg* and *meher*[6] rains. Farmers also used to cultivate diversified crops in the available small plots of land. Because they hope that if some of the grown crops fail or affected by some disastrous cause, others will remain. Furthermore, they tend to be self sufficient in all the varieties of crops they need for their consumption.

People grow fruits, vegetables and other crops like maize using irrigation. During dry season (*bega)* after the harvest season and before the next *meher* cultivation they grow potatoes, vegetables and other fruits for consumption. They also sell the product in the market and earn some income. It is very common in all the visited PAs to cultivate potatoes using irrigation for home consumption and it is an important strategy to cope with the reduced availability of food. Particularly if households are food insecure they cultivate

[6] an expression for the main growing season

potato and depend on it for their food. If they don't have irrigable land they will be given land from relatives and friends or else they can cultivate using share cropping from those who have the land but not have the labor to cultivate. Hence, potato cultivation using both irrigation and the *belg* rain is a common practice in the study district in general. However, the main problem of potatoes cultivation is that potatoes have been affected by diseases especially the one which is cultivated using the *belg* rains is nowadays affected by disease.

Farmers in Debre Kidusan PA use Cheye River for their irrigation but the river is so large that when a little rain falls it destroys their catchments dams. Farmers had requested the government for full utilization of the river but the government didn't respond in this regard. However, it should be noted that the government is spending a large amount of resources in the name of water resource utilization. Instead of supporting people's practices and demands in irrigation schemes large numbers of ponds have been constructed to harvest and utilize rain water. Nevertheless, water harvest has been found out inappropriate in the area and people did not accept it. This clearly shows as to how peoples need and demand on one hand and government interventions on the other hand do not match (Government intervention is discussed in the next chapter).

Some people in the lowland PAs also practice beekeeping and it is their important activity. One 52 year old informant in Debre Kidusan PA explained as:

> *I had four traditional beehives and had been benefited from the sell of honey. Now people in Agri service Ethiopia a local NGO have seen my effort and introduced me a transitional bee hive. I found the transitional beehive which they introduced me better as compared to our traditional beehive. But still it has its own limitations with regard to using smoke to harvest honey. I modified this limitation and found it convenient to me. Now I have six traditional and four transitional beehives. I am benefiting much. Agri service Ethiopia gave me some materials. They helped me to get training in the National Beehive Research Institute in Holeta to get training about wax preparation and beehive management in general. I am now very much beneficial from my bee hives and my life has improved.*

The productivity of agricultural practices such as crop cultivation and livestock rearing is declining even in normal harvest seasons and farmers are becoming more vulnerable to food shortage than ever. Therefore, off-farm activities like beekeeping and other similar agricultural diversification should be considered and strengthened in the area.

Some farmers in the study area also practice handicraft in combination with agriculture. There are many handicraft activities that farms have adopted in combination with their farming while for some people handicrafts are their main livelihood. The main handicraft activities in Enebse Sar Midir are weaving, tailoring, carpentry, pottery, metalwork, woodwork, and blacksmithing. These non-farm income generating activities are very important alternative source of income for some people who have the skills in one or some of these activities. There are some farmers who involve in carpentry, woodwork, pottery (pottery is limited to lowland PAs), and tailoring and support their agricultural income. Weaving and blacksmithing are mainly done by people who mainly engage in these activities for their livelihoods than agriculture.

People in the area, mainly use handicraft products from clothing to household utensils and agricultural tools, and handicrafts are important activity in the area. A weaver makes dresses for women, *gabi* and *netela* for both women and men and it is men's work while women's work in this regard is preparing the thread from cotton. Pottery on the other hand is women's work and they make different household products. Metal worker produces different agricultural and household tools like sickle, axe, hoe, knife, etc. in metal work, carpentry, and blacksmith activities men are involved.

Although people dominantly use weaving, pottery, and metalwork products in the area and these activities are important sources of income, they traditionally give nick names for those involved which is socially undermining and giving inferior position. Handicrafts are important sources of income. People mainly depend on handicraft products for their clothing, household utensils, and agricultural tools. Therefore, these activities should be supported and encouraged. People need training and initial capital. There should be an

intervention to raise people's awareness in this regard. There are many opportunities and prospects that a lot of people would involve into these activities.

6.3 Survival Strategies

Some of the main survival strategies that are experienced by Enebse Sar Midir rural communities are out migration, social networks and support from relatives or friends, daily labor, food aid, decreasing daily food intake and changing food stuff, and begging.

In all the visited PAs informants explained about the shortage of farm land. Most farmers indicated that their farm plot is now unable to support their increasing family size let alone the occurrence of other natural causes like drought. Thus, people tend to out-migrate to other regions particularly to Oromiya and Southern Nations and Nationalities Regions. They work there temporarily as wage labourers, collect some income and assets and come back to their homeland. However, sometimes when the migrants got the opportunity to settle in the area of their destination, especially when they got farm land, they come back and take their families and the migration becomes permanent. Men are the first to migrate in this kind of migration. Children both boys and girls also migrate to nearby urban centers and participate in different activities and their migration becomes permanent.

Some respondents said that they are ready and willing to resettle to other regions such as Oromiya and Southern Nation and Nationalities Regions if they get the opportunity. However, the ethnic based regionalization of the current government creates ethnic borders. It became even the ultimate cause for ethnic conflicts which had occurred in different parts of the country. For instance, in the recent past two major ethnic conflicts can be mentioned. In the ethnic conflicts of Gambela Region between the indigenous ethnic groups and other settlers hundreds of people died and huge resources were damaged. In the East Wollega Zone of Oromiya Region conflicts between indigenous Oromos people and Amhara settlers, 13,000 Amhara settlers had been displaced. They had been evacuated from their settlement and returned to their original Amhara Region. The current government's

resettlement program allows resettlement within regions and has been carried out accordingly.

Social networks and support from friends and relatives also play an important role. For food security of households' informal institutions organized by the society themselves are central. Their operational systems are important for the households' wellbeing. There are some self-help associations in the study area established by neighboring households for both social and economic purposes. *Idir* is one of the important informal institutions, which is established mainly for funeral and mourning purposes. However, now the function of *Idir* is not only limited to social obligations like funeral but it has also other economic functions. When fellow members organize wedding parties or other social obligations their *Idir* will support them. *Idirs* have also their own household utensils and members can use these utensils when they have any special ceremonies. Some *Idirs* have also one standard uniform cloth for the fellow members. It depends on the agreement and rules and regulations they have. Some *Idir* members entered an agreement to help each other even in times of some other economic crisis.

Mahiber is the other common informal institution in the area. A group of twelve men establish a religious based association called *Mahiber*. It has economic, social and religious functions. *Mahiber* members help each other particularly for agricultural labor on farm fields. They celebrate monthly religious ceremonies in each member's house in turn. If one gets sick or critically in needs of labor, others will help him. In farming agricultural practices they help each other and work together based on ones priority of tasks. People also have an informal institution called *Debo* which is temporary organized to collectively manage labor intensive activities. By organizing into *Debo* people can manage labor intensive farm work and other activities like house construction.

There is also an informal institution called *Ekub* which has purely economic functions. *Ekub* mainly functions in urban areas. However, people in the nearby PAs to the town are also members of *Ekub*. In Debre Birhan PA there are some farmers who are members of *Ekubs* in Mertle Mariam town. *Ekub* is a local saving institution. Members contribute a

fixed amount of money every month and they have a revolving capital. Every member will get the total members one month contribution in turn. However, one can also get this amount without his turn if he needs with some extra payment. Therefore, it is a local saving institution for those who can contribute a small fixed amount monthly.

People also get support from relatives and friends when they face some problems like food shortage. The support could be loan, borrowing household utensils and agricultural tools. One food secure respondent in Debre Mewi PA explained this as follows:

> *We have a good culture of helping and supporting each other. Those who have sufficient food or all the necessary household and agricultural equipment will help and support those who have not enough food or all the necessary agricultural and household tools. When the support is food and money it is given on loan basis. Poor people are not also self sufficient in all household tools and agricultural equipments they need. Thus, they borrow those tools and equipments from their relatives, friends, and from their Idir or Maheber members if they have one. Poor people even can get drought animals and irrigable land for the particular period from their concerned supporters.*

Other respondents also said that they help each other in times of crises. However, over time poor people or those who need support are increasing in number. When natural causes like drought occur, all people are affected.

The other important means of earning small income or a means of getting daily meal for the destitute is engaging in daily labor. In Mertule Mariam town, the district capital daily laborers have a place where they gather together every day early in the morning and wait for their daily employers. Any daily employer will make an agreement and take whomsoever he/she wants for any task agreed upon. Most respondents indicated that for many poor people in the area, especially if they are landless, daily wage labor is a common means of earning survival meals. For instance, one respondent said:

> *Daily labor is most poor people's way of live. It is their livelihood. Many food insecure people both male and female, young and elders involve in daily labor and*

get a small income. You can know the occurrence and extent of the food shortage problem in the district just by looking at the place where laborers will gather. If there are more and more people gathering daily, the crisis is more wide or serious. If there are only small numbers of laborers gathering there, it indicates that the problem of food crisis is less.

Seasonally food insecure people involve into daily labor only when they face the problem. Chronically food insecure people usually do not have land or any other reliable asset to depend or engage. Therefore, daily labor is their important occupation and every household member including teenage children is involved. Even very young children are employed in other food secure households for some months or years and earn income for their parents.

Men involve in both farm and non-farm activities. Non-farm activities includes loading and unloading, carrying, mudding, house construction, preparing firewood, etc while important farming activities that men undertake are weeding and harvesting. Women also involve in weeding but mainly they involve in domestic work which includes fetching water and baking *injera.* Some women also involve in any labor activities which are usually regarded as men tasks. One woman respondent who is daily laborer told me as follows:

My remaining asset is my labor. I am a daily laborer and it is my livelihood. I involve and work in any activities from domestic to field work. I am a known good worker. People know and employ me daily or for some days in different tasks. I earn up to six birr. It depends on the task I involved in. When I work for some organizations or offices, I earn better.

The problem with the daily laborers is that when the problem of food shortage increases, there will be large number of laborers but few employers. Thus, laborers are forced to work for with very insignificant wage to earn. When the opportunities for daily labors become very limited, some laborers will be forced to migrate temporarily to other areas.

Many people have also been depending on food aid for their survival. Ethiopia has got the world's largest relief food aid and it is the world's most food aid dependent country. Food

aid is a standard response to transitory food insecurity like drought emergencies. But, in Ethiopia it has become an institutionalized response to chronic food insecurity. A large number of populations in Ethiopia secure their survival using relief food aid. In Enebse Sar Midir district as in other food deficit areas, food aid had save many lives particularly in 2003 when food shortage crisis had been worst ever. In 2003, the government had identified about 90,000 people as relief beneficiaries in the district.

The institutionalized free food aid in the country however has created a dependency syndrome. People have become relief expectant which has its own impact on self motivation and efforts to ameliorate the problem. It is best illustrated by what peoples have said in the area "*It doesn't matter whether it rains or not here if it rains in Canada".* There are many other people's sayings which clearly indicate that relief beneficiaries are becoming relief aid expectant. Therefore, the government has tried to integrate relief aid with development activities. The government program in this regard stated that the relief food should be distributed freely only for those who are unable to work. Able-bodied beneficiaries should get the relief food by involving in community asset activities. The program sounds good but in the study area it has not been the case. All informants explained that chronically food insecure able-bodied people who are the most vulnerable did not get and have not been benefiting from relief aid since it has been changed into food for work program because they didn't accept resettlement. Integrating relief aid to development is a good strategy. However, excluding the most vulnerable for which so ever reasons will not work.

Seasonal food insecure households are involved in different food for work activities and received cash or food for their work. They involved in some soil and forest conservation activities such as tree planting, construction of diversion canals and rehabilitating gullies. People participate in construction of health posts and public schools, stream development or construction of water harvest schemes and receive cash or food grain. However, people pointed out that they do not know what and how much they will be given beforehand. Sometimes they are given cash other time food grain. The amounts given also vary and

changes over time. In general, there is no clear, transparent, and timely payment for their food for work activities.

Decreasing the amount of daily food intake is also one response that the food insecure households use to mitigate the impact of food crisis. They try to decrease both the amount and quality of food consumed during the problem food shortage. One of the poorest respondents in Debre Kidusan PA explained it as follows:

> *When our food shortage problem gets worse, we decrease our daily meal intake. We try to conserve the available small amount by consuming it bit by bit. It is a way of keeping ourselves alive. Once we have a piece of breakfast that may be for one day. It is just to save our live.*

People's response is not only by decreasing the amount and frequency of food intake but also by changing and decreasing the quality of available food. If the available small food items are expensive like *teff,* wheat, and lentils; these items will be exchanged for less quality or cheaper food items like haricot bean (*guaya)* and barley so that more quantity will be obtained. Low quality and cheap crops like *guaya* are consumed widely by food insecure households. Some respondents in Debre Birhan said that *guaya* was used to be a food for livestock some years back when there was no food shortage problem in the area. However, nowadays it is a staple food item consumed by every household because it can be easily cultivated and is cheap in the market.

During the periods of seasonal food shortage cabbage, potato, and maize are important food items in the study area. Farmers particularly those who do not have sufficient production for the whole year will grow cabbage, potato, and maize when the rain starts in May /June and they will mainly depend on these items up to the nest harvest. Cabbage can be consumed within some weeks of its cultivation. Therefore, food insecure households will depend on it for their food in the months of June before their potato will be ready for consumption. From July potato will be available for consumption and in the months of July and August it will be their important food item. Then, since September maize become the main food item up to November or the next harvest season. One Amharic proverb in the

area clearly shows how people depend on these food items for food during the months of June to November when seasonal food shortage is common and occur in most households from highland to lowland PAs even in normal harvest years. The proverb says "cabbage *speaks and said, people depend on me for their food in the period of food crisis, and it is me who save life during this time. But, maize comes in the last hour and takes my thanks and rewards"*.

The following graph shows important food items in the periods of food shortage between June and November just before the next harvest which usually happens for most people in the area.

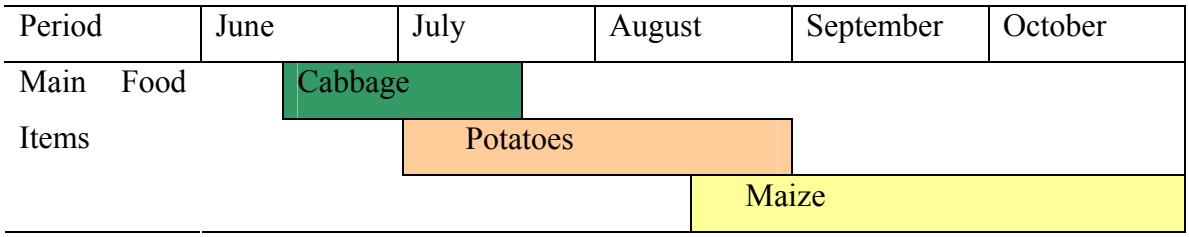


Figure 6.1 Critical periods of food shortage and main food stuffs for food insecure households

The last alternative for some disabled and ill-health people who had finished all their available resources and faced critical food shortage is begging. It is common to see many disabled or ill-health peoples of all ages begging in churches, along the road or even by wandering door to door. One disabled and beggar informant said:

> *I lost my sight 15 years ago. My wife died in 1988 E.C. Then I lost all my resources. Now I don't have any resources. Thus, we beg to survive. We beg in churches, and when there are wedding and other religious ceremonies people gave us a piece of food. This is how we survive. I have two children. One is daily laborer here in Mertule Mariam. His life is not different from me. This one who is the youngest is begging with me. He is my sight. He leads me from place to place. People know me. They are very sympathetic to me and help me. That is how we survive thanks to God.*

There are many disabled people who survive by begging, mainly in Mertule Mariam town and around churches. There are many children who survive by begging in Mertule Mariam town. Most of these children are those who lost their parents and don't have any supporter. Some of them learn religious teaching in monastery churches in the area including Mertule Mariam monastery. They are called *Yekolo Temari* which means religious student. They beg for their daily meal. *Yekolo Temari* in the religious school will get their meal by begging.

6.4 Conclusion: The Overall Picture of Farmers Coping and Survival Strategies

Based on their capacity and available opportunities, households in the study area try to implement different strategies to minimize the impact of food shortage crisis. There are some strategies adopted to minimize to impact of livelihood shocks called coping strategies. There are also survival strategies people adopt to combat destitution and death.

Important coping strategies experienced in the area are selling of assets, petty trading, wood selling, handicraft activities, and agricultural diversification. Farmers' important asset for sale in times of food shortage is livestock. If the problem is not ameliorated by disposing of livestock, farmers are forced to sell every available asset including their jewelry. Households also involve in wood selling and petty trading. Farmers in the highland PAs sell wood from the planted eucalyptus trees while farmers in the lowland PAs collect wood and burn charcoal from the bush forest and sell in Mertule Mariam town. Petty trading is also another important activity that people, mainly children and women undertake and get some marginal profit. Children engage in retail trade while women take agricultural products from produces to market place. Women also engage in the production and sale of local alcoholic drink. The other important coping strategies are agricultural diversification and handicraft activities. Farmers in the study area are also coping with the reduced agricultural production by cultivating two times using short season crops and using small irrigation schemes. Handicrafts are also other important activities. Some farmers also

support their farming activity by engaging in handicraft activities like carpentry, woodwork, and tailoring.

When the above mentioned survival strategies are exhausted people become more vulnerable and strategies are limited to survival or to combat destitution. Survival strategies experienced in the area includes out migration, social networks and support from friends or relatives, food aid, decreasing daily food intake and changing food stuff, engaging in daily labor, and begging. People from the study area out migrate to West Gojjam zone in the region and to other regions both temporarily and permanently in search of job. There are informal institutions called *idir, ikub*, and *mahiber* in the area which play an important role in times of crisis. People used to support each other in times of crisis through these informal institutions. People had received food aid and depend on it for their survival in the critical crisis of some past years. Daily labor is also an important means of earning small income and getting daily meal for some chronically food insecure households. The other survival strategy is decreasing and changing food stuffs to less expensive and less quality items. The last option for ill health or disabled people and children who do not have any supporter is begging.

In general, farmers in the study area practice a very traditional farming system. This traditional farming practice with declining farm land size and declining productivity could not be able to support the increasing family size let alone the occurrence of other factors. Thus, farmers try to practice different coping and survival strategies. Different agricultural strategies such as irrigation schemes, beekeeping, cultivation of short season crops, and cultivation of agricultural items for the market, petty trading and income generating handicrafts are all important activities that have impact in the life of the poor. People practice these strategies based on their experiences. These strategies are peoples' local knowledge for their particular problems. Thus, they should be clearly understood and supported by the government or concerned bodies. Any effort to solve the problem of household food shortage or improve the life of the poor in general should start from or should be based up on these people's strategies. In the next chapter government intervention mechanism to address households' food insecurity is discussed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION MECHANISMS TO ADDRESS HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY

7.1 Introduction

Governments' intervention mechanisms to achieve household food security in the past decades were very much limited if not non-existing in the country. The current government has a sustainable development and poverty reduction program which emphasizes achieving household food security as its top priority. Accordingly, there are some programs and activities carried out in this regard particularly in food insecure areas. Nevertheless, data from different sources show that the number of food insecure population is increasing over time. Hence, it is necessary to evaluate as to how government intervention mechanisms are carried out.

This chapter tries to assess government intervention mechanisms to address household food insecurity. First government strategies in this regard are discussed, including policies and strategies to promote agricultural productivity. Then, interventions made are analyzed with particular emphasis on Enebse Sar Midir rural communities. These include activities made to increase agricultural production and productivity, activities made to ensure access to food, and emergency responses. Activities made to increase agricultural productivity includes expansion of extension services, utilization of water resources, and resettlement. There are also some activities made to ensure access to food like enhancing off-farm employment and income generating schemes, and credit services. Emergency responses are carried out in the form of productive safety net programs.

7.2 Policy Framework

During the pre 1974-feudal and Derg 1974-1991 regimes, policies and strategies to promote agricultural production and food security were limited. The current government has adopted the Agricultural Development Led Industrialization as its overall development strategy. Among other goals, the strategy intends to enhance agricultural research and extension, increasing and diversifying application of agricultural inputs, expanding irrigation schemes, introduction of new products, encouraging service cooperatives, and promoting production of agricultural tools and equipments. A program of participatory demonstration and training extension system was elaborated for the development of small agricultural producers.

The government has also designed a food security strategy and programs. The first version of the food security strategy was prepared in 1996 and it was revised in 2002. The strategy is designed to address both availability and entitlement within the framework of the national agricultural and rural development strategies. The overall objective of the food security strategy is to enhance food security at the household level while the rural development policies and strategies would focus on ensuring national food self sufficiency. The food security strategy is mainly focused on food insecure moisture deficit areas. The strategy adopted rests on increasing availability through domestic production (Supply side actions), ensuring access to food for food deficit households (demand side actions), and strengthening emergency responses capabilities (MoFED 2002).

Domestic production is the main source of entitlement for most farming communities. Thus, an agricultural and rural development strategy has given more emphasis to increase agricultural production by giving utmost attention to agricultural extension services. Conservation based agriculture, irrigation development, improving livestock production and marketing systems are important elements of the strategy in moisture deficit and food insecure areas. Food insecure farming households as well as non-farming communities get some or all of their food from the market. However, many households in the drought prone and moisture deficit areas lack sufficient income to meet their basic needs. Therefore, to

address the demand side problems within the framework of the rural development policies and strategies the food security measures aimed at to promote and strengthen micro and small scale enterprise development, improving the food marketing system, promoting and strengthening supplementary employment and income generating schemes, credit services, and health and nutrition services. Strengthening emergency capabilities strategy includes monitoring, surveillance, and early warning arrangement, building the capacity of food and relief distribution, strategic reserve for food grains, and its analysis of international food trade and aid situations (ibid).

Strategies and programs to increase agricultural production and productivity in Ethiopia mainly focused on extension system which emphasizes inputs delivering, i.e. of fertilizers. The low productivity of agriculture in the country is attributed to many and interrelated factors or underlying problems. Therefore, strategies and programs should consider and give due attention to all aspects of agricultural challenges. The food security strategy of the country is well developed in 2002 as part and parcel of the poverty reduction strategy of the country. However, the poverty reduction strategy of the country in general or the food security strategy in particular was initiated and developed for donors' consumption. It has not been participatory.

The strategy emphasizes short term response and focused on moisture deficit and food insecure areas. To impact sustainable improvement and bring a change it should focus on long term strategies and emphasize every aspects of development including industrial development. The strategy is in general overambitious without considering the available capacity and resources. It promises so many things to accomplish and achieve. When in practical terms, it did very little. It is full of hopes and wishes. The food security strategy is not only overambitious there are implementation problems even with the existing capacity and resources.

Following the endorsement of the national food security strategy in 1996, different regions have established food security coordination offices and prepared their own programs. The Amhara Regional State established its Food Security Coordination Office at regional level

in 1999. The office is responsible for the overall coordination of the implementation of food security programs in the region. In 2004 The Food Security Coordination Office had merged with Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission and called Regional Food Security Coordination and Disaster Prevention Office. The Amhara Region Agriculture Office and Food Security Coordination and Disaster Prevention Office have implemented different projects and activities to achieve food security. In the following are major food security interventions with particular emphasis on Enebse Sar Midir rural communities.

7.3 Increasing Agricultural Production and Productivity

Increasing agricultural production is the first and main source of food entitlement for most of the Ethiopian farming community in terms of direct consumption of food. The surplus is sold to the non-farming and even to the farming community. Therefore, increasing the production and productivity in a sustainable manner could address the problem of food shortage (MoFED 2002). To increase agricultural production and productivity government's interventions in the study area are mainly focused on expansion of extension services, utilization of water resources and resettlement.

7.3.1 Expansion of Extension Services

Agricultural extension packages in Ethiopia were initiated in the 1950s and 1960s. They were implemented through the initiation of comprehensive extension package projects. The current government has introduced a new extension program known as a participatory, demonstration and training extension system with the aim of increasing agricultural productivity. Many reports indicate that extension programs in the country have been successful in terms of the participation of farmers. The Amhara Region Agriculture Bureau report indicates that extension programs in the region have increased in terms of number of participant farmers and services rendered.

In Enebse Sar Midir district the extension program so called minimum package and a family package. It is organized in such a way that every PA will have three DAs each

trained in three different areas. One is trained in crop cultivation, one in natural resource protection and conservation, and the third is trained in animal husbandry. In the minimum package program, each DA will have 50 participant farmers with close monitoring. Therefore, there will be 150 farmers in each PA participating in the minimum package that would be a model for the other farmers. All other farmers are within the family package. They would use extension programs but are not given close monitoring as in the minimum package participants.

Extension programs carried out in the area includes crop extension, livestock extension, and natural resource conservation and protection. Crop extension including fruit and vegetables is the main component of extension programs. Interviewed DAs explained that in crop extension program they advise and guide farmers about the use of improved seeds and fertilizers, about the use of crop pests and weeds prevention, how to prepare and use organic fertilizers. Available information in the Rural Development and Agricultural Office shows that participant farmers in crop, fruit and vegetable production have increased. In this extension program the main emphasis is to encourage farmers to use fertilizers, improved seeds and other agricultural inputs. Agricultural inputs are also supplied to farmers on credit basis. However, respondents complain about the problem of getting agricultural inputs. All interviewed respondents complain about the increasing price of fertilizer. One of the focus group participants in Debre Birhan PA put his complain as: *"First and foremost, agricultural inputs supply is not reliable and in time. The other problem is that agricultural inputs are supplied with high interest rate and at higher prices which is beyond our capacity".* Moreover, farmers are asked to pay the price during harvest season where the prices of their product use to be quite low. Therefore, they have to sell much of their product to pay their credit.

The current extension program carried out mainly focused on the use of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds and chemical sprays. On the other hand the price of these inputs has increased and become beyond the capacity of farmers to buy. DAs indicated that the number of farmers using agricultural inputs has declined recently in relation to the increasing price of inputs. One DA said:

So far the extension program had been focused mainly on increasing farmers' productivity and production using agricultural inputs. But farmers are too poor to use agricultural inputs with high prices. Therefore, particularly during the past few years there has been a significant decline in the application of inputs particularly fertilizers. Thus, now we are focusing on organic fertilizers as an option. We teach farmers how to prepare and use organic fertilizer (compost) and we have been effective in this regard. A lot of farmers are now preparing their own compost.

Some of the respondents also indicated that as the price of fertilizer become too high for them to apply; they prepare and use organic fertilizer (compost). But, it is also not without a problem. Some of them said that compost is more sustainable once prepared and applied. However, to prepare and apply it to their farm plot requires a lot of labor and tasks. To do all that difficult task, they don't have the ownership security for their farm plot thereafter.

Other important activities in the extension program are livestock production and natural resource protection and conservation. Livestock production in Enebse Sar Midir includes cattle, sheep, goat, poultry and beekeeping. Improving the productivity of this sector could improve household food security in the area. However, shortage of livestock feed and animal diseases constrain the development of this sector. Thus, extension programs in this sector focus on forage development and animal health. The other extension program in the area is natural resource conservation and protection. Natural resource degradation like soil erosion is severe in the area and constrains agricultural production. However, most respondents said that the support given to them in livestock production and resource conservation activities is very limited.

7.3.2 Utilization of Water Resources

One of the main causes for the household food insecurity in the study area is the shortage of rainfall. Therefore, utilization of available water for agricultural purpose is indispensable to secure households food situation particularly in moisture deficit areas. According to the government due attention has been given for water harvest and utilization programs in the

study area. According to Rural Development and Agriculture Office, to harvest and utilize rain water 270 pond schemes were constructed in 2002. By giving more emphasis to the program both square and hemispherical design 3,068 water harvests and under ground ponds had been constructed in 2003. In 2004 it was possible to raise these schemes to 4,768. These are concrete or plastic covered well developed ponds each costing about 8000 birr with the help of the government. However, there are many ponds developed by farmers with out concrete or plastic cover. The program intended that each farmer should have a well developed water harvest scheme.

Picture 7.1 photos showing water harvesting schemes

Although water harvest and utilization program has been an area of focus by the government and efforts have been continuously made to expand it, in the study area it has been proved to be ineffective and useless. The majority of respondents indicated that water harvest schemes became more a problem than a benefit in the studied communities. For instance one of the key respondents in Debre Kidusan PA said: *"there is no significant benefit using water harvest schemes. Rather they become sources of malaria. It can't hold sufficient water. It will have only little spoilt water that can't be used for any purpose.*

In addition, it should be noted that huge resources has been spent to construct such schemes. Moreover, most of the government officials also indicated that water harvest and

utilization program has been ineffective in Enebse Sar Midir district. Head of the district council stated the situation:

> *We have given due emphasis to water harvest programs. But, when we look at how much we spend to construct ponds and the expected output, it is not encouraging. The implementation of this program is found to be less effective as far as our district is concerned. We spent much resource but people are not using it.*

One technology should be tested whether it is appropriate and suitable to the particular area and situation before it is implemented widely. The water harvest and utilization program has been implemented in mass in the study area. But it has become ineffective. One of the respondents view in the District Rural Development and Agriculture office is illustrative:

> *The water harvest scheme is not appropriate to this district. First and foremost, there are abundant water resources including underground waters in the district. Thus, utilization of these water resources is important to increase agricultural production in areas where there is shortage of rainfall than water harvest. Water harvest is not the right response. Second, the design itself is not suitable to this district. We were given the design from the region and we had to implement it accordingly. For instance, the hemispherical designed schemes should be constructed with a concrete thickness of 5cm. However, I found out that a concrete with this thickness can't resist the ground stress in this area and consequently most of the constructed water harvest schemes have cracked and are unable to hold water.*

There is a good water resource potential in the district. There are many springs and rivers that can be used for small and medium scale irrigation schemes. Moreover, there is a good traditional practice of using small irrigation by farmers. Therefore, an intervention to utilize water resource in the area should have been focused in the support and strengthening of farmers' irrigation projects than rain water harvesting which didn't work in the area.

In fact, there are some activities carried out by the government such as pond construction, water pump installation, construction of small scale diversions, and maintenance of ditches.

Nevertheless, respondents indicated that the support given to them in this regard is minimal. Some respondents in Debre Kidusan PA where there is a shortage of rainfall indicated that they use the Cheye River for small irrigation. This river which is one of the main tributaries of the Blue Nike River in the area has high potential for medium scale irrigation development. Farmers have requested the government for support in the construction of a diversion canal but they didn't get any support. One of the focus group participants explained it as follows:

> *We use the Cheye River for irrigation. We cultivate twice a year. The river can be used to cultivate more areas. It has a high potential but it is beyond our capacity to divert the whole water. When the rain comes, it will ruin our dam. We requested the district officials for the full utilization of the river but nothing is do*ne.

It was clear from the discussion that the utilization of water resources in the studied communities shows different areas of concern by the government and local communities. The local communities need help and support from concerned bodies in irrigation development. On the other hand, what the government planned in the area to tackle the shortage of rainfall is to harvest and utilize rain water. That is, a program designed centrally, at national level and delegated to be implemented there. However, it has been proved to be ineffective and useless. In general, work of efforts and measures are centrally planned, ineffective solutions, and jeopardize possibilities for improvement.

7.3.3 Resettlement

Resettlement refers to population redistribution. It is relocating people in areas other than their own (Dessalegn 2004:P.1). According to Dessalegn resettlement is a complex and costly undertaking which should involve careful planning and sound assessment of the available resources with the close involvement of the beneficiaries themselves. Resettlement program in Ethiopia was started in 1960s during the imperial regime, and major and planned resettlement undertaking was conducted during the Derg regime in 1970s and 1980s. The Derg settled some 600,000 people, mostly in the lowland western parts of the country which was meant to relieve the population pressure of vulnerable areas,

to rehabilitate the environment, and promote food security. However, the program became disastrous and ineffective. 33,000 settlers lost their lives due to disease, hunger and exhaustion. About half a billion birr is spent for the resettlement program and the cost of damage caused to the environment, loss of the livestock and other property was enormous (ibid).

The current government also started a resettlement program within regions as one of its food security strategy. According to the Agriculture Bureau Report, the Amhara Region had resettled 48,030 people in 2003 and 2004, and planned to resettle 50,000 people in 2005. From the study area 1,035 people were resettled into Metema (Quara) in North Gonder Zone in 2003 and 835 people were resettled into Jawi in Awi Zone in 2004. However, according to districts information office, among the 1, 035 settlers in 2003 only 200 remained at their settlement site. All the rest have returned back to their village. From the 835 Jawi settlers in 2004, only about 300 of them were able to settle permanently. This clearly shows that the resettlement program has been ineffective.

Although the government has planed to resettle some more people into Metema and Jawi in 2005, no one was found willing in Enebse Sar Midir district. The government has tried to enforce them by prohibiting relief food aid. Officials said that peoples who are categorized as poor or poorest are supposed to resettle into the region's resettlement site such as Metema and Jawi. But, if they would not accept to resettle, they could not get the relief food aid here. In fact, most officials at the district level did not accept the enforcement of it by prohibiting relief aid. They said that it is delegated from above.

Almost all respondents complain or criticize the resettlement program in the area. Respondents in Debre Mewi PA explained that the resettlement sites are malaria prone and not convenient for them to resettle there permanently. One respondent explained this situation as follows:

> *Here our climate is cold and good for survival. For us who are used to this kind of climate, we can't easily adapt to hot and malaria prone areas like Metema. A lot of people had died of malaria and many more got sick and came back. They couldn't*

get used to the weather there. The government promised us here many things but once people went there nothing is done for them. Last year we agreed with the government and elect three people from our PA who would first go there and see the new proposed settlement site in Metema. They went to see the site but what happened was that two of them came back seriously sick and nearly died. We all abandoned it but the government is forcing us. Now we are prohibited to involve in safety net programs and get relief aid.

Some of the respondents also indicated the problem of other proposed settlement site Jawi. They explained that there are people who had temporally migrated and knew these places. They said this site also has no sufficient water. Thus, people believe that the proposed resettlement sites in the region are not suitable to live and practice agriculture. However, it should be also noted that most of them would like and are willing to resettle to other regions such as Oromiya and Southern Nation and Nationalities Regions but the resettlement programs are only within a region not between regions.

Resettlement programs are not only failed in the area but also create tensions. There is a clear tension between the government and people in the area with regard to resettlement. The government's attempt to enforce the program using relief aid as an instrument is a mistake that creates frustration and makes people suspicious of any development activities and the government in general.

7.4 Other Activities to Ensure Access to Food

The non-farming households get their food from the market. The Food insecure farming households also supplement their own production from the market. Therefore increasing the income of households and improving the food marketing system will improve household food security situation. The food security strategy states that the government should ensure access to food by addressing demand side problems. The proposed government's demand side measures includes enhancing off-farm employment and income

generating schemes, credit services, improving food marketing systems, and nutrition and health interventions.

Most Ethiopian farmers who try to undertake non-farm income generating schemes lack the opportunity. They lack the capital and skills to undertake. Based on the national food security strategy, regional governments have started different programs and projects to create off-farm income opportunities for rural farmers who do not have the potential for increasing household food production. The Amhara Region has initiated its own integrated food security program. Among other tasks, the program envisaged to create and strengthen off-farm activities. There are thirty different off-farm schemes identified that have been implemented in different parts of the region. The most feasible off-farm schemes are carpentry, masonry, mud block, compressed concrete block, gum production, honey processing, beehive making, and retail trade.

In Enebse Sar Midir district very little has been done in strengthening off-farm activities. Institutions such as Small and Micro-industries Promotion Team and Community Skills Training Centre have been established in Mertule Mariam. But, both the promotion team and training center are established recently and at the present situation are not strong enough to carry out significant activities. An activity accomplished in this regard so far was only the provision of some basic trainings. The Community Skills Training Centre with Small and Micro-industries in collaboration with Agri-service Ethiopia has given basic skills and training in pottery, weaving, metal work, tailoring and carpentry for landless farmers. However, there is no support once the training has been given. For instance, the provision of a small initial capital is essential after the training.

Improving credit services will also help to address both supply and demand side problems. Credit service can help the economically active poor in developing their enterprises and build up their income opportunities. The food security strategy of the government envisaged to strengthen and expand rural micro-financing institutions and cooperatives particularly in food insecure areas to provide banking services. There are three main sources of credit to the rural farmers. These are the Amhara Credit and Saving Institution,

Cooperatives Credit Service, and Federal government food security supported credit services. However, the performance of credit services in the region has not been effective. According to BoFED report in 2003, the region has allocated 200 million birr for rural credit services but only about 72 million birr (49%) had been provided to users. From the provided amount it was only about 56 million (78%) that had been collected from users. This is only about 28% of the total allotted amount.

In fact, in Enebse Sar Midir district there has been an improvement in the availability of credit sources. Nevertheless, the great majority of the rural farmers are still out of reach of the service. The existing credit service institutions in the area have limited capacity. Efforts made to access the rural farmers have been limited to only some farmers in the outskirts of the town. Farmers in the furthest PAs do not even know the existence of the service. On the other hand, farmers close to town are aware of the services and their demand for the service is also high. Credit services in the area are not only characterized by limited institutional capacity and financially unviable but also by their lending principles and operational procedures which are inappropriate to the poor rural farmer. Some respondents explained that the existing credit services have high interest rates. Moreover, the available credits services are for short-term.

Farmers in the study area use the loans mainly for agricultural activities when they get some. However, agricultural activities in the area are subjected to risks. One respondent said:

> *I took 1000 birr credit and bought fertilizer and cattle to fatten. I got a good harvest by using fertilizer and good income from the sale of my fatten cattle as well. Thus, I could able to pay my loan with its interest in time and earned more than thousand extra incomes. I bought a cow and other household utensils using my income. In 2003 I took 1500 birr and bought fertilizer and two cattle to fatten. However, there had been severe drought and I couldn't harvest anything on my farm and one of the cattle I bought to fatten died. I was disappointed very much. I sold many of my assets to pay my loan. Thereafter I am afraid of the risks to take a loan. Now I am thinking of taking some for petty trading.*

Even with a favorable climate farmers had also suffered from depressing market prices. During the periods of good harvest there is excessive supply in the market and prices fall very much. Farmers have no option; they have to sell their product at low price to meet their loan payment obligation. Therefore, they couldn't benefit from the loan they obtain due to market failure. The other main problem for extremely poor people who are starving is that there is a tendency of using the loan for immediate food consumption than utilizing it for productive activities and being unable to pay their loan.

To sum up, with respect to credit, discussions made with interviews and the focus group participants showed that the availability of the service is limited. Furthermore, what makes it worse is that although rural people need the service very much, they didn't use even the available limited amount. The lending principles and operational procedures of the existing credit services are inappropriate for farmers in general. Although there are some who have been benefiting, there are also some farmers who have been indebted. This makes some users to refrain from using even the limited available services.

7.5 Emergency Response

The food security strategy of the government stated to strengthen emergency capacity which includes early warning systems, national disaster prevention and preparedness fund, and emergency food security reserve administration. The food security coordination and disaster prevention office coordinates the inflow of district level information on food availability as well as data on market prices, on changes in health, water and social environment while vulnerable districts in the country provide monitoring reports to the office. The emergency food security reserve administration on the other hand makes grain available for immediate dispatch to food security coordination and disaster prevention office and NGOs once repayment is guaranteed by donors or the government. Its aim is to maintain food stock in different strategic locations of the country. However, reports show that the reserve is not replenished soon after being used. The national disaster prevention and preparedness fund is also an important preparedness mechanism and complements the

emergency food security reserve administration which is designed to ensure a smooth relief operation by cash resources to fund the non-food side of emergencies. It has played important role by providing loans for local purchase of seeds during crisis. However, reports show that it has not secured its minimum financial reserve because of inadequate support.

The government together with national and international organizations provided food aid to the famine stricken and food insecure population of the country. Food aid has saved many lives but it could not address the root causes that make people vulnerable. Even some said that food aid has eroded peoples work culture in the country which makes some people aid expectant lacking self motivation for improvement. Therefore, the government has tried to integrate relief aid with development programs instead of practicing free relief aid distribution. The strategy is called productive safety net program. Productive safety net program is a provision of food or cash to beneficiaries participating in public works and thereby create sustainable livelihoods and improving agricultural technologies in drought prone areas. The government has planned that 5 million chronically food insecure people who had received food aid continuously over the past years will be supported by productive safety net programs. The program requires households to engage in productive community activities. It is designed to prevent asset depletion at the household level while creating assets at the community level. The productive safety net program is functioning for 263 chronically food insecure districts in the country.

In Enebse Sar Midir district, the safety net program has two components: cash and/or food for work for households who can contribute with labor in public work activities and direct support for labor poor households. The public works element is basically meant for community asset building including the rehabilitation of natural resources. The direct support component will help those who can not participate in public works like elderly and chronically ill peoples. However, the only groups of people who are participating in safety net program in the study area are medium level wealth status households who are seasonally food insecure not chronically food insecure households. It is stated in the national food security strategy of the country that chronically food insecure households will

participate in productive safety net program and will create sustainable livelihoods. After all, this program is primarily designed for the five million chronically food insecure people in the country.

However, in Enebse Sar Midir district chronically food insecure households have been excluded from participating in the safety net program. One of the interviewed officials said:

> *Chronically food insecure as well as food secured households will not be included in the safety net program. Our program is to help transitory food insecure households who would face food shortage for certain months of a year. It is to fill this short or temporary gap and graduate them into secure status. Our program for chronically food insecure households is resettlement.*

The government is enforcing chronically food insecure people for resettlement by prohibiting them from receiving relief aid or involving in safety net program. Food insecure households can leave and resettle for the new settlement areas if they do accept it. This could be achieved through discussions and negotiations. But, forcing them to leave by prohibiting relief aid is not and will not be an appropriate strategy. People did not accept resettlement because the experience before them shows a failure. People do not accept failure but they are punished for the failure.

Interviewed respondents explained that being excluded from relief aid, they felt betrayed, rejected and allowed to die. They became hopeless. One respondent spoke desperately:

> *We destitute are hated by our leaders. First we thought that this government would help us. But now we have seen that it is not different from the previous regimes. It is said that the relief aid has come for us but we are prohibited to get any. They said us that you will be helped if you resettle to the settlement sites in Quara not here but we have seen that those who had left came back. Now we lost hope no one like us the destitute.*

The other problem with safety net programs is that community works carried out so far did not bring fruitful results. Activities were carried out in a haphazard manner without proper

planning and preparation. In safety net program community works are intended to create community assets such as trees, roads and other conservation investments that will facilitate the growth of rural productivity. However, community works in the study area are not well coordinated and managed. People participate in the activities only to get the relief aid.

7.6 Conclusion

The Ethiopian government has ambitious food security strategies and programs which are part and parcel of the poverty reduction strategy of the country. However, in practical terms very little has been done. In Enebse Sar Midir rural communities the main activities carried out to achieve household food security include agricultural extension services, water harvest and utilization, and resettlement which are called supply side actions designed to increase agricultural production and productivity. On the other hand there are also other limited activities on the demand side for insuring access to food which include credit services and enhancing income generating schemes.

The government's food security interventions are not only very limited but also ineffective solutions. Activities carried out become parts of the problems not parts of the solutions. Even extension programs which are stated as a success story in most reports are not effective in the study area. Extension program mainly focused on increasing agricultural production with the application of agricultural inputs like fertilizers. However, the price of agricultural inputs particularly that of fertilizer has increased beyond the capacity of the farmers. Other intervention programs such as water harvest and utilization, resettlement, and safety net programs have failed. For most interviewed government bodies activities such as resettlement and water harvest and utilization are ineffective because farmers do not accept these programs. Farmers do so because these are not proper solutions.

The nature of the government's food security intervention programs are essentially designed from the centre and locally implemented in campaign or mass mobilization in the area. It is far from the assessed bottom-up planning or interface analysis of actor oriented

approach which requires the interpretation of activities according to the local contextual situations. Some programs like water harvest and utilization which are already planned at the center and tried to be implemented in the area are found to be irrelevant to that particular area.

Some other programs such as safety net and resettlement which are also planned from the centre and delegated to the local officials and implemented accordingly without participation and due regard to the lived experience of the beneficiaries is also far from the assessed life world's concept of development planning in actor oriented approach and became inadequate, a problem than a solution. In general, almost all food security intervention programs have failed and some programs even have aggravated the problem.

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusion

The primary aim of the study was to understand the underlying causes of households' food shortage problem, coping and survival strategies, and to analyze government intervention mechanisms to address the problem with particular emphasis on Enebse Sar Midir rural communities. To answer the objectives of the study, the views of households and development agents were the main sources of information.

Theories of famine or food shortage such as food availability decline (FAD), food entitlement decline (FED) theories, and political economy explanations helped to get the broader picture of food shortage causations while livelihood framework helped to understand the general picture of households' coping and survival strategies. Government intervention mechanisms were analyzed using intervention, life worlds, and interface concepts of the actor oriented approach.

The physical feature of Enebse Sar Midir varies from highland to lowland. Within a short distance it is possible to recognize major climatic variations due to altitude. Some peasant associations (PAs) are found along the Blue Nile River Valley in the lowland and the climate is tropical (kolla) while some other PAs are at higher altitudes above 3000m.a.s.l. and their climate is temperate (dega). I purposefully select three PAs from the different lowland, highland, and middle altitude PAs for the study and it is found that the underlying natural cause for household food shortage varies from highland to lowland.

There are diverse and interrelated causes for household food shortage: In the highland PAs, people use steep mountainous sides for their farm plots. They practice very traditional farming methods which have been unchanged for centuries. But, the traditional ways of

keeping soil fertility like fallowing is abandoned. There is an expansion of farm plots to the very steep sides of the mountains due to population pressure. Consequently, farm plots on mountainous sides are severely degraded to support farm practices.

Hail storms are also other natural causes particularly in the highland PAs. On the other hand the main natural factor in the lowland PAs is shortage of rainfall. Crop pests and animal diseases are also prominent problems in the lowland areas.

Other main problems for household food shortage in the study area are population pressure; shortage of farm land and other productive assets; lack of infrastructural services like credit, marketing; and the increasing price of fertilizers and lack of other agricultural inputs. Transport communications, water supply, and health services are also very limited in the area. Moreover, government programs are also found to be inappropriate and became aggravating factors.

Agricultural diversification, income generating schemes, and informal institutions are important households' strategies: Based on their understandings and perceptions of the above mentioned causes for food crisis, households undertake different strategies to cope with the problems. They use different agricultural strategies such as irrigation, cultivating short season crops, diversified cropping, and cultivation of fruits and vegetables in their garden. People involve in different income generating schemes such as petty trading and handicraft activities. Asset selling, mainly Livestock and wood selling are also an important coping to reduce availability of food. Asset selling repeatedly, however, depletes the households' resource base and make them more vulnerable. All other coping strategies are important to alleviate their problems. Nevertheless, as many households are becoming more and more vulnerable, all those coping strategies became exhausted. In this case people engage in daily labor or tend to out-migrate to other regions. They also depend on others support including informal institutions and relief food aid. There are informal institutions such as *Idir, Ikub,* and *Mahiber* which have some social and economic obligations and play important role in households' ways of life in general or in times of crisis like food shortage.

Inadequate and ineffective or failed interventions made by the government: Relief food aid also has saved many lives in many years. Many people had depended on it for their survival. However, the government has used relief food aid as an instrument to enforce any of its programs on the people. Resettlement is one of government's interventions in the area to achieve food security. The government tried to enforce chronically food insecure people to resettle into the regions resettlement sites by prohibiting them getting relief food aid. The consequence has been neither food aid reached to the appropriate needy population nor the enforced resettlement has been successful.

Others main food security interventions of the government are water harvest and extension programs. Throughout the country large programs have been launched to harvest and utilize rain water. In Enebse Sar Midir district for instance, many water harvesting schemes have been constructed. A lot of badly needed resources have been spent to construct water harvesting ponds. Nevertheless, the findings of this research indicate that constructing ponds seems the end result of the program. A lot of water harvesting scheme have been constructed but people are not utilizing them. Water harvesting has been found out a technology not suited to the area and consequently people did not adopt it.

The other main area of focus carried out widely is extension programs. There are activities carried out to increase farmers' agricultural productivity and to conserve the ever degrading natural resources. However, activities are mainly focused on increasing crop productivity with the application of fertilizers and it had shown some success in this regard. But nowadays, on one hand farmers' farm plot become unproductive without fertilizer. On the other hand, the price of fertilizer increased beyond their purchasing capacity. Thus, although officials claim that extension as a success story, with the current situation it is difficult to conclude that it is effective.

The government's intervention in what is called demand side actions is very limited. People highly need financial and technical help in their small income generating handicrafts and petty trading. However, in this regard very little has bas been done by the

government. There is some improvement in the availability of credit. Nevertheless, most people are not using credit because of the high interest rates and the poor lending procedures.

In general, the findings of this study on government interventions show that activities carried out by the government to achieve food security have been: first, limited as compared to the magnitude of the problem. The government has weak institutions and limited capacity to address the problem. Second, inadequate or not adopted. It is unfortunate that even the few activities carried out with the barely available resources have failed to bring any change because they are not accepted. They are not accepted because of being wrong. Third, these programs are enforced in such a way that even if they are adequate, the relationship between government and peasantry is deteriorated so much that collaboration is impossible. Some activities such as resettlement and safety net programs create tension between the government and peoples and aggravate the problem. Even officials knew that such programs are wrong and not accepted by the people. Nevertheless, they continued doing so because they are only mandated to implement the delegated programs and activities from above with out any change. All these are sensible which require a dedicated bureaucracy to the farmers. A change of perception and behavior from the administrative side is required.

8.2 Recommendations

To overcome the disastrous food shortage problem in the country or to secure people's sustainable livelihood in general, policies and strategies and their implementations should be credible and corrected based upon the existing real situation on the ground. Hence, the following recommendations are given on the basis of the findings of the study.

Development programs formulation and implementations should be participatory based upon the expressed needs of the society: Both programs formulation and their implementation in Ethiopia is conventionally a top-down approach where every specific activity is designed from the top and imposed to the people at the grassroot. People have no

any say; they have to accept and implement the prescribed and delegated activity from above. This has been the case in the implementation of food security program in the study area and in the country at large. Government bodies designed different food security programs like water harvest and utilization, resettlement and safety net based up on their own understanding of the problems. These programs are then delegated and implemented in mass mobilization or quota system. However, what people need at a specific area significantly varies from one area to another. Some programs are found to be irrelevant to the studied specific areas. Most often what the government is doing is quite different from what people need. Consequently, most programs are found to be ineffective or failed. Therefore, it is essential that programs formulation and their implementation should start from the people.

There should be identification and utilization of people's strategies to local problems: Through their long experience, people have a good understanding of their local problems. In the study area, people have a good understanding of the causes for food shortages. Accordingly, they have different important coping strategies. These people's strategies would provide basic inputs in the designing of appropriate local specific programs. There is a potential for local solutions to local problems. Therefore, people's strategies to the local problems should be clearly understood and considered.

Efforts should be made to develop medium and large scale irrigation schemes: One of the prominent natural causes for food crisis is shortage of rainfall. In the lowland and warm areas, rainfall gets shorter and shorter over time. On the other hand, most of the lowland areas are flat plains with rivers suitable for irrigation schemes. People are practicing small-scale irrigations and needs support. Therefore, irrigation developments are important that deserves due consideration because people are practicing it and asking for it.

Agricultural input and output marketing systems should be improved: Most rural areas have only few markets. The price of agricultural inputs is increasing over time. The agricultural extension program in the country is now constrained by the increasing price of fertilizers. The price of agricultural produce is very fluctuating with slight product change.

During bad years the price rises high and food items become inaccessible to the poor. The problem of marketing affects both production and consumption. Therefore, market stabilization measures are very essential to achieve household food security in the country. Marketing problem in Enebse Sar Midir is aggravated by the lack of road network. The district is one of the most inaccessible areas. Lack of transport service is more severe in food insecure and drought prone areas. Thus, there is a need to strengthen the link between the most vulnerable areas to the rest part of the country.

Even if all programs are working properly it does not mean that problems will be solved because of population pressure and environmental degradation. There should be measures against the high population growth and severe environmental degradation.

1. Measures against environmental degradation should be strengthened:

There is a need to rehabilitate the degraded agro-ecology in the highland areas. In some highland areas the degraded environment is one of the main responsible factors for household food shortage. In the studied highland PAs soil erosion is very severe. Some farm plots are degraded to the extent that they can't support farm practice. The main problem is that people are using very steep mountain sides as farm plots and these mountain sides are severely eroded. Therefore, there should be a strengthened intensive natural resource conservation and rehabilitation activities. Particularly measures that conserve the environment and at the same time can generate income to support farmers are essential. For instance, eucalyptus plantation and other similar alternatives should be sought.

2. Measures against the prevailing high population growth are also possible: There is a high population pressure in most parts of the country, particularly in the highlands. Every year there are many new claimants for farm plots in rural areas. On the other hand, the fertility of many farm lands is ever decreasing. Most people in the study area are now well aware of the problem and want to limit their family size. However, they don't have access

to contraception services. There is a clear unmeet need of contraception which requires immediate attention.

3. Above all, encouraging and supporting extra non-farm activities, diversification and deagrarianization: Non-farm income generating schemes should be strengthened and expanded. As large scale enterprises are very limited in the country, small scale firms or handicrafts and business play an important role in creating employment opportunities and generating income. In areas like Enebse Sar Midir, the agricultural sector is not only vulnerable to natural calamities but also it becomes unable to support the increasing population. There are many people engaging in handicrafts and small business and still many others would like to involve into these activities. However, most of them lack the skills and the initial capital to undertake. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen and expand these activities. It could be the provision of credit and training. There are emerging institutions to expand credit availabilities to rural communities. However, the rural credit lending procedures requires improvement including its high interest rate and short terms of repayment.

In general, there should be an urgent consideration of all those above measures. If not, there will be further out-migration, reinforcing urban congestion, environmental degradation, and further food shortages and famines.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

A. Individual Interview

1. Name
2. Sex
3. Education
4 What is your main means of livelihoods?
5. Are there other activities that you have been engaged to support your main livelihood?
6. How have you been engaged and how do you think these activates helped your household?
7. What are the major needs of your household?
8. How food secured is your household?
9. How and when do you think your means of livelihoods become insecure and food shortage becomes a problem of your survival?
10. How do you think this food shortage impact on the various aspects of the life's of the household?
11. How do you see your future food security situation?
12. What are the causes for your household food insecurity?
13. Can you please describe how these factors cause the problem of food insecurity?
14. In your opinion, what are the natural, socio-economic or other factors of food insecurity and how they cause the problem?
15. Which causes do you think are more serious and why?
16. Can you anticipate problems a head of time? If so how?
17. How your household copes to the livelihood threats and decline food availability?
18. If the household is chronically food insecure, can you please describe how the family survive?
19. What measures have been or are being done by the government to solve the

problem?

20. How such government measures are effective?
21. How far have you been benefited from the government food security measures?
22. Do you think these government measures have brought changes in your food security? Why?
23. How do you participate in the planning and implementation of government food security programs?
24. How measures and practices applied so far are suitable to your strategies?
25. How the government encourages and supports your strategies?
26. What are the problems with the government measures undertaken?
27. Have you ever been received relief aid in time of food crisis?
28. Can you please describe when and how have you got the relief aid?
29. How efficient do you think were relief aid operations?
30. What is the problem you see in relief aid programs?
31. How do you think are the best means to achieve food security?
32. Do you have any additional comments concerning food insecurity?

B. Focus group Discussions

1. What are the most important needs of this community?
2. How do you perceive the food security situation of this community?
3. How and when do you thing food become insecure in this locality?
4. What are the impacts of food shortage in various aspects of the life's of the people?
5. Which groups of people do you think are more vulnerable to food insecurity and why?
6. What do you think are the natural, socio-economic, and other factors of food insecurity in this area?
7. Which causes are more serious in this locality?
8. How do you think these factors cause the problems?
9. How peoples cope in response to food and livelihood threats in this community?

10. How chronically food insecure households survive in this community?
11. What role do the cultural/religious values or institutions organized by the community have in ameliorating the impacts of food shortages?
12. What measures have been or are being done by the government to improve household food security?
13. How such measures are suitable to this locality?
14. How such measures do you think improve the food security situations in this community?
15. what are the problems with the government measures undertaken?
16. How the government encourages and strengthens the existing local strategies?
17. How much do you think peoples participate in the planning and implementation of government programs and activities?
18. How do you see the effectiveness of relief food aid operations carried out so far?
19. What are the problems do you think in the operation of relief food aid programs?
20. What alternative solutions do you recommend in order to alleviate the problems of food insecurity in this community?

C. Interview with Government Bodies

1. What are the main problems of the community in this district?
2. How do you see the problem of household food insecurity in this district?
3. What do you think are the causes for these problems?
4. What has been done to address these problems?
5. How such measures do you think are effective?
6. What problems do you encountered in the implementations of food security programs?
7. How do you see the role of local institutions organized by the community in alleviating the impact of food shortages?
8. How do you support and encourages these community or household local strategies?

9. How do you involve the local communities in the planning and implementations of your programs?
10. How do you see the efficiency of relief aid operations carried out so far?
11. What is your future plan to address food insecurity?
12. Do you have any additional comments concerning food insecurity?

Thank You So Much for Your Cooperation!

Appendix 2: Number of People in Need of Food Assistance in 2002 and 2003

Region	Projected total rural population, mid 2002	Population requiring food assistance in 2002	Population requiring food assistance in 2003
Afar	1,167,000	493,840	804,500
Amhara	15,200,000	1,836,630	3,283,429
Benishangul gumuz	515,000	9,000	31,600
Dire Dawa	100,000	53,600	91,500
Gambella	163,000	32,800	58,361
Harari	72,000	19,000	20,000
Oromiya	17,720,760	1,829,097	3,999,681
SNNR	11,657,000	1,043,900	1,620,452
Somali	3,150,000	894,800	1,242,472
Tigray	3,200,000	948,860	2,033,777
Total	**52,945,360**	**7,161,527**	**13,184,772**

Total population in 2004 was estimated at 71 million

Source: DPPC 2004.