



# LAND ACCESS AND YOUTH LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA: SUMMARY REPORT

By Sosina Bezu and Stein Holden

*SECURING LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS FOR ALL*

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*‘Securing Land and Property Rights for All’*

**UN**  **HABITAT**

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine current land access and youth livelihood opportunities in Southern Ethiopia. We used survey data from the relatively land abundant districts of Oromia Region and from the land scarce districts of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) Region. Although access to agricultural land is a constitutional right for rural residents of Ethiopia, we found that youth in the rural south have limited potential to obtain agricultural land that can be a basis for viable livelihood. The law prohibits the purchase and sale of land in Ethiopia. We found that land access through allocation from authorities is virtually nonexistent while land that can be obtained from parents through inheritance or gift is too small to establish a meaningful livelihood. The land rental market has restrictions, including on the number of years land can be rented out. Perhaps as a result of limited land access, the youth have turned their back on agriculture. Our study shows that only nine percent of youth in these rural areas plan to pursue farming as a livelihood. The majority are planning non-agricultural livelihoods. We also found a significant rural-urban migration among the youth and especially in areas with severe agricultural land scarcity. Our econometric analyses show that youth from families with larger land holdings are less likely to choose a non-agricultural livelihood as well as less likely to migrate to urban areas. We suggest here some measures to improve rural livelihood such as creation of non-farm employment opportunities and improvement of land rental markets. We also argue that as a certain level of rural-urban migration is unavoidable, investigating youth migration is essential to design policies that help the migrating youth as well as the host communities.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment and lack of livelihood has become a major global concern in recent years following the global economic crisis that triggered a sharp rise in youth unemployment in 2008-2009. The global youth unemployment rate is estimated to be 12.6% for 2013 and is expected to remain high for the next five years (ILO, 2013). Although agricultural economies like that of Ethiopia have not been hit as hard by the crisis, there is still significant unemployment; with some of those reportedly employed having vulnerable livelihood. Sub-Saharan Africa has a regional unemployment rate of 11% but the rate of working people who are poor is by far the highest in the world, estimated at 40.1 per cent in 2012 at the US\$1.25 per day level (ILO, 2013).

Secure land rights play a vital role in achieving the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - Eradicating poverty and hunger. For rural residents, agricultural land is one of the most important sources of employment and livelihood. Lack of access to agricultural land may thus translate to food insecurity and unemployment unless there are enough non-agricultural livelihood opportunities to supplement the agricultural sector. Rural youth who do not have access to agricultural land may also be unable to secure non-agricultural livelihood because they often lack complementary resources such as social and financial capital.

Ethiopia's current population is estimated to be more than 86 million (CSA, 2013). The population is predominantly rural with 84% employed in agriculture. A recent nationally representative survey shows that the majority of Ethiopia's population is young, with the youth and adolescent population alone (10-30 years old) accounting for 40.6% the total population in 2011 (CSA & ICF, 2012). Access to agricultural land is, therefore, one of the most important determinants of livelihood outcome for most of Ethiopia's youth.

Access to agricultural land has been a constitutional right in Ethiopia since the 1970's. The recent land use proclamation reinforces this right for all citizens (18 years old or above) who choose to engage in agriculture (FDRE, 2005). The state is able to pass such legislation because all land is owned by the state and land holders get perpetual user rights. But increasingly, it has become difficult to fulfill this right for the young generation. Ethiopia faces land scarcity in parts of the highlands where population densities have become very high and farm sizes very small. As a result, land as a safety net is eroding and landlessness emerging among the youth who are unable to stay on their parents' land. This is particularly true for Southern Ethiopia where farm sizes are the smallest in the country. New land laws also add complications as the minimum farm size is now set at 0.5 ha for annual crop systems and 0.25 ha for perennial crop systems while many farms are already smaller than this.

This study aims to examine land access and youth livelihood in Southern Ethiopia, focusing on the current land access for youth and how this access to land or lack of it, influences their livelihood opportunities. In addition, we explore how land scarcity influences the welfare of young people, including their nutritional and educational outcomes. The specific research questions include:

1. What livelihoods strategies do the youth choose when land scarcity becomes very high? Are the youth aiming to obtain land for agriculture or are they looking for alternative livelihood options outside agriculture?
2. How is land scarcity and land certification affecting the access to land and land tenure security of youth?
3. How does extreme land scarcity affect the intra-household competition for land? Who are leaving and who remain behind and why?

4. How is land scarcity affecting;
  - a. The nutritional status of children and youth that stay on the farm?
  - b. The education decisions of the children?
  - c. The gendered land distribution among children in the household?
5. To what extent are the youth organized and demand land as a source of future livelihood?
6. How and to what extent are the local governments and communities responding to the youth needs and demands?
7. What are the complementary constraints and needs that the youth face in accessing and efficiently utilizing land resources to secure their livelihood and improve their welfare?
8. What are the best practices used to improve access to land for youth, to mobilize and empower them in relation to land utilization?

## 2. DATA SOURCES AND STUDY AREA

The survey for this youth study was carried out in February-March 2013. We built on a baseline study of 615 households in 2007 that focus on gender and land rights (Holden and Tefera 2008). The youth interview addresses youth involvement in agriculture; land inheritance expectations; trust and

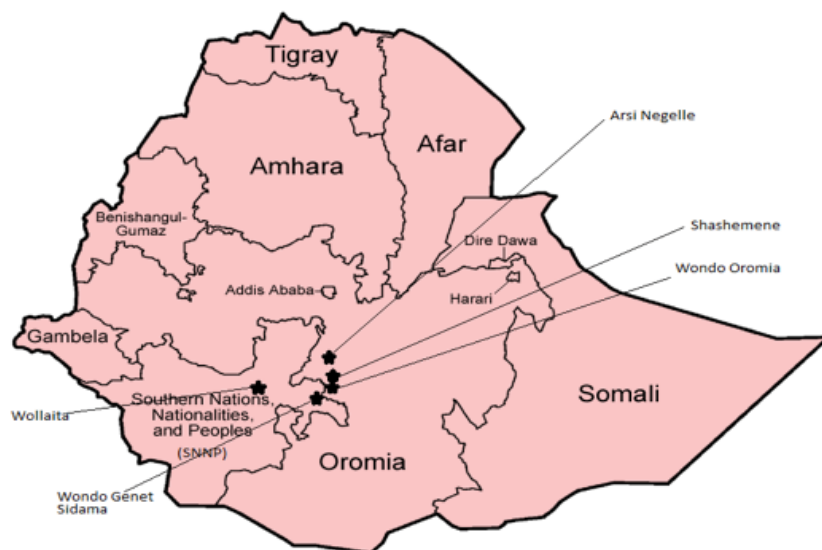
cooperation with siblings and parents; preferences and expectations in relation to marriage; and livelihood options and choices. The questions posed for household heads deal with past and future land inheritance to children, land registration and certification status and schooling decisions for children. In addition, detailed demographic data was collected, including information on the household members who left the household. After questionnaire based interviews, we carried out social field experiments that explored the sharing behavior and trust among siblings and with other youth in the village. Descriptive analyses and regression analyses are used to answer our research questions.

The locations and households that were included in the study were identified using stratified random sampling. Stratification was based on agro-ecosystem variation, market access, population density (urban expansion pressure) and regional differences in land laws and implementation of land registration and certification. The sample included three major ethnic groups (with different languages). The study is carried out in sixteen peasant associations in five districts. Two districts are from Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) region and three of the districts are from Oromia region.

### Study Areas

**Wondo Genet in SNNP region:** A cash-crop and perennial zone with very high population density (64% of farms below 0.5 ha). The main cash crops are sugarcane, chat and coffee. Maize and enset are main staple crops.

**Wollaita in SNNP region:** A subsistence oriented perennial zone with very high population density (67% of farms were below 0.5 ha). Enset, maize, and root and tuber crops are the main food crops.



**Sashemene in Oromia region:** A cereal producing area and growing trading centre (small town development) where farm sizes are relatively larger (22% of farms were below 0.5 ha).

**Arsi Negelle in Oromia region:** A cereal producing area with relatively larger farm sizes (12% of farms were below 0.5ha).

**Wondo Genet in Oromia region:** This location capture Oromo people that have settled in the Wondo Genet area. Agro-ecological conditions are similar to those in Wondo Genet in SNNP region.

### 3. YOUTH LAND ACCESS

The population in Ethiopia is predominantly young. The youth and adolescent population (10-30 years old) alone account for 40.6% of the total population in 2011 (CSA & ICF, 2012). But proportionately fewer youth are land holders. The 2012 national level land use survey shows that the youth accounts for 21% of rural land holders in Ethiopia. Young female holders are even fewer with only 3% of land holders identified as women aged 18-29 years.

#### 3.1 Conflicting legal rights to land access

Land is owned by the State in Ethiopia. However, all residents in rural communities in Ethiopia who do not have alternative livelihood opportunities have a constitutional right to obtain land as a basis for their livelihood since 1975. Section 5 of the 2005 Rural Land Administration and Land Use Proclamation states that:

*Peasant farmers/pastoralists engaged in agriculture for a living shall be given rural land free of charge (Land Use Law, Section 5, No. 1-A)*

*Any citizen of the country who is 18 years of age or above and wants to engage in agriculture for a living shall have the right to use rural land; children who lost their mothers and fathers due to death or other situation shall have the right to use rural land through legal guardians until they attain 18 years of age (Land Use Law, Section 5, No. 1-B).*

This “land as a safety net” right is also the basis for the prohibition of land sales in the country. This constitutional right was provided to youth through



Youth in 'Chat' (stimulant leaf) trade : youth are hired or self-employed as collector, transporter, vendor or broker  
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repeated land redistributions that aimed to maintain an egalitarian land distribution and households accessed land based on their subsistence needs (family size) and the production potential (land quality classes) of the land (Holden & Yohannes, 2002). Increasingly these redistributions had to take place by reallocating land from more land-rich to land-poor households and this created tenure insecurity as the land redistribution game became a zero-sum game when all surplus land in the communities had been allocated to households. It was this tenure insecurity and weak land rights of individual households that undermined investment in land and created a demand for more secure land rights that ultimately led to the halting of the land redistributions and to the recent land registration and certification reform that aims to provide more secure land rights. This implies, however, that Ethiopia has created conflicting legal rights in favor of current owners and occupiers of the land and at the expense of future potential occupiers and owners which are the growing land-poor or landless youth population who cannot rely on their constitutional right being provided by the state any more.

### 3.2 Youth land access through inheritance and gifts from parents

With the abolition of the redistribution policy and due to increase in land scarcity, it has become more and more difficult for youth to access land. Most rural communities have a long waiting list of youth that have applied to get land from the authorities. In many places they have started to give them a small plot for building a house but too small to be used

for farming purposes. In our sample, a total of 95 youth reported to have secured some kind of access to farmland. However, only 6 obtained land from the land administrative authorities.

The average farm size for our sample households is 0.86 hectares. This is barely enough to sustain a family under the current agricultural production system. But currently, this family farm appears to be the only source of long term land access for young farmers as they seek to start their own family or live independently from their parents. The majority of parents recognize that their farm is the main source of land access to their children and intend to hand down at least part of their farm land before the current household head dies. Close to 90% of households are willing to transfer on average a little less than half of their current land holding to their children while parents are alive (see appendix for tables). Parents do not necessarily hand over their less desired land. In fact, proportionately more people plan to give the land closer to homestead (40%) than land further away from the homestead (30%). Only 3% of household heads indicated that they will transfer the less fertile land as opposed to 13% who reported the intention to transfer the more fertile land. It appears that parents have to hold on to their land to maintain their family and transfer part of their land as the need arises.

So, when do parents give land to their children? We asked the parents and the youth, separately, for their opinion on the most appropriate 'time' to transfer land

**Table 1. Youth and parents opinion on when to have intergenerational land transfer**

	Parents' opinion		Youth's opinion	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
At marriage	340	55.9	277	46.3
When both parents die	60	9.9	24	4.0
When the father dies	6	1.0	6	1.0
When either parent die	17	2.8	11	1.8
When son/daughter becomes an adult	153	25.2	210	35.1
After son/daughter finish high school and is unemployed	23	3.8	64	10.7
Other	9	1.5	6	1.0
Sample	608	100	598	100

Source: Own survey data

from parents to children. Table 1 summarizes their responses.

Most of the parents and youth think that marriage is the most appropriate occasion for a transfer of land from parent to children. However, proportionately more parents (56%) than youth (46%) choose marriage as the most appropriate time for land transfer. On the other hand, the percentage of youth who elected adulthood as the most appropriate time for land transfer is 10 percentage points higher than parents that elected the same. In general while marriage seems to be the accepted time that most parents and children expect the land transfer to happen, the youth prefer the transfer to happen earlier while the parents' preference is in direction of a later transfer.

### 3.3 Small land, many inheritors

As farm sizes in our study areas are small relative to their household size, sharing parents' land among children is a challenge. A computation based on current land holding of parents in our sample shows that if all sons and daughters of the household inherit, each receive on average 0.22 hectares. This is such a small amount of land that it cannot be even registered according to the 2005 Land Use Law which states that "where rural land is transferred by succession, it shall be made in such a way that the size of the land to be transferred is not less than the minimum size holding" (FDRE, 2005, Section 11-2). In both Oromia and SNNP, the minimum holding size is 0.5 hectares for rain-fed agriculture with annual crops and 0.25 hectares for perennial crops and irrigated land (Holden & Tefera, 2008). Even if farmers are to bequeath all land only to their sons, the average land that each receives will still be below the minimum size for a large share of the households. More importantly, such farm size is too small to be a basis for sustainable livelihood under the current agricultural system.

Under these circumstances, one option of maintaining formal land access for all the children will be co-management among siblings or/and with parents. This does not, however, solve the concern for household food security unless supplementary sources of income can be found. Another option is for some of the inheritors willingly to forfeit their inheritance right or

for parents to select inheritors among their children. Our survey indicates that such options may have been adopted by some of the households. Our interviews with the youth indicated that 40% of the youth who have not received land from their parents do not expect to inherit in the future. However, the majority of the youth are more likely to expect inheritance of some land the higher the value of land or the larger the farm size. Young women are less likely to expect land inheritance than young men. This is not surprising given the patrilineal tradition for land inheritance in Ethiopia.

These land transfer issues are increasingly pressing and some form of regulation may help to reduce sibling competition and within-household conflicts. Such stress factors could affect the level of trust, generosity and willingness to cooperate on land management within families. Better off-farm employment opportunities due to rapid economic growth in the country may reduce the pressure and facilitate youth access to other livelihood opportunities outside their family farm.

### 3.4 Land access for female youth

Land is traditionally inherited by the sons (patrilineal system) who marry and stay on the farm while daughters typically marry and move to the husband's village. Their land access will thus be through their husbands. Although the Ethiopian land laws grant equal land acquisition and use rights to male and female citizens, parents, who are the main source of land, are the ones who decide the actual outcome. Our question for household heads on this issue reveals that most girls and young women will not be inheriting from their parents. Three-fourth of the household heads in our sample admits that none of their daughters will ever inherit land from them.

Severe land scarcity appears to particularly affect the probability that female children will access land from their parents. We found that parents from Arsi Negelle, where average farm size is the largest in the sample, were seven times more likely to bequeath land to their female offspring than parents in Wollaita where average farm size is the smallest. We expected that land certification increases the probability of daughters inheriting land from parents as their names



A member of survey team recording the decisions of a youth in the behavioural experiment about trust and sharing among youth. © UN-Habitat /Sosina Bezu

are typically registered in relation to households' land holding and on the land certificates. However, this does not seem to make any difference in the study areas. The proportion of household heads who intend to bequeath land to their daughters does not differ by their land certificate status. It appears that the traditional partilineal land inheritance system is not likely to change in the short run. Our econometric analysis shows that female children were less likely to inherit land the smaller the farm size of their parents and the lower the education of the household head.

### 3.5 Land co-management

Co-management of land is likely to increase in importance as further land division violates the minimum land holding legislated in the land laws. Already we observe significant co-management of land in our sample. 36% of youth reported that they

have co-managed land with their parents and 21% with their siblings. The percentage of youth that co-managed land with their siblings is not much different across the different zones but proportionately more youth co-managed land with their parents in the districts in Oromia region than in the two more land-scarce SNNP districts Sidama and Wollaita.

The results from the interview indicate that conflicts with parents and siblings with whom the youth co-manage land are not very common. 72% of those who co-manage land with parents and 70% of those who co-manage land with siblings reported that they have never experienced conflict. In general, conflict experiences are more common in Wollaita where only 38% of youth reported never to have experienced conflict. This could be due to the more severe land scarcity and desperate situation there.

## 4. LAND SCARCITY AND YOUTH LIVELIHOOD

### 4.1 Land scarcity and youth occupational choices

Most of the youth from the rural areas we studied do not plan to follow the footsteps of their parents. Only nine percent of the youth state farming as their planned occupation

**Table 2. Summary of youth occupational choice in Southern Ethiopia**

Livelihood Choice	Freq.	Percent
Farming	56	9
Non-farm wage employment	17	3
Non-farm self-employment and business	177	30
Urban salaried employment	343	58
Total	593	100

Source: Own survey data

Most of those who intend to engage in farming either plan to take over the farm from parents or farm together with parents. Although resettlement has been considered one way out of the land

scarcity problem, particularly in SNNP, only one person in our sample plans to resettle. It may be because resettlement is not something that they can plan as the authorities are the ones that decide on resettlement programs. But this may also be an indication of lack of interest in or knowledge of the resettlement opportunity. Urban salaried employment includes those who want to work in government offices or private companies. About half of these want to go for higher education as the first step.

With a generally small land holding to cultivate and little technological advancement to compensate the small size, the largely traditional agriculture may not be an attractive livelihood opportunity. But lack of access even to the current level of farm size is likely the main factor behind young people turning their back to agriculture. Our econometric analysis confirms the importance of land access for youth livelihood decisions. The results from our regression model shows that youth that came from households with larger land holdings are less likely to choose occupation outside of agriculture whether it is local off-farm wage employment or urban salaried employment. We also found that youth from Wollaita zone, the most land scarce area, are more likely to choose occupation outside of agriculture. In general our choice analysis of the different types of livelihood opportunities indicate that young people choose off-farm wage employment as a result of lack of land access and viable rural livelihood opportunities (push factors) while the urban salaried employment seems to

**Table 3. Overview of youth migration from study areas**

District Name	Migration by destination (% of youth who migrated)					N
	Abroad	Addis Ababa	Other towns	Other rural Areas	All	
Shashemene	1.2	0	1.2	2.1	4.6	241
ArsiNegelle	2.5	1.2	6.2	1.2	11.2	401
Wondo Genet	0.6	2.5	3.4	0	6.5	325
Wollaita	0.2	5.1	21.6	4.4	31.3	450
Wondo Oromia	0	0	1.6	0	1.6	64
Total	1.1	2.4	9.3	2	14.8	1481

Note: Percentage of youth and adolescent (10-30 years old) who migrated between 2007 and 2013

Source: Own survey data

be an attractive opportunity for those with resources, education and flexibility to explore such opportunities (demand factors).

## 4.2 Land scarcity and migration

The urban salaried employment chosen by 58% of the rural youth suggest a significant urban migration in the next few years. However, it is not possible to determine how much of the planned activity is actually carried out. To find the impact of land scarcity on actual migration, we analyzed observed youth migration in the sample between 2007 and 2012. The data shows that 15% of the youth and adolescent population in 2007 have migrated by 2012.

We see that Wollaita has the largest migration rate (31%). This area looked like a prototype Malthusian poverty trap in 2007 but still had very little outmigration. However, from 2007 to 2012 there has been a drastic change in the strategy of the youth in Wollaita. From informal discussions we learned that youth from Wollaita has in the recent years 'taken over the shoe shiner market' in Addis Ababa indicating that the high level of migration in our sample is not an exception. This is a remarkable change in a few years showing that this type of migration can really explode when the internal population pressure in a subsistence community has reached a level beyond its carrying capacity. With continued rural population growth more and more rural communities will soon reach similar and comparable situations for their youth populations. The econometric analyses of factors associated with migration decisions reflect the results from the livelihood analysis. Youth from households with larger land holding are less likely to migrate to urban areas while youth with more years of education are more likely to migrate.

## 4.3 Land scarcity and youth welfare outcome

### Land scarcity and nutrition

This study also explored the impact of land holding on the nutritional status and education attainment of youth that are currently residing in these rural areas. We did not find evidence that households with smaller land holding have poorer nutritional outcomes. This indicates that the recent migration has contributed to break the poverty-environment trap that appeared

severe particularly in Wollaita a few years ago (Holden & Yohannes, 2002; Tessema & Holden, 2007).

Economic growth in Ethiopia might have contributed to improve off-farm employment opportunities and this indirectly affects the nutritional status of youth in rural areas by reducing the population pressure on the land. However, when we assessed the height of youth as a measure of the long-term nutritional status of youth (stunting), land access was significant in the model with village fixed effects and many of the village dummies were highly significant. This indicates that land access and variations across communities in access to food in the past has contributed to substantial variation in stunting. It is therefore likely that the village fixed effects capture part of the land scarcity effect on long-term nutritional status of youth.

### Land scarcity and education

We found that youth from households that have larger land holding have a higher level of education compared to youth in more land-poor households. This is an indication of the positive wealth effect of landholding on parents' decision to send children to school. It may also indicate that parents who are able to earn enough from their farm do not need to send their children to work on others' farms. Land-poor households are therefore less able to educate their children and at the same time less able to provide them livelihood opportunities on their farms. Youth from such households are more likely to be pushed into unskilled low-wage off-farm employment. This is also evident in our youth occupational choice analysis.

## 4.4 Complementary constraints for youth land access

Youth that cannot inherit sufficient land resources from their parents to derive a livelihood may be able to access land through the land rental market (most commonly through sharecropping contracts). However, access to land in the rental market may also depend on their skills, access to oxen for land cultivation, capital, labour and reputation as farmers. These may cause youth with limited experience and complementary inputs to be rationed out of this market (Ghebru & Holden, 2008). The land rental market may, however, be available to some youth who may access land from relatives through renting or for some youth who are in an advantageous



position in terms of having access to the necessary complementary inputs and therefore can convince potential landlord households to rent land to them. A related constraint is the restriction on land renting among farmers. The land use law restricts land renting

to traditional farmers to a maximum of 3 years in Oromia and 5 years in SNNP. Farmers also cannot rent out more than half of their farm. Such restrictions, if imposed, limit the smooth functioning of land rental markets.



Young women who work at one of the big greenhouse farms in Southern Ethiopia © UN-Habitat /Sosina Bezu

## 5. COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO INCREASE YOUTH LAND ACCESS

### Establishing youth organizations to access land

Youth in our study areas were not organized in ways that could help them to obtain land. The traditional way to try to get land is to register interest at the community (kebele) level but there are typically long waiting lists to obtain land because of the scarcity of land. We found no attempts by youth to organize themselves to go for resettlements to obtain land although we were told by the regional administration in SNNP region that such resettlement programs existed.

Although we did not find examples of youth cooperatives that have succeeded in obtaining land, according to the SNNP regional bureau report (BWCYA, 2010), both urban and rural youth are

getting organized to access land, capital, training or all. The report states that 119,000 young people from SNNP got organized into 3795 cooperatives (appear to include both urban and rural youth in SNNP). In addition, 101,274 youth were trained and then started up modern agriculture on their family land and 18,095 youth were engaged in agriculture in mountainous areas producing trees, bamboo, etc. (BWCYA, 2010). We did not see any signs of these activities in our study areas perhaps indicating that youth mobilization for these activities are still concentrated in urban areas or specific locations.

### Local government and community responses

The national and regional land laws open for actions at community level to redistribute land e.g. to landless youth. However, our impression is that such redistributions largely have stopped after land registration and certification took place. We therefore see very limited community actions in our study areas to provide land for youth. The parents are considered the main source of land while at the same time the law prohibits further splitting of legal land units below the minimum farm sizes of 0.5 ha in the annual cropping areas and 0.25 ha in the perennial cropping areas.



Youth engaged in self-employment business selling fried fish by the lake © UN-Habitat /Sosina Bezu

## 6. GENEROSITY, TRUST AND COOPERATION AMONG YOUTH

Generosity and trust among the youth and between the youth and parents is essential for establishing cooperation that is needed for co-managing land among siblings, for arriving at a land sharing arrangement within households, for obtaining land as a youth group or engage in any youth group initiative. To explore these issues we carried out dictator game and trust game field experiments with the youth in our sample. We expect the trust game to give us information on the trusting and trustworthiness behaviour of the youth and the dictator game to give insights about the generosity and cooperation among siblings and with their parents, as well as among youth in general.

In the dictator game a player who is given 30 ETB<sup>1</sup> is asked whether and how much s/he will share with another youth willingly and without any expectation from the other player. Table 3 summarizes the results from the dictator game experiment. 30% of the youth in our sample were willing to share their endowment with other anonymous youth. The average rate

of sharing was 9% of the endowment. However, their willingness to share with family members was substantially higher, 56% were willing to share with their father and 56% with their sibling, and the amounts shared were on average 30% and 24% respectively.

Compared to the statistics found in the literature, the sharing level in our sample is smaller. A survey of dictator game studies that cover developing and developed countries as well as student and non-student samples report mean allocations that range from 19% to 47% (Cardenas & Carpenter, 2008). Another meta-study of dictator experiments that cover more than 130 papers found that the average sharing constructed from all the studies is 28.4% (Engel, 2011). As most dictator studies involve sharing among anonymous players, the 9% sharing we observe for anonymous youth seems to be much lower than findings in other countries.

### Trustfulness and trustworthiness

We try to explore trust among youth by asking direct trust related questions and by observing behavior

<sup>1</sup> ETB- Ethiopian Birr. 1USD ≈18 ETB

**Table 4. Allocation of money in dictator game experiments by gender of player and recipient**

Allocation for whom	Young women		Young men		All youth	
	Youth willing to share (%)	Mean allocation <sup>a</sup> (%)	Youth willing to share (%)	Mean allocation <sup>a</sup> (%)	Youth willing to share (%)	Mean allocation <sup>a</sup> (%)
Sister/brother	55	23.2	57	23.9	56	23.6
Father	61	28.6	64	31.4	63	30.2
Anonymous youth	27	8.6	33	9.7	30	9.2
Total	48	20.1	52	21.7	50	21.0

*a-Allocation is reported in terms of a proportion of total endowment the dictator gave out*

*Source: Own field experiment data*

in a field experiment where real money is at stake. From the direct interview question on willingness to lend money, we found that about half of the youth are willing to lend to their sibling without hesitation while 19% of the youth are unwilling to lend to their siblings and 14% are unwilling to lend to their parents in any way. Compared to lending to a sibling, proportionately fewer youth make lending to their parent conditional on the type of need.

In the trust game experiment played with sibling pairs a randomly chosen first player is asked whether and how much s/he will send from 30 ETB endowments to another anonymous youth player with whom s/he will be randomly paired or with his/her sibling or father. Unlike in the dictator game experiment there is an incentive for the first player to send money because the second player will receive three times the money sent by the first player and is given the opportunity to willingly return some of the money to the first player. The more money the first player sends, the larger will be the pie they can share. However, both the first and the second players decide for themselves whether and how much money to send and the experimenter will not interfere in any way.

in the trust game. 69% and 67% sent a positive amount to their sibling and father which represent larger increases as compared to the dictator game when they know the person than when it is an anonymous youth. They sent on average 34% and 36% of the endowment to their sibling and father, the average increase in amounts were also higher than for anonymous youth and particularly so for sibling. This shows that the youth trust their family members more than anonymous youth.

We assumed above that the difference in giving behavior in the trust game as compared to the dictator game can then be attributed to the trustfulness of the respondents. There could also be other explanations as the games are framed differently but we still think the comparison and findings are indicative of relatively low levels of trustfulness. More than 40% of youth are still unwilling to share with others even when there is an incentive to do so if they trust their co-player. While in the dictator game the generosity towards the father was significantly higher than to sibling, trust in the father was not higher than that for sibling in the trust game.

**Table 5. The probability of non-zero transfer and average amount transferred by youth in trust game**

Allocation for:	Young women		Young men		All youth	
	Transfer probability (%)	Mean Allocation (%) a	Transfer probability (%)	Mean Allocation (%) a	Transfer probability (%)	Mean Allocation (%) a
Sister/brother	69	35	68	34	69	34
Father	66	34	68	36	67	36
Anonymous youth	36	13	33	11	34	12
Total	57	27	57	27	57	27

Source: Own field experiment data. a % of endowment.

Table 4 shows the transfers by male and female youth in the trust game. Compared to the 30% sharing in the dictator game for anonymous youth, which may show pure altruism, a higher percentage of youth shared money in the trust game (34%) when they have a monetary incentive to share. They sent on average 12% of the endowment to anonymous youth

The fraction of money sent by trust game players in our sample is low compared to what is found in the literature. A study that reviewed results from more than 20 studies shows that first-movers sent on average 30%-70% of their endowment. Given that for almost all of these studies the receiver is an anonymous person, the sharing in the literature

should be compared with that for anonymous youth in our sample which is found to be only 12% of the endowment. Even the fraction of the endowment sent for family members in our sample is in the lower range found in the literature. Our interview questions and answers also revealed this lack of trust outside of the family circle. Around 20% of the youth have no friend they can trust with 100 ETB loan while 37% trust 1-2 friends only with such a loan.

### Trustworthiness

If more than half of the youth are trusting and are willing to send at least a small share of their money in expectation that they can share from the larger money

The percentage of money returned by the second players in our sample is in the range found in the reviewed studies in Cardenas and Carpenter (2008). The percentage returned in the literature range from 18% to 50% of the endowment. However, when we compare the amount returned for anonymous youth in our sample with that found in the literature we find that the fraction returned in our youth sample is an outlier at the lower range.

To summarize, trustfulness and trustworthiness appear to be lower among youth in Ethiopia compared to the levels found in the experimental literature. This

**Table 6. The amount of transfer actually returned by player 2 in trust games**

	Returned amount as share of transfer received			
	Male Youth	Female youth	All Youth	N
	(%)	(%)	(%)	
Brother/sister	30	28	29	139
Anonymous youth	18	14	16	99
Total	25	22	24	238

Source: Own field experiment data

player 2 receives, how trustworthy are these others in return? Table 5 shows the share of money returned by those who received non-zero amount. When the second player was an anonymous youth, s/he returned on average 16% of the received money. People are more trustworthy to their brother or sister than to anonymous youth in the village. Young men and women who received a positive amount returned on average about 29% of the received money if sender is a sibling. Young men returned a larger share on average than young women.

may be partly explained by sample differences as the subjects in such experiments are often university students in developed countries. However, trustfulness and trustworthiness found among non-family youth in our sample is lower even compared to studies in Tanzania, South Africa and Kenya, countries that have comparable levels of economic development.

## 7. OVERALL DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The statistics from our sample indicate that the youth have limited viable land access. Our study sites include areas with varying land scarcity, including some of the most land-scarce districts in SNNP region; the cash crop oriented Wondo Genet district and the subsistence oriented Wollaita district as well as less land-scarce districts in Oromia region; Sashemene and Arsi Negelle districts, where small town formation contributes to increasing land scarcity. The sample from SNNP region has an average land holding size of 0.53 hectares while the sample from Oromia region has an average land holding size of 1.22 hectares. Despite the land holding differences for the current holders, the opportunity for agricultural land access is very bleak for the youth in both regions. We found that land access through allocation by local authorities is virtually nonexistent. Our data also indicate that if parents in our sample were to divide their land among their children, the average land holding that a son or daughter of a farmer would receive would be 0.30 hectares in Oromia and 0.14 hectares in SNNP. This is very small size to establish a meaningful livelihood under the current agricultural systems. This is also far below the minimum land holding allowed in the 2005 federal land use law and the regional directives.

In economies where the land market is working perfectly or where there are enough non-agricultural employment opportunities in rural areas, lack of long term access to agricultural land may not be a big concern. Youth from farming families may choose to engage in non-agricultural activities in the village or neighboring towns. If land markets function perfectly, youth who want to engage in agriculture may be able to obtain enough land through purchase or land rent while those who are interested in engaging in non-agricultural activities may be able to secure the funds for such activities instead of being 'tied-up' with insufficient land. However, these are not the conditions in rural Ethiopia and youth's inability to

obtain enough land is in fact an important concern. There is a glaring lack of local non-agricultural employment opportunities in all of our survey areas. The villages close to budding towns are able to benefit from trade activities but there are no factories or large scale agro-businesses near-by that are able to absorb large numbers of youth from these villages. On the other hand, land sale and purchase are prohibited in Ethiopia. The current regulation allows for short term land renting which may help solve some of the land access problems for youth with complementary non-land resources. Young women are not very likely to get land from their parents even if their names are on their parents' land certificate. Their main source of land access is still likely to be through marrying a young man that has obtained land from his parents. Only a quarter of the households in our sample intend to bequeath land to their daughters. But those with larger land holding were by far more likely to bequeath land to their daughters confirming that shortage of land is the most important factor in discriminating against girls and women.

On the livelihood question, we found that a strikingly small percentage of the rural youth in our sample, 9.4%, plans to pursue farming as a livelihood strategy. With a generally small land holding to cultivate and little technological advancement to compensate the small size, the largely traditional agriculture may not be an attractive livelihood opportunity. But *lack of* access even to the current level of farm size may be the main factor behind young people turning their back to agriculture. 58% of the youth in our sample reported that they want to move to urban areas for salaried employment, including those who want to go for higher education. The others plan to engage in local off-farm wage employment and business. If we were to generalize this rate for the country's youth and adolescent population, the figures are staggering. Close to 17 million young people in Ethiopia may be looking to move to urban areas and establish their livelihood there in the next few years. Of course, our sample is not nationally representative and all the youth may not follow through with their plan. Still, this figure gives suggestive evidence to the high magnitude of rural-urban migration to be expected in the face of limited rural land access. A separate analysis of youth migration in 2007-2012 confirms

this trend. We found significant and increasing youth migration. The data shows that 15% of the youth and adolescent population in 2007 have migrated by 2012. The migration in Wollaita, the most densely populated area, is the highest at 31%. We found that youth from households with larger land holding are less likely to migrate.

The impact of land holding on the nutritional status and educational attainment of youth that are currently residing in these rural areas has been examined using regression analyses. We did not find evidence that households with larger land holding have better nutritional outcomes. But we found that youth from households that have larger land holding have higher levels of education compared to youth in other households. This is an indication of the positive wealth effect of landholding on parents' decision to send children to school. It may also indicate that parents who are able to eke out livelihood from their farm do not need to send their children to work off-farm.

We also explored trust and cooperation among youth in our sample using field experiments that involve real financial stake. We found that the level of trust and sharing among youth who are not family members is low compared to the levels found in the experimental literature. This may be partly explained by sample differences as the subjects in such experiments are often university students in developed countries. But that is not the whole explanation as trustfulness and trustworthiness found among non-family youth in our sample are lower also compared to that found in experiments in Tanzania, South Africa and Kenya.

## Recommendations

Below we list some measures that can be taken to increase agricultural land access, improve rural livelihood opportunities for youth and address youth migration in a way that reduce stress on migrants and host communities.

**1. Improve the legal framework:** The land laws and regulations such as the right of citizens to land access, minimum land holding size and the land registrations and certification must be harmonized to ensure consistency and equitability in agricultural land access. Specific measures to consider:

- Drop the constitutional right to access land as it is impossible to ensure it any more.
- Develop clear inheritance rule to ensure that transfer of land from parents to children does not lead to land fragmentation or conflict among siblings or with parents. One suggestion is for the oldest child in the family to be given the first right to take over the land if the farm is too small to be subdivided. The inheritor then has the responsibility for taking care of the parents when they are getting old and for accommodating siblings in need. This may give them incentives also to help siblings with schooling. If the first child does not want to take over the farm the second born is given the opportunity, etc.

**2. Improve land rental market:** Improving the land rental market in rural Ethiopia may play an important role in improving the economic opportunity for youth in rural areas. An important step may be to relax the current restriction on the maximum number of years land can be rented out to other farmers and the restriction that maximum half of the farm can be rented out. Young farmers with complementary resources may then get better access to agricultural land through the rental market while others may rent out more of their farmland to obtain working capital for non-farm activity or to get food through a sharecropping contract without having to work for it if they lack complementary resources such as oxen for plowing, are labor-poor, sick, disabled and old.

**3. Provide group land access:** Authorities can provide group access to land by encouraging and facilitating formation of worker cooperatives for youth that are interested in agriculture based activities such as production of high value fruit and vegetable, livestock and dairy productions and processing and packaging of agricultural goods. Supplementary resources such as training, extension service and credit may also be provided to the youth cooperatives. We were told by the youth bureau in SNNP that such effort has already started in the region. But it is our understanding that

these activities are for now concentrated in urban areas. We suggest expansion of these activities to rural areas incorporating also the lessons learned from the existing cooperatives.

4. ***Improve non-farm livelihood opportunities in the rural areas:*** Improvement in the non-farm livelihood opportunities in the rural areas can help to reduce the high level of uncontrolled rural-urban migration that is poised to happen. Specific measures may include:
  - Design employment generating schemes targeted to the youth that create much needed public goods and employ youth with different levels of education. Skilled employments may be performed by youth with short term training.
  - Provide entrepreneurial training and credit for youth to encourage creation of non-farm self-employment such as business.
5. ***Involve youth in land-related decisions and policy implementations:*** Stakeholder meetings and activities should not include only current land holders but also landless youth who will be greatly affected by land-related decisions. This will improve youth empowerment as well as encourage the relevance of the policies and regulations. Some

of the activities they can be currently involved in include:

- Engage youth in implementation of second stage land certification
  - Engage youth in work of Land Administration Committees in the communities
  - Develop youth corps for other social needs in the community such as conservation of communal lands, afforestation programs, etc.
6. ***Design a youth migration program:*** Our study shows that because of land scarcity, population pressure and lack of rural livelihood opportunity, youth migration have become a very common phenomenon in rural areas. We observed an already significant and increasing migration from land scarce areas. While generating non-farm employment opportunities in rural areas and improving access to agricultural land may reduce the need to migrate for some of the youth, we should still expect a very high level of youth migration with better infrastructure and information. It is important, therefore, to understand the migration process in order to make a better use of the youth labor that migrate into urban areas and reduce the stress and tension on the migrant youth and host communities.



A member of survey team interviewing young farmer about land access and livelihood related issues  
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## 8. CONCLUSIONS

In a country where almost six out of ten farm households cultivate less than one hectare of land, a high and growing youth population in rural areas pose a challenge in terms of ensuring access to land and livelihood. Although Ethiopia's constitution seems to guarantee youth rights to rural land should they wish to establish livelihood in agriculture, the practical applicability really depends on local land availability, inheritance customs and local administrative processes for land allocation. The statistics from our sample indicate that the rural youth in Ethiopia have limited viable land access. Despite the constitutional guarantee, we found that land access through allocation by local authorities is virtually nonexistent. Inheritance from parents is not promising either as the majority of the parents are already cultivating very small farms. Although land renting is a possibility, there are constraints on the length of rent contract and the size of land that can be rented out by farmers. From the perspective of 'continuum of land rights', individual formal land right is not the only way to grant land access to individuals. Instead of insisting on individual land access to a perpetual land user right, which the state is not able to sustain anymore, it is imperative to design innovative land tenure that ensure access and security to all young farmers.

Our findings from Southern Ethiopia also suggest that an increasing share of the youth will be unable to depend on agriculture as their primary source of livelihood in the future and we will see a rapid increase in rural-urban youth migration due to population push factors. The recent strong economic growth in Ethiopia and expanding educational opportunities for youth may have created more off-farm livelihood opportunities. There is, however, a growing population of youth with intermediary levels of education that have a hard time finding jobs. Completing a BSc-degree or even MSc-degree in the country is no longer a guarantee for obtaining a good job. We saw

examples of youth who had completed their education but came back to their parents' place as they had problems obtaining off-farm jobs.

Youth unemployment is a growing international challenge not only in Africa. A growing urban unemployed youth population may also become an important political factor that potentially threatens the political stability unless acceptable livelihood opportunities are provided. A pro-active approach to engage youth in innovative actions is essential in a sustainable livelihood approach to development. The youth should be actively involved in forming its future. We saw that youth migration has really taken off the last five years in some of our most densely populated study areas. These were, however, more spontaneous actions by the youth themselves as individuals or groups and it was not a result of publicly organized activities or policies. Our research revealed very little of such publicly organized activities for youth in the rural areas that we have studied in Ethiopia. What we have revealed is a very rapid transition of youth livelihood opportunities and strategies that will require immediate proactive political action to minimize severe future problems. Inability to address the land and livelihood access problems may result in social and economic crisis not only in rural areas but also in urban areas where a rapidly increasing number of youth migrate to. Our study is really to our knowledge just a first study of these issues in Ethiopia and should be followed up at a broader scale over time to better understand the dynamics and its implications.

We think that youth face similar problems in many densely populated African countries that face similar transition challenges. UN-Habitat may play an important role to orchestrate more studies of these issues and to identify political and administrative solutions that can engage youth directly in innovative approaches to develop and promote new livelihood opportunities.

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## APPENDIX

**Table A1. Land holders in Ethiopia in 2012**

	Male	Female	All
Ethiopia	18%	3%	21%
Oromia	22%	3%	24%
SNNP	16%	3%	19%

Source: Compiled from the 2011/2012 Agricultural Sample Survey report (CSA, 2012)

**Table A2. Willingness of parents to hand over (part of) their farm to their children while the household head is still alive**

District	Current mean household farm size (ha.)	Parents plan to hand over farm while alive (% of respondent)	land size to be given (% of current holding)	N
Shashemene	1.15	90	47	102
Arsi Negelle	1.38	82	46	144
Wondo Genet	0.55	87	47	125
Wollaita	0.52	90	46	197
Wondo Oromia	0.84	93	42	40
All	0.86	88	46	608

Source: Own survey data

**Table A3. Farm size in relation to potential inheritors**

	SNNP		Oromia		Total	
	Mean, ha	N	Mean, ha	N	Mean, ha	N
Farm size/household size	0.09	322	0.20	287	0.14	609
Farm size/Own children living with the household	0.14	298	0.30	278	0.22	576
Farm size/Male offspring living with the household	0.25	280	0.53	266	0.39	546

Source: Own survey data

**Table A4. Households who intend to bequeath land to female offspring**

District	Percentage
Shashemene	34.7
Arsi Negelle	43.8
Wondo Genet	30.9
Wollaita	6.1
Wondo Oromia	42.5
All households	27.2

Source: Own survey data

**Table A5. Land co-management and conflict experience with siblings and parents**

Youth land co-management experience	Percentage of youth respondent			
	Oromia	Sidama	Wollaita	All
Co-managed land with siblings	21	24	20	21
Conflict experience during co-management				
frequent	5	0	3	3
Sometimes/rarely	18	15	59	27
Never	77	85	38	70
Co-managed land with parents	49	18	23	36
Conflict experience during co-management				
frequent	5	0	3	4
Sometimes/rarely	17	18	59	23
Never	78	82	38	73

Source: Own survey data

**Table 6. Willingness to lend money to sibling versus parent**

	If able and asked, will you lend to your <b>sibling</b> 300 Birr?			If able and asked, will you lend your <b>parents</b> 300 Birr?		
	No	Yes	Depends on the need	No	Yes	Depends on the need
Gender						
Male (%)	17.8	45.9	36.4	14.8	54.4	30.8
Female (%)	19.6	52.9	27.5	13.1	60.8	26.1
All youth(%)	18.5	48.7	32.8	14.1	57.1	28.9

Source: Own survey data



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## ABOUT THE PUBLICATION:

This study aims to examine current land access and youth livelihood opportunities in Southern Ethiopia. We used survey data from the relatively land abundant districts of Oromia Region and from the land scarce districts of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) Region. Although access to agricultural land is a constitutional right for rural residents of Ethiopia, we found that youth in the rural south have limited potential to obtain agricultural land that can be a basis for viable livelihood. The law prohibits the purchase and sale of land in Ethiopia. We found that land access through allocation from authorities is virtually nonexistent while land that can be obtained from parents through inheritance or gift is too small to establish a meaningful livelihood. The land rental market has restrictions, including on the number of years land can be rented out.

Perhaps as a result of limited land access, the youth have turned their back on agriculture. Our study shows that only nine percent of youth in these rural areas plan to pursue farming as a livelihood. The majority are planning non-agricultural livelihoods. We also found a significant rural-urban migration among the youth and especially in areas with severe agricultural land scarcity. Our econometric analyses show that youth from families with larger land holdings are less likely to choose a non-agricultural livelihood as well as less likely to migrate to urban areas. We suggest here some measures to improve rural livelihood such as creation of non-farm employment opportunities and improvement of land rental markets. We also argue that as a certain level of rural-urban migration is unavoidable, investigating youth migration is essential to design policies that help the migrating youth as well as the host communities.

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