

**UNDERSTANDING WELLBEING AMONG PASTORALISTS IN AFAR:
FIELD REPORT FROM WEEP FORMATIVE RESEARCH**



WEEP

Water-security in Ethiopia and the
Emotional response of Pastoralists

ESRC-DFID Development Frontiers



**Cranfield University, Friendship Support Association, IRC Ethiopia,
Oxfam Ethiopia and the International Water Management Institute**

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1. Introduction

The field work for the WEEP formative research stage 1 was conducted from December 20 – 26. The purpose of the field work was to introduce the WEEP research to local stakeholders, select research sites and engage in first round of data collection (key informant interviews and focus group discussions) aimed at understanding emotional wellbeing of pastoralists in the Afar and factors associated with wellbeing and illbeing in the community. The data is expected to help build a model of local norms regarding emotional wellbeing and distress to develop semantic differential tools.

The field work included selection of research sites in Dulassa woreda in consultation with the woreda government staff; key informant interviews with woreda administrator, water and women affairs offices and six focus group discussions with men and women groups in selected three research sites.

The field research team included: Bethel Terefe from Oxfam leading the team, the project focal person and community facilitator from FSA, the local partner and two focus group discussion facilitators and a note taker recruited by Oxfam. The data collectors are native Afar language speakers, who are familiar with the local culture and are experienced in qualitative data collection.

2. Research site/village selection

The research sites/villages were selected in discussion with the woreda administrator and water office. The main criteria used for the selection of the villages was the level of access to a formal water supply provision. Three villages located across a 'formal-informal transect of water supply provision' as indicated in the research protocol were selected. One village, (Ege village) has access to a formal water supply source, a borehole, from which the community access water throughout the year. A second village (Adkonta village), is located further away from a formal water supply source. People in the village access water from a mix of formal and informal systems. During the wet season, they mostly access water from streams and surface water sources, while during the dry season, they sometimes travel to Ege village to collect water or they use nearby streams that have not dried up. The third village selected (Tirtira village) is located far away from any formal provision of water supply and the community rely on informal sources, streams and other surface water sources, both during the dry and wet seasons. All the three villages are located in the same kebele, Tirtira Kebele, and the inhabitants belong to the same clan. The livelihood of the community in all the three kebles is dependent on pastoralism.

The figure below shows the location of the three villages in comparison to one another and major landscapes.

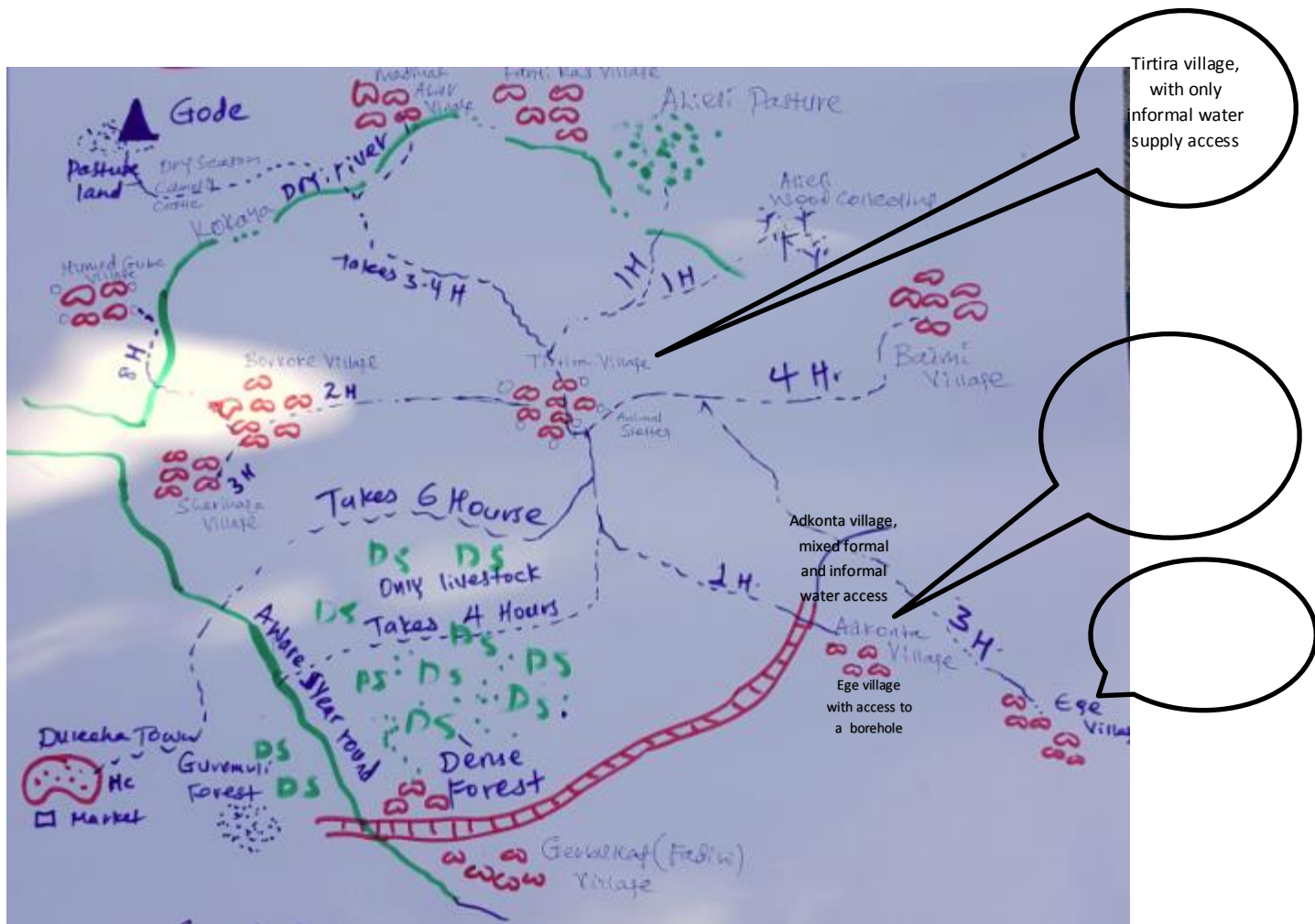


Figure 1 – Map of selected villages in Tirtira kebele

Ege and Adkanta villages are separated from Tirtira village by a rail way line that cuts across the woreda. The map gives the time it takes the community to travel to villages, water points and pasture lands on foot, taking Tirtira village as the central reference point.

3. Key informant interview

On the first day of the field work, discussion was held with woreda representatives to introduce the purpose of the research and to gain contextual information about the woreda and research sites/villages. The woreda representatives who were also interviewed as key informants comprised of the woreda administrator, a representative of traditional leaders and heads of woreda women’s affairs and water offices. The names, offices and roles of the key informants are listed below:

- Ato Abubeker: Dullassa Woreda Administrator
- W/o Zahra Walu: Dullassa Woreda Women’s affairs office head
- Ato Salim Seid: Dullassa Woreda water resources office, water supply and irrigation case team leader
- Ato Mohammed Doye: from the woreda Sheria court

The information obtained from the key informant interviews and secondary data that was available in the woreda offices is presented below.

4. Trends and developments affecting livelihood of the Afar in Dullassa

Dullassa also known as Dulecha is one of the woredas in administrative zone three of the Afar region. The woreda is bordered on the south by Awash Fentale woreda, on the west by Argoba Special woreda, and on the east by the Awash River, which separates it from Amibara woreda. The woreda is divided into 12 administrative units, called Kebeles. Elevations in the woreda range from 800 (along the Awash) to 1100 meters above sea level. The woreda has an average temperature of 32 degree centigrade and an annual rain-fall of 650-750 millimeter. Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency (CSA), the woreda has a total population of 20,687, of whom 11,202 are men and 9,485 are women. Most of the people in the woreda are pastoralists. There are about 111,014 cattle (oxen, cows etc); 246,385 shoats (goats and sheep); 75,206 camels and 5,669 draught animals in the woreda.¹

Over the past decade, the woreda has experienced several changes that affected the lives of the community, both positively and negatively. Investments are made in education, water supply schemes and health centres that had a positive impact on the lives of the community. Several schools have been constructed. Veterinary service providing centres have been set up. Some water supply schemes are constructed government and NGO financing. In some kebeles, demonstration sites are set up to encourage pastoralists to engage in crop agriculture and adopt agro-pastoralist livelihoods.

Some investments, on the other hand, have negatively affected the lives of pastoralists. One of these is the construction of a sugar factory and clearing of about 30 hectares of land for sugarcane plantation. Although, the factory has created employment opportunity for a few pastoralists, the harm caused by the investment to the livelihoods of the Afar in Dullassa, outweigh the benefits, according to the woreda administrator. The land that was used for the sugarcane plantation used to be covered by bushes. The area was relatively green and it was used by pastoralists for grazing, especially during the dry season. A perennial river/stream runs along the land now enclosed for the sugarcane plantation. The enclosure of the land by the factory has led to loss of dry season pasture land for the pastoralists. The community who used to use the pasture land are now forced to go further away in search of pasture land and water during the dry season, sometimes crossing regional boundaries and gong to Amhara and Oromia regions. During focus group discussions, it was raised that conflict sometimes breaks out with the Argobba people living in Amhara region, as pastoralists cross to their land in search of water and pasture.

Promises were made by the investors of the sugar factory to construct water supply schemes, health services and schools for the community. However, these have not been realized and the woreda government is appealing to the regional government to facilitate the construction of the promised infrastructures..

Another investment that has in the short term affected the livelihoods of the pastoralists negatively is the construction of a railway that crosses Dullassa woreda. The railway construction has provided some jobs for the Afar. However, the railway line that cuts across the woreda has also affected movement of livestock from one part of the woreda to another in search of water and pasture. Although, in some places

¹ Source: woreda socio-economic data

crossing paths are prepared for livestock under the railway lines, according to the woreda administrator, these are not adequate to alleviate the problem.

Similar to the sugar factory, during the rail way construction, promises were made to the community that deep boreholes will be constructed to improve water supply. According to the woreda administrator, these have not materialized. (However, we have seen at least one water point constructed by the railway construction company and some water points constructed by the sugar factory. It might be that the number of water supply schemes constructed is below the expectation of the woreda administration).

Decisions for these investments are made at the national and regional government levels. The woreda is consulted, according to the woreda administrator, and has raised its concerns about loss of pasture land. It has proposed that water supply schemes for the community and cattle troughs for livestock to be constructed along the irrigation canals dug for the sugarcane plantation. The woreda suggests, along the irrigation canals water can also be diverted to develop fodder that could have been provided to the community. The woreda's concerns and proposals don't seem to have been taken up in the investment plan. And the woreda is still following up the issue with the regional government.

Another trend, affecting livelihoods of pastoralists is the recurrence of drought in the region over past decade. Shortage of rainfall, especially over the past three years has led to death of livestock in huge numbers, as pasture land and water resources are depleted.

Prioritizing key concerns and problems for the livelihood of the Afar in Dulesa, all the woreda key informants put access to water as the main concern, followed by access to pasture. Limited or inadequate access to services, such as health and education is also described as a concern in the third place.

5. Access to water supply services

Inadequate access to water supply is described as the main problem/ concern for the Afar in Dulesa by all key informants. The woreda is subdivided into 12 kebeles/ administrative units. Water supply infrastructures are constructed in 10 of the kebeles. There are 7 boreholes constructed in six of the kebeles. Two were not functional at the time of the data collection, due to technical problems. There are about 12 protected hand dug wells or ponds, which use hand pumps to lift water. Out of these, nine are not functioning due to technical problem or low water table. There are also four shallow wells, three of which use solar power. All the shallow wells were functioning at the time of the field visit. Most of the water supply infrastructures are constructed in the past ten years with the financing of the government and NGOs such as FSA.²

According to the woreda water office, the water table in most places in the woreda is low, except in few kebeles such as Hurunto, where a yield of 11 liter per second is obtained by digging a well with a depth of 60 meters. During the dry season, most of the hand dug-wells will dry up and only the boreholes will continue to provide water. Women often need to travel half day or the whole day in search of water, during the dry season.

The water from the formal water supply sources is used both for human water supply and livestock. Each water supply scheme and/or water point has water troughs for cattle. The water supply infrastructures are managed by WaSH committees set up by the community. However, the capacity of the WaSH

² Dulesa woreda water office annual water supply report

committees is very low, according to the woreda water office. The running cost of the water supply schemes, such as, cost of fuel for motor pumps, is covered by the woreda.

According to the woreda water office head, access to improved water supply has improved from 17.5% (ten years ago) to 34.5%, currently. The access is calculated by looking at the number of water supply infrastructures in the woreda and the expected No. of people the infrastructures would serve. It doesn't mean 34.5% of the population has access to drinking water supply within 1.5 km radius as per the national water supply access measurement. Dispersed settlement of the population has resulted in limited No. of people living close to existing water supply schemes. The majority of the people who don't have access to a formal water supply service, use water from streams, ponds, rivers and other surface sources. In the dry season, there are perennial rivers and lakes that will have water, although the volume of water decreases a lot. According to the woreda water office, the use of water resources is not restricted by clan membership and all the community in the woreda can access and use any formal and informal water supply source available in the woreda.

6. Gender division of roles

Among the Afar living in Dullassa, there is a strict division of gender roles. Women are responsible for unpaid care work and domestic activities in addition to their role in production for household consumption. Their roles include: fetching water for household consumption, collecting fuel wood, cooking, milling, going to the market, taking care of children, the elderly etc. They also fetch water for small animals which are not able to travel to rivers or streams. Women can travel 6-8 hours every day to fetch water. Although women don't grind grains manually anymore, the closest grinding mill is located in the woreda town. Depending on proximity of the kebele to the town, it takes from half a day to a whole day to reach the woreda town. Grinding mill is available only in the woreda town as none of the kebeles have access to electricity. Women use donkeys and camels to transport water, grain and fuel wood. However, those who don't have camels and donkeys carry water and grain on their backs.

Men are responsible for looking after livestock such as camels, cattle and goats. During the dry season, they often stay far away from home for weeks or months looking for pasture and water for their animals.

According, to the woreda women's affairs office head, gender power relations, in terms of decision making in the house have not changed in the woreda. Women don't have the power to make decisions on assets or other issues in the household.

Over the past 10 years, opening of schools in the woreda has improved access to primary education. However, girls usually drop out when they reach grade seven or eight in order to get married. There are no schools above grade ten in the woreda and therefore, students have to travel to Awash town to continue education after grade 10. However, only few girls reach up to grade 10. Most girls marry early, have children and can't continue their education.

Similarly, the construction of a health centre in the woreda and health education has improved the number of women who access prenatal services and health professional attended deliveries. However, the number of women who access maternal services is still very low.

Annex 1. Table. Water supply infrastructures in Dullasa woreda, population served and functionality

Name of Kebele	Name of Village	Type of water supply infrastructure	Population served	Functionality status
Dullesa	Woreda town	Mororized deep borehole (electric power)	1172	Functioning
Segento	Merento	Protected hand dug well or pond (hand pump)	260	Functioning
	Segento	“	295	Not functioning
	Keluwale	“	215	Functioning
Hurunto Kelela	Mesgid Ela	“	2133	Not functioning
	Meanditi ela	“		Not functioning
	Hurunto ela	Shallow well (solar power)		Functioning
	Kelela ela	“		Functioning
	Shengo ela	Protected hand dug well or pond (hand pump)		Not functioning
Durufli	Budima	Protected hand dug well or pond (hand pump)	325	Not functioning
	Dankar	“		Not functioning
Kefis Idali	Daharuma Idali	Protected hand dug well or pond (hand pump)	659	Not functioning
	Keda Idali	“		Not functioning
	Keda Idali	Shallow well (solar powered)		Functioning
Burteli	Burteli	Protected hand dug well or pond (hand pump)	671	Functioning
	Jiga	“		Non functional
	Jiga	Deep borehole (dissel power)		Non functional
Tirtira	Ege	Deep borehole (dissel power)	611	functional
Isikilele	Eylele	Deep borehole (dissel power)	813	Functional
	Kilele	Shallo well (dissel power)	1100	Functional
Hugob	Hugob	Deep borehole (dissel power)	545	Functional

Gerbohaf	Tolela	“	480	functional
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7. Highlights from the field work of WEEP formative research – stage 1b

The field work for the WEEP formative research stage 1b was conducted from March 13 – 20, 2018 for a second round of qualitative data collection building on the previous one done in December 2017. The purpose of the field work was to understand what water security means to pastoralists in Afar and positive and negative emotions associated with water security. The field work included focus group discussions with men and women groups in 3 research sites (Ege, Adkonta and Tirtira villages) in Dulassa woreda, zone three of Afar region.

The field research team included: Bethel from Oxfam, Sarah from Cranfield University, Solome and Daniel from FSA and two focus group discussion facilitators and a note taker recruited by Oxfam. The data collectors are native Afar language speakers, who are familiar with the local culture and are experienced in qualitative data collection.

The field work started with discussion with data collectors and briefing them about the research objectives on the first day of the field work. The tools designed for data collection were tested in FSA project sight Jigan village, Bortole kebele with a group of women. Based on the pretesting the tool was revised and used in the first village, Adkonta. The experience of data collection in Adkonta was again used to further update the tool for the data collection in the next two villages.

One of the challenges faced in the field was the migration of people in Ege village to another location, because the borehole water supply scheme in their village has stopped functioning. The FSA team were able to track them and we conducted the data collection. Because the area in which they are settled now was not accessible by vehicle, they travelled to a village about one hour away to meet us. Many of the pastoralists in Tirtira village have also moved away from their previous locations, because of the dry season. Water trucking relief support is being provided by the railway construction company, which was mainly used by people from Adkonta village, who are closer to the railway line. More pastoralists can migrate to other places in the next months and may not be available in their former locations when the quantitative survey starts. Therefore, it would be useful to check with FSA and adjust the timing of the survey accordingly. The pastoralists might not return to their villages, if the rainy season is delayed.

During the data collection, it was not difficult to find words that describe emotions associated with water security. The main challenge was the various interpretations and definitions given to the same words by different people. Respondents were asked to give examples of situations when they will use the words to understand the meanings of the words and to differentiate between words that are given similar interpretations. This has helped to some extent, but it still needs further clarity. There was also often confusion identifying words that express emotions from words that are used to express situations. People often use the words that express situations as an expression of emotion as well.

The direct translation of the words to English is also likely to pose a challenge. Some words have different connotations when translated to English. For example, the Afar word ‘Meysi’ is directly translated as fear

in English. However, Meysi in Afar is mostly used to express fear of being in physical danger, while the English translation has wider connotations.

We saw the beginning of a research fatigue with the people participating in the focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Some asked what has resulted from the previous data collection and wanted to know if they are going to get any support after this round of data collection. We have tried to explain and not to raise their expectations, but it will be good to be aware of this in the next field work. There were also complaints that the incentives they are getting for participating in the data collection is not enough, given that they have travelled for an hour to meet us (referring to Ege village). It will be good to think about how it can be improved during the survey.