

# *ETHIOPIA: THE PATH TO SELF-RESILIENCY*

## *Summary of Findings*

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## I. Introduction

This document summarizes the findings of a research effort coordinated by the Canadian NGO Network in Ethiopia (CANGO) to assess the factors that contribute to the vulnerability and resilience of communities and households in rural Ethiopia. The overall purpose of this study is to provide insights on how best to promote self-resiliency for the chronically food insecure, both at the household and community levels. It is also intended to provide guidance on means of improving the effectiveness and complementarity of PSNP, OFSP and NGO interventions by employing a sustainable livelihoods approach to examining the vulnerability and resilience of beneficiary households and communities.

The assessment of vulnerability within the various livelihood systems found in Ethiopia was based on an analysis of access to critical assets and resources, the constraints faced by households and communities within a certain livelihood system, as well as the role of social capital in determining livelihood security.



Another key contribution of this study is the identification of livelihoods-specific criteria for PSNP and OFSP graduation, as well as thresholds for achieving household resilience, each of which can be found in Volume II of the study report (Regional Specific Findings). Finally, in an effort to enhance the effectiveness of ongoing food security programs in Ethiopia, the study offers recommendations for improving linkages between existing government and non-government interventions in order to improve the targeting, implementation and monitoring of food security programs at the national, regional and local levels.

Time and resource constraints limited the assessment team to collecting qualitative and quantitative data from nine woredas in five distinct regions of Ethiopia. It was therefore critical to purposively select individual woredas in a manner that ensured heterogeneity with respect to livelihood systems, agro-ecological area conditions, access to services, and participation in the PSNP. Based on these criteria, the following woredas were selected for inclusion in the study:

- ◆ Enderta and Raya Azebo Woredas, Tigray Region;
- ◆ Ziquala and Habru Woredas, Amhara Region;
- ◆ Adami Tulu and Grawa Woredas, Oromiya Region;
- ◆ Dirashe and Siltie Woredas, SNNPR; and
- ◆ Chefera Woreda, Afar region

## II. Vulnerability and Resilience within Various Livelihood Systems

A primary objective of this study was to identify key factors related to vulnerability and risk management for each of the major livelihood systems in Ethiopia. In order to understand the vulnerability of communities and households with respect to an array of risks, this study examined a range of livelihood systems currently functioning in the nine Waredas surveyed. Despite the diversity revealed by varying climatic conditions, availability of natural resources, and access to social services, each of the livelihood systems can be broadly grouped into one of the following five different categories:

- Diversified Peri-Urban Livelihood Systems
- Highland Food Crop Dominant Livelihood Systems
- Lowland Livestock Dominant Livelihood Systems
- Cereal Crop and Livestock Mixed Livelihood Systems
- Cereal/Food Crop and Cash Crop Livelihood Systems

## III. Household Vulnerability Analysis

In addition to exploring vulnerability factors and risk management strategies within the various livelihood systems, the study sought to identify differences between vulnerable and non-vulnerable households across the entire sample. These differences were analyzed in terms of demographic characteristics, access to assets, and consumption patterns. It is assumed that if major differences can be detected between these groups, the information would be helpful for improving the targeting of the PSNP, OFSP and other food security interventions implemented in Ethiopia. Based on an analysis of demographic, asset ownership, and household consumption indicators, the study revealed the following characteristics among households highly vulnerable to food insecurity:



- Vulnerable households tend to have a larger proportion of female household heads and fewer household members;
- Vulnerable households often have a shortage of household labor and report relatively low educational attainment of household heads;
- Vulnerable households tend to have considerably less access to livelihood assets (land for farming/grazing, water, livestock, etc.);
- Vulnerable households reported extremely low monthly expenditures on food and durable household goods compared to non-vulnerable households;
- Vulnerable households tend to experience severe and prolonged seasonal food shortages.

## Gender Issues

In accordance with previous research, this study found that limited access to productive assets and labor markets, unequal compensation, and limited opportunities for participation in household and community decision-making are the most significant constraints to food and livelihood security among Ethiopian women.<sup>1-4</sup> For instance, while the PIM encourages female participation in the woreda and kebele-level FSTF, this study found that women are rarely involved in the targeting of PSNP beneficiaries and very few hold leadership roles within the community. Meanwhile, many female respondents explained that their involvement in PSNP activities means they have less time and energy to spend on other duties such as supporting the health and education of children, caring for elderly and/or chronically ill household members, and performing daily labor on their own agricultural land.

Quantitative data confirm the greater vulnerability of female heads of household across the entire sample. For example, female-headed households were found to have fewer assets per capita and female heads of household are less likely to have attended formal education than their male counterparts. While the study found that in general, participation of women in household income generation has improved in recent years there remains a significant difference in income generating opportunities available to women and men. Findings suggest that women within the study areas are most often channeled into low-income, low-status livelihood strategies.

Despite traditional social practices that limit women's roles in rural Ethiopia to home management and assisting men in household agricultural production the study found that women are increasingly aware of their right to be involved in community development activities and are willing to voice their opinions in public gatherings. Similarly, women throughout the study area reported an increase in decision-making influence within their individual households. This was particularly true in cases where female household members play a significant role in the generation of household income.

## IV. Household Aspirations

Consideration of household aspirations adds another dimension to this study by investigating the role that attitudes and expectations concerning future food and livelihood security play in determining self-resiliency. Household aspirations condition the preferences, choices, and calculations of individuals and groups as well as the relationships they form within a particular community. Analysis of household aspirations is an important component of the current study given that they have been found to be directly linked to self-resiliency. Previous research on individual aspirations has found that those with positive aspirations for the future are much more

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<sup>1</sup> Sharp, K., Brown, T., and Teshome, A. (2006). Targeting Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). London, UK: Overseas Development Institute with the IDL Group

<sup>2</sup> Slater, R., Ashley, S., Tefera, M., Buta, M. and Esubalew, D. (2006) PSNP Policy, Programme and Institutional Linkages: Final Report. London, UK: Overseas Development Institute with the IDL Group and Indak International

<sup>3</sup> Devereux, S., Sabates-Wheeler, R., Tefera, M., and Taye, H. (2006). Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP): Trends in PSNP Transfers Within Targeted Households Final Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies

<sup>4</sup> Lautze S., Aklilu, Y., Raven-Roberts, A., Young, H., Kebede, G., & Leaning, J. (2003) Risk and Vulnerability in Ethiopia: Learning from the Past, Responding to the Present, Preparing for the Future. Washington DC: USAID

likely to make investments in household well-being that will allow them to successfully escape poverty over the long term.

For the purpose of this study, ‘aspiration failure’ is defined as a lack of systematic and pro-active effort to better one’s future. Alternatively, ‘aspiration gaps’ represent the difference between the position one aspires to and the one he/she currently find themselves in. Aspiration failures occur when the gap is either too narrow or too wide, leading in both cases to low levels of effort on the part of the individual to improve his/her situation. Ultimately, findings from this study suggest that unless a household is proactively engaged in bettering its future, graduation based on asset accumulation may not lead to long-term self-resiliency. The following key findings resulted from an analysis of household aspirations:

- A third of the entire sample believes success or failure in life is primarily the result of destiny and/or luck;
- More than 50 percent of respondents in Chifira and Ziquala woredas felt that luck was the primary determinant of success in life while 80 percent of respondents in Dirashe woreda believe that hard work is the primary key to a successful life.
- Data suggest that individuals who believe they are primarily responsible for their own success in life are more likely to take out slightly larger loans and make longer-term investments.

## V. Analysis of Household and Community Self-Resiliency

In addition to the comprehensive analysis of indicators of food and livelihood insecurity, the study examines an array of factors that contribute to, or detract from, household vulnerability. It also assesses the more subjective attainment of “resilience” at both the household and community levels. For the purpose of this study, *resilience* refers to a household’s or a community’s ability to bounce back or recover after adversity or hard times, and to be capable of building positively on these adversities. This study found that traditional mechanisms for promoting community resiliency may be perpetuating intra-community inequality and preventing poorer households from escaping chronic poverty in exchange for safety and security. Household self resiliency is difficult to achieve under these circumstances. Such processes perpetuate poverty traps for poorer households and can lead to low aspirations.



Factors found to contribute to household resilience across the range of livelihood systems in the nine woredas include:

- an ability to diversify sources of income;

- a willingness to invest in productive household assets;
- a commitment to establishing savings and/or contingency funds; and
- shared decision making between spouses.

The study also examined four specific factors that influence community resilience. The following factors were identified:

- community attitudes toward collaboration;
- cooperation and change;
- the strength of relationships between internal (local) and external institutions;
- the degree of collective decision making; and
- the management of internal and external resources.

In addition to the specific factors mentioned above, the study identified individual ‘enablers’ and ‘inhibitors’ of community resilience. Enablers of community resilience in Ethiopia include strong rural-urban linkages and community social assets, collective appreciation for and commitment to investments in human capital, and the presence of resilient households to serve as role models. Inhibitors of community resilience include weak access to markets, lack of complementary food security programs, constraining religious influence on participation in credit programs, limited community involvement in selection and implementation of PSNP interventions, poor communal management of natural resources, and low household aspirations.

## **VI. Program Linkages and Layering**

In order to ensure the effectiveness of federal food security programs, the Federal Food Security Coordination Bureau (FSCB) and the Federal Food Security Steering Committee have created expectations of strong linkages between the regional and woreda levels in planning, budgeting and support and between woreda and lower levels for activity planning and targeting of the PSNP and OFSP.

Despite the fact that the PIM explicitly sets forth the need for PSNP and OFSP complementarity at the regional and woreda level as a necessary condition for food security program graduation, the reality, as repeatedly conveyed by stakeholders at every level, is that horizontal linkages between the programs are also weak. The study found that OFSP activities frequently fail to complement or coordinate with PSNP, negating the potential for sustainability and enhanced resilience.

A common complaint with respect to the effectiveness of horizontal linkages under the PSNP involved the timing and direction of budget allocations to woreda sector offices/line departments charged with carrying out specific activities. Due to delayed disbursements, sector offices often lack necessary materials and fall behind in scheduling individual activities. The lack of effective horizontal linkages was cited as a major reason for delayed implementation of activities as well as the lack of an integrated, multi-sector approach to improving household resilience under the PSNP.

Although the level of program coordination varies somewhat among the nine regions, common constraints to effective horizontal and vertical linkages include the following:

- Vertical linkages between woreda technical experts, kebele administrators, DAs operating in the field, community elders and groups, and FSTF personnel at the kebele, woreda, and regional levels are generally weak and frequently ineffective;
- Food Security and line offices frequently fail to share reports documenting implementation and monitoring issues, oversights that can negatively affect the quality of the implementation and field supervision process, rendering follow up difficult.
- NGO program strategies are frequently not harmonized with woreda development plans. NGO programming usually does not complement the FSP approach. Instead, the NGO presence in PSNP woredas frequently means the NGO programming activities substitute for PSNP activities.
- Ineffective horizontal linkages delay the implementation of activities and impede an integrated multi-sector approach to improved household resilience under the PSNP and other food security programs.
- National coordination structures between the Food Security Bureau (FSB) and the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Agency (DPPA) are poorly defined, limiting the PSNP's ability to respond to emergency and food insecurity crises.
- In many cases, woreda food security personnel have yet to receive sufficient guidance on their role in creating horizontal linkages and little support in coordinating activities, especially in the areas of project, beneficiary selection and graduation.
- As a result of high turnover, low remuneration, insufficient training, inadequately qualified staff, and personnel shortages at key woreda-level positions, NGOs tend to discount the commitment of field and office personnel. NGOs would like to engage woreda and kebele staff in relevant training and programming exercises, but are not always prepared to pay the per diem demanded by government staff for their participation.

## **VII. Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to provide insights on how best to promote self-resiliency for the chronically food insecure, both at the household and community levels. It is intended to provide guidance on how to improve current implementation practices by NGOs employing a sustainable livelihoods approach which, while complementing the federal FSP and PSNP, aims to lift vulnerable communities and households beyond graduation from food insecurity to 'self resiliency'. The following recommendations are proposed with this purpose in mind. The first set of program recommendations seek to highlight the complementary interventions needed to promote resiliency. This is followed by implementation recommendations aimed at improving coordination and collaboration between PSNP and other food and livelihood security interventions implemented by NGOs.

### **1. Program Recommendations**

Based on the study findings a number of activities can be implemented that could enhance self-resiliency at the household and community level. First the recommendations related to promoting

household resilience are presented, followed by those that relate to community resilience. These are followed by recommendations related to pastoral communities.

#### **a. Program Investments Aimed at Promoting Household Self Resiliency**

- **Investments that will enable households to diversify their livelihood strategies in order to accumulate assets-**
  - The mix of interventions being promoted must be aligned with the opportunities that exist in a given livelihood system, or agro-ecological zone. This means that different sets of interventions would be implemented in different livelihood contexts.
  - Livestock investments must be coupled with investments in veterinary services and fodder/grazing resources. If PSNP and other food security programs want households to invest in and maintain livestock, then these other investments are essential to protect the investment.
  - Investments in education and skill building to enable households to diversify their livelihood options. Such investments are considered extremely important by female headed households.
  - Redesign existing credit mechanisms to make them more flexible and affordable to the poor. Existing credit packages are not attractive to the poor due to the perceived risk of adopting the package as well as the high interest rates.
  - Provide opportunities for households (especially women) to participate in saving groups and to receive training in contingency planning.
- **Widening aspiration windows for the poor in order to expand household aspirations and to encourage more pro-active behavioural responses to risk management.**
  - Resilient households, both male and female, found in different livelihood systems could share their experiences and advise other households to demonstrate the potential to escape from chronic poverty and food insecurity. Similarly, networks of graduates from PSNP could be used as change agents to encourage households to take a more pro-active stance in achieving self-resiliency. The key is to learn from resilient household experiences.
  - Encourage household cross-visits so that households can experience contact with resilient households in other communities.
- **In areas with limited resources and services, and few complementary OFSP interventions, PSNP activities must be implemented longer than the current window of 5 years.**

#### **b. Program Investments Aimed at Promoting Community Self-Resiliency**

- **Support local social capital initiatives:**
  - In many of the communities visited, local savings groups (e.g.Equb), mutual support groups (Iddir), and local work groups (Morroo in Oromiya, Weberra in Amhara, Debo/Wonfel in SNNPR) are operating to support participating households. These

groups should be strengthened and ways should be sought to diversify their functions. New organizational structures introduced by government or NGOs should not undermine these groups if they are operating effectively. Participatory planning and implementation is one of the most attractive and effective characteristics of many social capital groups.

➤ **Introduce women’s micro-savings groups in areas where credit options are discouraged :**

- Building on the lessons learned from CARE in Oromiya, women’s micro-saving systems could be introduced in the Amhara and Afar region where Muslim leaders discourage households from taking out credit.<sup>5</sup> Women’s micro-savings group promotion may therefore be more effective than micro-credit. Micro-savings activities can promote productive investments, livelihood diversification, enhanced opportunities for women, and provide an excellent forum with which to promote other social and political capital activities. In the pastoral and agro-pastoral context, small ruminant loans to women allow them to build up livestock; a group promotion approach can be used to link women entrepreneurs with markets and build up resilience and social status.

➤ **Engage the whole community in development initiatives –**

- In many situations, the better off households are left out of program designs or decisions on investments. These individuals could be key to creating resilient communities because of their own experiences, and should not be left out of the dialogue. Care must be taken to ensure that community initiatives are not co-opted by the elite.
- Promote community ownership and management of natural resources. This will require engaging the whole community in the stewardship of the resources, not just PNSP participants. Too often, PNSP soil and water conservation activities have usurped communities’ initiatives to manage their natural resources.

### **c. Pastoral Programming Recommendations**

➤ **Invest in pastoral livelihoods, rather than just try to turn pastoralists into sedentary farmers.** As the Safety Nets Program forges into pastoral livelihoods systems, it is crucial to use the experiences gleaned from the years of Food Security programming in highlands and non-pastoral areas of the country to ensure community participation and empowerment in the design process. Supporting pastoral livelihoods should include:

- **Veterinary services** – it is inexplicable that pastoral communities in Afar and Somali regions lack access to veterinary services;
- **Building up holistic pastoral extension systems**, essential pre-requisite to improving livestock management;
- **Building the capacity of community members** to initiate and oversee veterinary services for their community;

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<sup>5</sup> This could also be considered an economic capital recommendation.

- **Range management;**
  - **Wildlife conservation,** a community asset; and
  - **Seasonal loans to women’s groups for livestock**
- **In addition to investment in strengthening pastoral livelihoods, food security programming in pastoral contexts should strive to diversify livelihood options.** Pastoral livelihoods could be diversified through:
- **Investments in riverside agriculture** -- rivers in pastoral areas are under-utilized, but can support food production and as critically, fodder production;
  - **Strengthening women’s groups and petty trade,** particularly in areas adjacent to towns – Promote business skills within communities in range of small towns to allow local communities to benefit from the development of towns;
  - **Promotion of labor-saving technologies for women,** who are overworked with labor responsibility within and outside of the household. These types of implementation activities should also include training to clan leaders and elders about women’s burdens;
  - **Health, sanitation, and nutrition education;** and
  - **Public works for social services** – Schools and health centers are essential in Afar and Somali but should not be constructed unless an agreement is in place to properly staff and equip the structures to ensure the actual utility of the social services. Within the pastoral context, it is important to consider building woreda health care capacity to:
    - introduce health outreach programs,
    - initiate mobile health care treatment services, and
    - provide proper services related to HIV/AIDS

## **2. Strengthening Collaboration and Coordination in Promoting PSNP and OFSP**

Although the Project Implementation Manual (PIM) tries to spell out the duties, responsibilities and structures for linkages between different institutions at different levels, coordination between and amongst government agencies as well as between government and NGOs remains quite problematic. There are several reasons for this conundrum, including the array of stakeholders operating at different levels, staff capacities, high turnover rates in different regions, incomplete coverage of OFSP activities in all PSNP operational areas, and logistical challenges in planning, implementing and monitoring the PSNP at the scale it is operating. Recommendations for improving coordination and collaboration are presented below. Recommendations related to strengthening vertical linkages will be presented first, follow by those related to strengthening horizontal linkages.

### **a. Strengthening Vertical Linkages**

- **Timely budget releases** - Untimely disbursement of the budget to Woreda sector offices and kebeles for public work activities, purchase of materials, and payment to beneficiaries can reduce the effectiveness of the overall implementation of the program. This is heavily influenced by the availability and timely delivery of financial and project monitoring

reports from Kebele and Woreda offices. Resources are needed to strengthen the capacity of Woreda and Kebele staff to generate these reports in a timely manner. Although woreda FSP and sector offices have received training in reporting, retraining is clearly needed followed by close monitoring to ensure that financial and monitoring reports are properly prepared and sent from the kebele to woreda to the regional FSB in a timely manner. Training activities should include facilitated discussions between sector and FSP offices to ensure efficient reporting structures are understood by all. Some of the NGOs collaborating on the FSP have developed good monitoring systems and could contribute to this effort.

- **Two way information flow** - Woreda and Kebele offices are responsible for regular monitoring and reporting on program implementation. National and Regional offices should be responsible for reporting back lessons learned to help improve program coordination and collaboration. Woreda FSP staff should regularly participate in capacity building exercises, particularly given the high turnover. NGO experiences can be used to help in this regard.
- **Retention and effectiveness of Woreda FSP personnel** – Donors and the national FSB Coordinating office should reflect on remuneration and administrative and logistical support to Woreda offices to encourage retaining committed staff. Included in such a review is the DSA or per diem policy. NGOs throughout the regions have reported an interest in collaborating more effectively with government field staff, who nevertheless lack logistical support and tend not to participate without receive per diem from the NGO to go in to the field.
- **Community participation in intervention selection, planning, targeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation** - Many of the public works activities that communities would like to implement are not given high priority. If communities chose the assets they want to build, they are more likely to take ownership. Woreda FSP field project staff as well as sector experts should participate in training activities aimed at improving participatory facilitation skills. NGO training activities could reach out to include FSP staff.
- **GOE-NGO fora to increase collaboration & cooperation** – Several of the recommendations listed above would be strengthened by increased GOE-NGO collaboration. Donors should consider supporting systematic collaboration workshops at the regional and/or national levels bringing together government office personnel, major donors, and NGO partners to discuss practical means by which collaboration could be strengthened. NGOs need to design their project interventions more systematically in collaboration with woreda and regional offices in order to ensure adherence to the woreda development plans as well as promotion of linked programs, which will increase program impact. Similarly, NGOs can contribute in capacity building, technical quality, and monitoring efforts more systematically.

## **b. Strengthening Horizontal Linkages**

- **Strengthen the capacity of the Woreda administration to coordinate and lead the Woreda Food Security Task Force (WFSTF) so that all food security programs in the woreda are linked and coordinated.** This should involve major investments in training,

materials and logistics. This coordination should be at the woreda level rather than at the community level. Involve NGO partners working with the FSP in the woreda by including their representatives on the WFSTF, which will strengthen linkages and coordination and allow the WFSTF to recruit NGOs in the training and logistics plans for the woreda.

- **Planning, implementation and monitoring of all food security programs should be coordinated by the WFSTF.** Good examples of such horizontal linkages between NGOs and Woreda administrations can be found with REST in Tigray, ORDA in Amhara, Save the Children UK in Amhara, and CARE in Oromiya. Horizontal linkages can be strengthened to promote more effective and efficient programming and therefore improved sustained outcomes. Because many woreda and kebele offices are currently understaffed, consider using NGOs operating in the woreda to assist in monitoring and verifying the quality and quantity of public works implemented in the kebeles.
- **All NGO projects should be incorporated into Woreda development plans.** For example, the micro enterprise and agricultural development project implement by ORDA (Reducing Dependency and Increasing Resilience) was incorporated into the Habru Wareda development plan. This point relates strongly to the previous point about coordination and complementarity.
- **NGOs and government should engage in joint monitoring and evaluation of program activities.** For example, CARE participates with Woreda staff in undertaking panel monitoring on a bi-annual basis. Such panel monitoring improves transparency among implementers and coordinating bodies and facilitates joint planning. CARE also carries out monthly zonal level meetings with government to comprehend the food security situation as part of an early warning exercise. Similar types of meetings were carried out by Save the Children UK to monitor the implementation of an IPM program in Amhara. NGOs should institute systematic cross visits to explore innovative programming, linkages and layering mechanisms and activities implemented by each other.
- **Sharing resources for joint training can strengthen integration.** CARE and the Woreda administration jointly funded a watershed management workshop. This workshop strengthened future collaboration.
- **At the Kebele level, insure that communities are involved in program design, beneficiary selection, program implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.** It is also important to involve the whole community in the process, especially better-off households that are not targeted by the project. As mentioned above, PSNP implementing field staff should receive field-based training in facilitation methodologies toward promoting comprehensive community involvement in all aspects of program implementation and monitoring.

### c. Food Security Graduation

- **Come to an agreement on acceptable criteria for graduation in a given livelihood context.** Government and NGOs working in an area should jointly work with communities to derive acceptable criteria for graduation. These criteria should be vetted with all stakeholders to identify and implement acceptable relevant and appropriate measures. In situations where few OFSP operate in the area, caution should be exercised in removing households off of PSNP too quickly. Tracking graduation is a skill requiring capacity

building at the woreda and kebele levels to improve monitoring and assessment skills and effectiveness.

- **Chose appropriate asset-based benchmarks for graduation criteria.** Graduation benchmarks should be asset-based or could be established on the basis of a combination of assets and consumption variables. Assets are relatively easy to monitor, particularly in comparison to income levels, and information about assets is already collected as part of the household PSNP selection process. This study has confirmed the close correlation between vulnerability, food insecurity, and the lack of access to assets. Assets are the means by which households create livelihood opportunities in rural Ethiopia and figure prominently in households' ability to cope with shocks and protect food security by selling key assets such as livestock.
- **Graduation benchmarks should be determined at the woreda level.** The determination of graduation benchmarks or thresholds should take place at the woreda level, involving the input of the woreda FSTF with input from the various kebele FSTFs within the woreda. The FSTF teams could make adjustments, if needed, for differences by livelihood system within the woreda. Determining and then monitoring graduation benchmarks by livelihood system is probably not feasible, given that many woredas are characterized by several different livelihood systems that straddle woredas, zones, and regions of the country. On the other hand, establishing graduation thresholds at the regional level is far too wide-ranging and would not allow for differences by woreda and livelihood system.