ACSF-Oxfam Rural Resilience Project

Case Study: Kejima (Hawassa Zuria), Ethiopia

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I. Community Profile

The community of Kejima is located in south-central Ethiopia, at an elevation of approximately 1,700 meters above sea level. Kejima is located in the Great Rift Valley, and in relation to the Bale Mountain highlands to the east, sits at a relatively low elevation. Kejima is the name of a *kebele*, which is equivalent to a township or comparable sub-county unit the United States. It is located in Hawassa Zuria *woreda* (county-level equivalent), Sidama zone, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region (SNNPR).

The particular community that participated in this research—which I will refer to as Kejima—lives in four contiguous villages within this *kebele*: Umbollo, Gamacho, Badecho, and Hanashame. These villages form a settlement area that is geographically separated from other villages and towns in the *kebele* by agricultural fields, deep ravines, and a steep hillside. Households in Kejima constitute a distinct community in the sense of sharing a place of residence and being exposed to similar environmental conditions, which are a key factor in local livelihoods. This cluster of villages also represents a locus of social activity: individuals in Kejima are more likely to know and interact with other individuals in Kejima than in other villages. These interactions often have significant social and economic implications, and include church services, development-oriented meetings, and savings group collections.

That said, there are a number of important qualifications to the categorization of Kejima as a unified community. For one, there are important patterns of, and barriers to social interaction within Kejima. In many cases, these social boundaries simply fall along the administrative lines that separate the four villages within the community. Although these lines are rather recent administrative artifacts, they nonetheless shape patterns of social interaction, knowledge transfer, and according to some residents, government resource allocation. Individuals are more likely to interact with other individuals from within their village than from other villages within the community—but, as mentioned before, they are also more likely to interact with other individuals from Kejima than from those outside.

In addition to internal divisions, the bounded-ness of Kejima is destabilized by connections, flows, and interactions with external actors. An unimproved road that connects two significant markets in the area runs through part of Kejima, and is no more than 5km from any household in the community. As a result, individuals from outside Kejima—and sometimes far outside the region—frequently pass through, in some cases.

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1. In the Ethiopian context, elevation is a major source of agro-ecological heterogeneity.
buying or selling goods and exchanging information. Households in Kejima also frequently travel the road to collect water, participate in local markets, and engage in other similar activities.

In total, approximately eighty households live in Kejima, around ten percent of whom are headed by women. Households range in size from two to twelve persons, and include between one and three generations (i.e., grandparents, children, grandchildren). Most commonly, households will include a husband, wife, and between three and seven children. Although Kejima is located near a boundary between the Sidama zone and an area that has traditionally been home to people of Oromo ethnicity, all households in Kejima belong to the Sidama tribe. There is significant variation in sub-tribe, clan membership, but this has very limited social implications in the community, according to key informants.

As the aerial photograph above illustrates, Kejima is located at the base of a steep hillside that rises approximately 200 meters over the course of only one-half kilometer. Most agricultural plots in the area have an observable slope, but only ten to fifteen percent of households control land that is too steep for viable agriculture. Most land-related problems stem from households’ location vis-à-vis the main hillside, which channels rainwater downhill. Deforestation over recent decades has increased the severity of this problem by reducing barriers to downhill water streams and exposing loose topsoil to the elements. Often violent flows of water leech nutrients from the soil and are causing significant physical erosion, which is evident in the large ravines that are cutting through the community. These problems are particularly acute for those located in the central and western parts of the community, where downhill water flows and resulting ravine formation is most severe. A number of households in this area have lost upwards of one-quarter hectare of land as a result of ravine formation (see photo below), and a large proportion of households reported declines in agricultural productivity that they, in part, attribute to erosion and nutrient leaching.

Aesthetically, the landscape of Kejima varies greatly according to rainfall quality (i.e., amount, timing), with stark differences on seasonal and annual bases. The dry season runs from approximately October to March. During the dry season—or entire years with failed rains—the landscape is extremely desolate and arid, with little vegetation and dry soils. In contrast, the landscape is extremely lush during successful rainy seasons, with deep green vegetation and dark, moist soils. The extreme seasonal variation in the landscape is due in part to a scarcity of trees and other permanent vegetation, with the exception of cactus fences planted by
households. Seasonal crops are the primary source of vegetation in Kejima; hence the landscape is contingent upon maturity of the crops. Of course, this is not simply an aesthetic issue: the lack of trees and other permanent vegetation make the landscape more vulnerable to erosion and nutrient loss, and may have adverse micro-climatic effects.

Land ownership in Kejima generally ranges from one-quarter to two hectares. One household is effectively landless in the community, as it does not have access to any plots of land large enough for agricultural production. Legally, land is owned by the ‘government and people’ of Ethiopia, and households hold usufruct rights that are passed down from fathers to their sons, usually at the time of marriage. The current distribution of land reflects historical settlement patterns and government land allocations; land grabs during previous periods of social and political unrest; and family social and demographic histories (e.g., birth rates, out-migration).

There is currently no unused land in and around Kejima, which reflects historically high rates of population growth in the region. Population dynamics are driven by a complex array of underlying social and economic factors. However, the proximate causes are historically declining death rates without offsetting decreases in birth rates or increases in out-migration. There is evidence that such demographic dynamics may be changing, but for the time being, the result is that household landholdings are essentially fixed. As a result, future land distribution patterns will be contingent upon intra-household demographic dynamics—primarily the number of male children that remain in the community to form households as adults. It should also be noted that a number of households also have access to plots of land outside of Kejima. Given the stark microclimates of the region, such limited dispersion of land across space can have a significant risk-reducing impact.

Although land use rights cannot be sold permanently through the market (or other mechanisms), an informal market for land sharing rights and short-term contracts has emerged in Kejima in recent years. These exchanges address a mismatch between (a) households with land but without the capacity to develop it and (b) households with the capacity to purchase seeds and fertilizer, and provide labor for agricultural development.

In sharing agreements, the individual with land but not capacity will partner with the individual with input and labor capacity, who will purchase seeds and fertilizer for the land. Both parties will share the labor responsibilities for the shared plot and will divide the output among themselves, usually on a fifty-fifty basis. This provides those with the capacity—and willingness to risk a failed harvest—to expand their production beyond the land they have rights to, while those who own land but lack the capacity—or are risk-
averse—to buy the inputs can still utilize their land. In contrast, so-called ‘contract’ agreements are simple rentals in which an individual will pay a landowner rent for exclusive use of part, or all of their land for that year. There is no labor or output sharing in these agreements.

Economically, livelihoods in Kejima are centered around rain-fed agricultural. All interviewed households plant maize and haricot beans, and many plant some combination of potatoes, cabbage, ensete (false banana) and peppers in smaller garden areas around their houses. The crops that a given household plants are contingent upon the size of their landholdings and monetary savings, which are necessary to purchase improved seeds and fertilizer from the government.

With the exception of the most destitute, most households in Kejima also raise at least one kind of livestock. These include cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, and chickens. Livestock are a source of food and a store of wealth. Those with large herds of cattle, for instance, are considered among the better off in the community. Livestock sales are a common coping mechanism in the area: households will sell livestock in the market to obtain money for food to fill production-consumption gaps in years with poor harvests. Some households—particularly those with savings or access to credit—also engage in livestock ‘fattening’ operations. In these cases, cows, sheep, and goats are fed more than normal (which is often not much), so that they gain weight and can be sold at a relatively high price. In many cases, households will begin by fattening sheep and goats, and then reinvest the profits to ‘upgrade’ to cattle fattening. This is considered a key means of upward mobility in Kejima.

In nearly all cases, at least one member of each household engages in a food or income generating activity beyond agricultural production on their farm. These activities are highly gendered. Men frequently work on other households’ fields for food or wages; trade or broker livestock in the market; operate local donkey transportation services; or engage in arbitrage of agricultural production between the village and local markets. Women also engage in arbitrage and are often responsible for selling any excess household agricultural production in the market. Women also often process foods (e.g., false banana root flour, better) to sell in the market, or may work as ‘food processors’ for other households (e.g., preparing false banana root for another household).

A significant proportion of households in Kejima (up to one-third) receive government food and monetary transfers for six months of the year via the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP). In exchange for manual labor on public works projects, PSNP beneficiaries receive food (three months per year) and monetary transfers (three months per year). These transfers are intended to provide a ‘safety net’ for the worst-off households in the community by supporting them in bad years to diminish the likelihood of short-term coping strategies with long-term negative consequences; and in good years, PSNP helps these households accumulate savings or invest in productive activities, such

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2 The elderly and those with disabilities are often exempted from the public works requirement.
as seed and fertilizer purchases and children’s education. The public works requirement is intended to mobilize community labor to improve public goods, such as roads or erosion-mitigating forests. Quotas limit the number of PSNP beneficiaries in a woreda. Benefits are ‘targeted’ to assist the most needy through government and community decision-making mechanisms—with varying degrees of success as a result of political processes and narrow wealth gradients within communities.

It should also be noted that Kejima has also received significant emergency food aid during particularly bad years in the past. At least one such distribution has occurred within the past five years.

**Governance**

The Ethiopian government is structured as a federation. Governing units are nested in a hierarchical arrangement from the kebele up to the federal level. The kebele is the smallest official unit of government, with a chairman (all male) and deputy chairman elected directly by their constituents. All adults, male and female alike, are eligible to vote for their kebele chairman. These chairmen are responsible for maintaining lines of communication between the people of the kebele and the woreda government, and lobbying on behalf of the kebele when appropriate. Topics that these chairmen frequently deal with include: fertilizer and improved seed prices and distribution; environmental and food crises in the kebele; agricultural and health training; and PSNP targeting and distribution. Chairmen are elected directly by their constituents, who by definition, live in the same kebele as them. As a result, there is significant formal and informal pressure on these individuals to respond to local demands. The people of Kejima have removed ineffective and corrupt chairmen from office in the recent past.

From the perspective of most households in Kejima, the woreda government is the most important for their wellbeing—assuming they have a responsible kebele chairman. The woreda is the lowest level of government at which there is an established bureaucracy that has the power to allocate resources, including PSNP benefits, credit, food aid, and extension services. When households in Kejima report a problem or request resources, they expect a response from the woreda government—even if the woreda is dependent upon resource allocation from higher levels within the federation. As a result, the woreda is effectively ‘the face of the state’ for households in Kejima. It is also worth noting that employment for the woreda government (and higher levels of government) is also seen as highly desirable.

Above the woreda, district, zonal, regional, and federal governing bodies operate in a hierarchical manner in which policies and demands are transmitted down from one level of government to the other. Many respondents in Kejima feel disconnected from governing bodies above the woreda level, with the exception of sporadic visits by district agricultural officers to the community. Higher levels of government nonetheless have important effects on life in Kejima through policies that affect PSNP distribution, food aid allocation, agricultural extension practices, and seed and fertilizer prices. Of course, it is not clear the degree to which these policies are actually driven by on-the-ground situations and local demands.

Adult Ethiopians have voting rights and elect sub-federal officials and representatives in the national House of Representatives, which has the power the elect key federal officials. Despite many of these democratic processes, Ethiopia is dominated
by a single political party—and a single cadre within that party—which severely limits debate and opposition about contentious issues.

Nonetheless, participation in governance is quite high in Kejima. The vast majority (up to eighty percent) of adult respondents reported participating in community meetings and voting in local elections. Participation in community governance and elections does not fall along traditional gender or wealth lines. Those who do not regularly participate tend to believe that community meetings are simply too time-intensive (e.g., they ‘had better things to do’). With respect to potential inclusion/exclusion, however, it is worth noting that the community developed a political group with the specific objective of communicating the needs of women to the kebele government. Although women attend traditional community meetings, the existence of this organization—and data from interviews—suggests that they are often marginalized or hesitant to speak out during these community-wide meetings. On the one hand, the existence of this organization suggests that local leaders are interested in providing women a voice in the community. Of course, it is not clear how the views of this organization are taken into account. It is possible that this separation actually perpetuates gender-based inequalities.

It should also be noted that in recent years, the federal-to-kebele governance structure has been extended to the ‘neighborhood’ level through the establishment of ‘development cells’, alternatively known as the ‘five to one’ program. Administratively, each kebele has been split into 40-50 household goats, or villages, each of which is assigned a leader. Each goat is further divided into five-household ‘cells’, and each ‘cell’ is also assigned a leader. Ostensibly, these cells are intended to improve communication lines between households and the government, particularly with respect to rural development issues (e.g., seed and fertilizer needs, agricultural techniques, crop or livestock disease, financial management). However, respondents’ descriptions of these ‘cells’ suggest that they may serve as mechanisms for top-down imposition of development schemes and may encourage self-policing. Although reports of, for example, neighbors monitoring another neighbor’s fertilizer application may be relatively benign, there is significant potential for abuse. Given the relatively authoritarian Ethiopian government system and a history of draconian rural development programs, this ‘development cell’ structure may be cause for concern.

Civic capacity

With few exceptions, the government sponsors all formal civic organizations in Kejima. Notions of an autonomous civil society (vis-à-vis the state) are not relevant in this context, although a number of organizations exist with non-political goals. These include micro-credit organizations; savings groups; funeral insurance groups; leagues (politically-oriented meeting groups); associations (development-oriented meeting groups); and a recently started cooperative that will work to improve access to agricultural inputs. Gender, age, or class segregates all of these groups. For example, only adult women are eligible to participate in the microcredit organization; and separate associations and leagues exist for men, women, and youth. Likewise, certain savings groups are only eligible to those with enough money to save and, in the case of a house-building savings group, aspirations to construct an iron-sheet house.
International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also operated in Kejima, albeit rarely. Respondents recalled only two recent interventions. First, an NGO named GOAL implemented a women’s health training program between 2005 and 2010, which provided the foundation for a health extension program that is currently run by the government. Second, the Czech development agency, People in Need, implemented a conservation program in 2012, which involved tree planting along the steep hillside that runs along the northwest part of Kejima.

In nearly all cases—from government-sponsored organizations to international NGO programs—these groups and activities provide the possibility of improving households’ wellbeing through savings, credit, politics, or learning. As such, individuals in Kejima are incentivized to participate; respondents did not mention any potential coercion.

Beyond government sponsorship, the emancipatory or transformational potential of these organizations is limited by their narrow geographic scope. These groups are at most woreda-wide, but usually kebele- or village-specific. As such, they do not provide links with similar organizations in other locations within Ethiopia or internationally. That said, a number of women reported that within-woreda meetings among women opened new lines of communications between them and had empowering effects.

Respondents reported that they knew of no social movements or protest activities, which is not surprising given the political context in Ethiopia. Protests, social movements, and armed insurgencies have, and continue to occur in parts of Ethiopia, but these are usually in response to highly contentious issues that are not necessarily relevant to residents in Kejima.

Natural resources

Given the centrality of agriculture to livelihoods in Kejima, land is the single most important natural resource in the area (see above for discussion of land tenure and distribution). As mentioned above, there is no unoccupied or unused land in or around the community, with the exception of three ‘enclosure areas’ that are being rehabilitated for erosion control or used for communal livestock grazing.

Respondents unanimously reported declining land quality over time, which they attribute to overuse and erosion. Given the major land constraints in the area, nearly all available land is put under production each year; no fallowing of land was reported by any respondent or key informant. Moreover, households plant the same primary crop—maize, with occasional haricot bean intercrop—year after year, which may have soil-depleting effects above and beyond the repeated annual planting.

Such temporal changes in land quality are rather uniform, but there is significant spatial variation in land quality. Certain parts of Kejima—particularly those in the central and western areas—suffer from particularly poor land quality. Agricultural plots in this part of the community tend to have the steepest slopes and are subject to particularly significant water runoff from the surrounding hillside. This has a number of implications
for land quality, including: increased risk of flood-related crop damage; loss of nutrient-bearing topsoil to downhill plots; and the formation of ravines. These have destroyed significant portions of some households’ land and created a dangerous physical barrier between households and the road. Respondents also noted that land quality is linked to other natural resources, such as trees and other vegetation, which affect the quality of agricultural plots via landscape-level processes (e.g., erosion).

There are no naturally occurring, safe sources of water in Kejima—although households will occasionally use water from constructed ‘ponds’ and seasonal streams flowing through the ravine. Two government-operated water pumps are located within 5km of Kejima, and Lake Hawassa is located approximately 10km away. Despite the relatively close proximity to the lake, no households reported utilizing the lake or lake-related natural resources. Households must pay to access the pump water, at a rate of approximately ten U.S. cents per twenty-liter jerrycan in the rainy season, and fifteen to twenty U.S. cents per twenty liters in the dry season. In addition to higher dry season costs, household face physical scarcity of potable water during time. Some respondents reported having to wait for water through the middle of the night during the dry season.

Individuals within and around Kejima have built small businesses around the water supply system. Those with donkeys and carts often transport the water for remote households or sell the water along the road that runs through Kejima. All of these services are for an additional fee, of course. It should also be noted that the pipe supplying the two primary water pumps used by Kajima residents runs under part of the village itself. The choice of pump location likely reflects population density (i.e., the pumps are located in areas where the most people can access them), but many respondents in Kejima expressed dissatisfaction with the government officials that chose the location of the pumps. Similarly, a functioning electricity line runs through part of the village, but there are no outlets for households in Kejima to access it.

*Economic resources*

Members of the Kejima community participate mainly in two nearby markets. The first, called Shamana, is located approximately six kilometers to the northwest of Kejima, atop the steep hillside that borders the community. This is the primary market for community members. It is where they buy and sell agricultural goods, livestock, clothes, food from outside sources (e.g., salt), and petty goods, including mobile ‘airtime’ for those with mobile phones. In previous times, Shamana had been a place of exchange with inhabitants of the Oromiya region (i.e., the Oromo people) who would often purchase goods from Kejima residents in Shamana to re-sell in more distant
markets. Respondents reported that this trade has diminished in recent years, as Oromo exchange has been reoriented to the north. This has had a detrimental impact on local producers. Shamana is connected to Dore, the administrative capital, by the road that runs through Kejima. This road is serviced by a local bus, motorcycle taxis, and occasional cargo truck—although hiring transportation on either is too expensive for most residents of Kejima to afford.

The second market, called Dore, is located approximately eight kilometers to the southeast of Kejima. This town was only recently established as the administrative capital of the woreda. It is growing rapidly and hosts a robust livestock market, as well as restaurants that primarily service government officials. One can also purchase a limited selection of agricultural products and petty goods in Dore. A local bus and an increasing number of motorcycles run between Dore and Shamana, and between Dore and Hawassa. Hawassa is a large town and the administrative capital of SNNPR, located approximately forty-five kilometers to the east of Kejima. Although residents of Kejima cannot afford frequent transportation between these towns, many people and goods flow between Dore and Hawassa, making Dore an important connection between the people of Kejima, urban Ethiopia, and broader circuits of commodity circulation, as exemplified in the Pepsi soda available in the two restaurants in Dore.

A third local market, Darba, is located approximately five kilometers south of Kejima. Despite its relatively close proximity, Darba is a secondary market for Kejima because of its small size and relatively distant location vis-à-vis the main road and population centers. It is important not to overemphasize the spatial and economic connections that these markets provide residents of Kejima. Practically, the community has very limited connection to regional, national, and global markets. Virtually no local production is exchanged beyond Shamana, Dore or Darba; and aside from petty food items (e.g., salt), clothing, and, for few residents, mobile ‘airtime’, Kejima residents do not have the resources to purchase goods that come from external markets.

Fertilizer and improved seeds are important exceptions. According to residents of Kejima, these inputs are necessary for agricultural production given declining soil quality and the low reliability of the ‘local’ seeds available in the area. Both fertilizer and improved seeds are sourced from national and international markets, and as such, are not necessarily responsive to local conditions (e.g., ability to pay). Most people in Kejima access improved seeds and fertilizer through government-sponsored channels, although many utilize other sources of credit to purchase these inputs. In 2013, the government responded to local complaints about input prices and allowed some households to pay for their inputs in two installments, including one after the harvest, when households can sell food for money.

Perhaps surprisingly, nearly all transactions are monetized in and around Kejima. If a household wanted to, say, exchange their cow for a certain amount of maize, they would have to sell their cow to a livestock trader in the market for cash (Ethiopian birr) and then use those birr to purchase food from a separate vendor in the market. The same holds true in the labor market. On-field work is often remunerated in birr, although workers may be paid directly in food during periods of environmental stress.
Knowledge sharing and learning

Most youth in Kejima attend school through at least the primary level, with approximately half attending secondary school as well. In a number of cases, households have sent at least one of their children to Hawassa for high school, at significant economic cost. Many respondents expressed a belief that agriculture-based livelihoods in Kejima were a ‘dead end’, and therefore placed major emphasis on the education of their children—male and female alike. As discussed below, this marks a major generational shift in education; most male adults in Kejima received a primary-level education at most, and adult women were uniformly denied all educational opportunities as youth.

Among adults, government training is the exclusive form of knowledge sharing and learning. Various extension agents conduct training programs in the community on topics including agriculture, health, gender, financial management, and conservation training. Agricultural knowledge is, by far, considered the most important. This again reflects the centrality of agriculture to livelihoods in Kejima. Extension agents often utilize the ‘development cell’ structure described above to disseminate information. This can be an effective means of spreading messages, with the potentially important drawback of doing so in a top-down manner that limits discussion of potential alternatives. Indeed, interviews suggested that even informal, neighbor-to-neighbor knowledge sharing largely involved the transmission of government-sponsored ideas and schema.

Respondents did not indicate that training and knowledge sharing was limited to a particular subset of the population. Indeed, the ‘development cell’ structure is designed to promote the transmission and uptake of knowledge/practices to everyone in the community. That said, those in leadership positions—such as the women who were leaders of the health extension program—tended to receive more training than others.

II. Rural Resilience Capabilities Community Assessment Matrix

[See attachment]

III. Interview and focus group results

This section presents key findings from interviews and focus groups. First, it outlines the major challenges and constraints describe by households in Kejima. The next part describes the ways that resources are being mobilized in the community to construct and defend livelihoods. The final section presents respondents’ subjective understandings of resilience.

Major challenges and constraints

Respondents identified a number of threats, challenges, and limitations to their livelihoods and wellbeing. These generally fell within the realms of the environment,
economy, or politics/governance, with environmental issues the most emphasized by far. This largely reflects the centrality of agriculture in Kejima: environmental challenges have the most proximate and observable impact on households’ wellbeing. However, it is worth emphasizing that separating discussions of the environment, economy, and politics/government is purely a matter of organizations, since none of these spheres exists in isolation from the others.

With respect to environmental issues, Kejima is facing both long-term declines in natural resource availability and quality, and high levels of year-to-year variation in the environmental conditions necessary for agriculture (i.e., rainfall shocks). Households generally have small—and shrinking—landholdings that produce little, if any, surplus under ideal conditions. Without open land to develop their agricultural production extensively—or off-farm alternatives for subsistence—households utilize all of their land every year, prioritizing short-term food needs over long-term soil health and productivity. As one farmer described his landholdings, “There is no land here. All of my land is occupied by different plants. By false banana, and the other plants like maize. No land is bare.” This is unambiguously true of all other plots in Kejima.

In addition to overuse, many households suffer from erosion-related declines in soil health. As one man explained, “The production was also decreasing because of rain and because of minerals which are—minerals are just washed away by erosion, most of the minerals. That’s why the production is becoming less.” Other respondents had similar observations: “But right now, as you can see, the runoff coming from this hill washed away the soil and people’s production is decreasing and decreasing.” Combined, these long-term processes are undermining agricultural production in Kejima. Two respondents describe the decline:

“My land is not as productive as five or six years ago… Before six or seven years, we were not using this fertilizer as an input. Simply we plant with seed, and we get good production. Right now, even though we are using fertilizers like DAP and urea, we are not getting as much production as we have been getting from five or seven years before. The quality of land is very much decreasing.”

“I heard from my father and my grandfather that our land was very fertile in the past, giving good production…without using fertilizer and improved seed. Right now, even though we are using fertilizer and improved seed, the quality of my farm is very low… I don’t get the production which I need, as much as I need. It’s obvious that the quality of my soil has just eroded and right now it’s not good, and it’s not as much as before.”

In addition to leeching minerals, downhill runoff is driving the formation of large, dangerous ravines through the middle of the community. Individual households have lost up to one-quarter hectare of land to date, and fear that they may no longer have enough land for subsistence if the process continues. Given the lack of available land for affected

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3 While the very importance of rain-fed agriculture in the area reflects a number of important structural issues, this section will nonetheless focus on respondents’ reports.
farmers to relocate their production, these ravines are a direct threat to livelihoods in the community.

“Erosion and some valleys are a big problem. If you go beside, on this side of the field, you will see some valleys coming. This is the result of erosion making our land very much eroded. And the production of the land it is now, it is decreasing very much. Not as much as before, and we have a lot of children to feed and live with us.”

“My land was just destroyed by this gorge. If you go there, you will see that it just passes through my land. And now half of my food, my family’s consumption is coming from the market.”

A number of respondents drew a direct link between the relatively barren (i.e., treeless) hillside that runs along the northwest wide of the community and erosion-related ravine formation and nutrition loss. Indeed, the community’s forests are almost entirely degraded:

“During Haile Salasse era, this area was forest. No one came along in this area because there are lions, tigers, and some hyenas that may just…people are not coming around here. I know that it was like that when I was very little boy, but when I grew up, people are just increasing, and people are just making some land for farms… and they are just deforesting some forests in this area.

Recognition of the links between deforestation and soil quality is leading to soil and water conservation efforts in the community (discussed below).

Kejima is also subject to significant environmental shocks, including floods and failed rains. The latter term refers to both long-term rain shortages and poorly timed, erratic rains. Although the latter may still add up to expected monthly totals, it will nonetheless contribute to crop failure. Respondents suggest that year-to-year variability has increased over time. At least two rain failures have occurred within the past five years, including the most recent growing season (2012). Despite the verdant landscape that the interviews took place (pictured on this page), respondents were suffering from an exceptionally severe hungry season as a result.

Such shocks have drastic impacts on households in Kejima, and are a constant source of fear in the community. This was a major theme in nearly all interviews, as a number of excerpts demonstrate below:

“…when I was a child, this area gets surplus production. It gives extra production because the land was very fertile. For either maize or false banana, they both would get big production, so there was no hunger…"
[but now] every year drought is coming and hunger is occurring. That is the change which I have seen.”

“The other concern is drought. It occurs regularly. Last year there was a drought, but this year it is good. I don’t know in the next two, three, years, it may become dry last like year or before last year. That’s my concern.”

“My biggest concern is drought. It is occurring regularly. And crop failures are also a concern because sometimes the rain stops when we start sowing our crop, or sometimes the rain stops when the crop starts flowering. This is my concern. And after that, the hunger is coming, that is also my concern. Even before five and six years, these things were not happening regularly. But right now it is happening regularly. And the water shortage is also there, that is my concern.”

“I fear that the hunger will also come again.”

“Right now we are fearing.”

Households in Kejima face other environment-related risks, including malaria and water-borne disease. As two respondents describe,

“...the biggest threat which we are just fearing is the shortage of rain. Another threat is malaria or disease. Because there is no health post here, health center here, when we get sick, we couldn’t reach the health post or health center on time.”

“...they are collecting water, the rain water. They are fearing to drink it because they fear diseases. So everybody goes to down there [to the pump] and buys water from there. I myself also go to it. Right now there is no problem for water because it’s the rainy season. But when dry season comes, unless you just rise up at 2 am in the night, you will never get water.”

Such so-called idiosyncratic shocks are a significant source of additional risk to the lives and livelihoods of Kejima residents.

Economic activity in Kejima is centered on rain-fed agriculture. Given the environmental challenges in the area, it should not be surprising that the majority of households in the community face extreme poverty and food insecurity. Although respondents placed disproportionate emphasis on environmental factors, they also discussed a number of economic factors that further constrained or challenged their livelihoods.

For one, many households routinely have difficulty securing resources to buy improved seeds and fertilizer. Household savings are often low or nonexistent as a result of year-to-year variability in output. Therefore, a slight increase in prices, a slight decline in output, or an unexpected drain on savings (e.g., due to sudden illness) is enough to
make these inputs—considered critical by most households—unaffordable. One respondent described the increase in prices for seeds and fertilizer:

“The price of fertilizer has increased... Before five years, it cost 400 birr, now 800 birr. This is fertilizer. Improved seed has also increased. It was 80 birr at that time, five years ago, and now it is 500 birr with transportation.”

Although the government recently instituted a two-installment payment option for seeds and fertilizer, these prices still make inputs unaffordable for many households.

“That fertilizer and improved seed, if you get money, you can buy that one... Money is the first thing which we need. And fertilizer and improved seed are also needed then. As you see that the government has helped with fifty percent [installation payment plan]. But this fifty percent only reached a few people, not everyone. The poor still don’t have the capacity to pay that fifty percent, so they do not get that fertilizer. They simply plant seeds without fertilizer on their land.”

Indeed, many respondents viewed the (in)ability to purchase seeds and fertilizer as an important marker of socioeconomic differentiation in the community. As one woman described:

“Some people...do not have the capacity to buy improved seed and fertilizer. Those better off households, they have a cow, sheep, goat, or something, and they take that to the market and sell it. Then they buy some improved seed and fertilizer to plant. That is the difference. That’s why there are the different types among this community.”

Assuming that improved seeds and fertilizer do indeed increase productivity under current ecological conditions and farming techniques in Kejima, differential access to these inputs is likely to increase between-household inequality in the long run.

Households will also sell productive assets, or take out significant loans to purchase these inputs. Such debt relationships are a fairly common—likely more so than reported—in Kejima. Debts are common among the poorest, and are often one of the enduring impacts of shocks among households of all statuses. Even better off households may need to borrow money for inputs or food after a failed harvest. These debts a long-term negative impact on those who hold them for months or years after the crisis has passed. One particularly poor individual describes his situation:

“I will take the credit every year, even right now I am working for food. I need to take some food for my child because sometimes my child feels hungry. Even sometimes in the nighttime she feels very hungry. We are—me and my wife—we are bigger people, we can just resist that hunger. We do have patience, but my child does not have patience for hunger. That’s why I take the credit every time... This PSNP money is also not enough,
and it is coming late every month. Not on time. It is not paid on time. And it is not this much enough for my family.”

Distress sales of livestock and other productive assets also have negative effects. These sales not only liquidate wealth but also redirect household resources to replenishing herds in future years. However, they are considered a better alternative to debt:

“No, there are no other ways to exchange food. Only money. We buy from the market. If you take some food from the other people as a loan, they ask you to work more than what you get from them. So we [our household] don’t do that one. I simply sell my cows or my sheep, goat, I buy from the market.”

In addition to economic challenges associated with seed and fertilizer acquisition, debt, and distress sales, households in Kejima expressed a more general sentiment that the community is an economic ‘dead end’. From their perspective, agriculture in the area is declining and there are no sustainable economic alternatives in the community, making escape or exit the best alternative for the next generation. Respondents saw this as motivation to educate their children, which would give them the chance to secure a government job or develop some non-agrarian livelihood away from Kejima.

“I am very tired of working on the field, the farm. I don’t want my children to work like me in the field and the farm, and become tired like me… that’s why I send them to school.”

“My wish for my children when they grow up, my wish for my children and grandchildren is that… they can do a business, they can do that and have a car. And some of them will go to school and have a good job, government employees. That is what I wish.”

“Then for my children, I wish that they go to school, they learn up to the end of college, get employed for the government and work there. And then they can help me again also.”

“My hope in the future is that, I am thinking about my children going to school. To finish their school, to have a good result, to be employed as a government officials, to live in the different towns and cities.”

“I wish for my children that I will be able to send them to school, and up to the last, up to the college, and let them get employed for the government and work as a government official in the towns, in the cities. For me and my wife I wish we have a good life, enough food to eat, many cows, here [in Kejima], we live together here.”

With respect to political challenges, respondents focused mainly on aid- and benefit-delivery issues. Uncertainty or discontent about PSNP targeting and timing was
among the most frequently discussed. This was particularly true among current and former beneficiaries, and those who felt they should be beneficiaries. As described above, quotas restrict each community’s PSNP benefits, and beneficiaries are selected through a targeting process that, in principle, identifies the most asset poor and food insecure households in the community. While many respondents were generally content with the current allocation of benefits, retargeting in the past has been contested. As one so-called ‘forced graduate’ describes:

“I was PSNP—I was in PSNP for four years, and now it is three years that I am not in PSNP. I didn’t graduate, I didn’t graduate by myself. They forced me to graduate. I don’t know who removed my name from that one… when I go there, there is not my name on the list. I don’t know why.”

Such experiences fuel continuing fears about the how long these benefits would continue into the future.

“Then even some people were forced to leave without their interest [consent]. Those people came to me at my home and said, let us go and accuse this government officials who just forced us to leave this PSNP”

“In other kebeles this retargeting did not take place. But in our kebele, when we changed the chairmen, the retargeting also came. By that way some people who are directly benefitting from PSNP were just removed from PSNP. Some poors were also removed.”

Such concern is particularly acute among female-headed households, who feel particularly vulnerable with respect to government policies:

“Yeah I fear that because I am female… No one is supporting me. If right now the retargeting [of PSNP] comes people are just pointing the finger to female-headed households first… They fear males. They don’t want to point a finger to him. But because I am female, I think that if the retargeting comes they will just point the finger at me first. Why don’t I fear that one? I fear it.”

A number of respondents suggested that PSNP targeting was not a matter of uncertainty, but was undermined by cronyism and nepotism:

“I am not better off than the others, but the local government officials and the woreda officials want those people who are just relatives to them to benefit from this PSNP. Friends, relatives. That’s why I say that I couldn’t get that opportunity.”

PSNP beneficiaries also reported uncertainty about the timing of their monthly benefits. Given the small margins at which many of these households live, delays of as
little as a week may force a household to forgo food consumption or important purchases, or work for cash, sell assets, or take a loan to make these acquisitions.

“Sometimes the PSNP is coming delayed. One time, we had a big problem in my house for food, so we had to sell it [our sheep] because the money is delayed.”

“When this safety net money is late, we go to some rich man and we get some cash credit from them because we are hoping that this safety net money is coming. So we get some money from that rich man and we buy some fertilizer and improved seed. When that money comes we pay the loan back to them.”

“When that cash and food was late, I worked for other people, just working in their house. By that way I got some money from them, and I was buying food from market.”

Respondents generally believed that their local representatives were responsive to their needs, and would call upon officials at higher levels to support them through food aid, seed and fertilizer subsidies, and training. For example:

“When we ask the government for improved seed and fertilizer to come on time, we tell the chairman of the kebele and he goes to the woreda and tells them. They respond very soon. And when sometimes this safety net money becomes delayed, we tell the local officials that we are in problem and then they go to the woreda and tell them that people are not paid, the payment became very late. Then the woreda responds very soon.”

However, respondents identified a number of governance-related challenges. In most cases, these issues could be traced to issues at higher levels of government (i.e., above the woreda). For example, one respondent complained about the water and electricity access. As he put it,

“Yeah there are some things that the people have asked and the government hasn’t replied. The one issue is water, clean water. The water has come from the area called Loke and passed to Shamana, but we didn’t get that water. And the other is electricity. We asked them before two years about getting access to electricity and water, but still now they have not replied.”

Others pointed out the government response depended upon the type of claim that was being made, which in most cases is related to the level of government that is ultimately responsible for responding.

“Yeah they respond very fast and just help. There remain some problems. For example, some people Still right now there are thieves, but they do not
respond for that. But in others cases, when we ask them to help us in
different ways they respond as much as we need.”

“The response is not fast, but it depends on the question... Some questions
need a very fast response, some questions need long response. So
sometimes... some questions have a faster response, the others may take a
long time to respond. But officials from the region or federal level, they
are not responding very soon.”

Indeed, respondents drew stark distinctions between the different levels of
government. While they were generally happy with the response of local government,
respondents commonly expressed a feeling of disconnect between the people of Kejima
and government officials outside beyond the woreda level.

“Everything comes through the local government. We don’t know the
above one. We just expect things from the local chairman or local
officials. And we don’t know the regional, the federal government, what
they are doing. We know the one who is very near to us.”

Some see this isolation in a positive light, a reflection that the federal system is working
effectively. For example:

“We are not expecting the higher-level government officials to come to us
and just move through us and look to us. Because government has already
put in a structure so that there is a woreda and some kebele. The
government also sends DA among us and extension works, the health
extension workers. They are moving here and there and looking at our
problems and they are supporting us. By that way I think the higher
officials are also helping us because they have a representative here
which works with us.”

“Sometimes experts from the regional government are coming and visiting
us here, but not always. Sometimes they come and ask us what is a
problem, how development is going, what technologies you need for
agricultural improvements. They are just doing that and we will tell them
about everything, but the response is not as fast as the woreda.”

“As I told you... sometimes we need fertilizer on time, received on time. It
is the responsibility of the woreda officials, not regional officials that
one.”

Others, however, described this isolation in more negative terms:

“There is no change that the regional and national government has
brought in my life.”
“They are not just, they are not helping my interests. Only god knows about me. They do not know me, where I am…”

Others have recognized that popular satisfaction with the local government is due almost entirely to the kebele chairman. As one woman noted, “The local officials are responding very well. It’s because the chairman.” This suggests that the responsiveness of local government is due more to a single person than an enduring structure or institution.

Despite, or perhaps because of the fairly authoritarian governance system described above, few respondents expressed explicitly critical views of the top-down governance structure. The one stark example is instructive, however:

“They who are on the level—the regional level and the federal level are thinking that us, just considering us like a cattle. They are not responding to our question. They just eat for themselves, build houses for themselves, send their children to good schools—they are not thinking about us. I don’t think that…the region and the federal government are responding as we want.”

This perspective may have been more common than the interviews suggest.

Overall, households in Kejima face an extremely challenging social and natural environment, with a number of processes undermining their agricultural production and limiting their ability to cope and construct alternative livelihoods. Long-term declines in land availability and soil quality, and highly variable annual rainfall are contributing to lower agricultural productivity over time and increased variance in output from year-to-year. Moreover, there are few viable alternatives to agriculture in Kejima, leading many respondents to conclude that exit is the best option. Finally, while views of the government are generally positive, community members expressed well-founded concerns about the predictability of government support and, less frequently, the intentions of government officials at higher levels.

**Opportunities and resource mobilization**

Despite the severe challenges discussed above, households in Kejima are mobilizing resources to construct and defend their livelihoods, at least to the extent possible given current constraints. Of course, many of these ‘resource mobilizations’ may have potentially negative consequences as well.

With respect to economic resources, households in Kejima have dealt with challenges associated with the fixed land tenure system, high input prices, and limited household resources by developing an informal market for land sharing agreements and short-term land use rights. As one respondent describes land sharing and contrasts:

“On the shared land, the farm owner and you will share the cost of fertilizer and improved seed, and…you will divide the production evenly. On the contract land, if it is one hectare, you will pay around 1,000 or 2,000 birr to take the land for one season as a contract. You will buy improved seed and fertilizer for yourself, and if you get some production
from that land you won’t give the production… to the farm owner. You take all the production to your home, and when you just, when you do the cost-benefit analysis, you may cost much or you may have a benefit from that one. But in the case of the sharing you are benefitting.”

Two other farmers describe how share agreements address resource inequalities:

“…some are just asking to work together and to share the production from that land. By that way, rich people are just buying an input, these improved seeds and fertilizer, and give to the poor, and they work with that and share the production. By that way, this rich people may have three or four places and get a big production from that land…”

“In this area, people do not want only labor because fertilizer is so expensive, and improved seed is also expensive. If you want to work, share with them, you have to share some money for that fertilizer and seed, not only labor…”

Finally, it is important to note that this land market is only accessible to men:

“Males can work on another household’s field on share or on contract. Female-headed households do not have such a capacity to work on another’s field, either in share or in contract.”

There is also a relatively robust labor market in and around Kejima. While a labor sharing system does exist in the community, most respondents reported that wage labor—typically farm labor—was extremely common. Like land sharing and contracting, wage labor is exclusively a male activity. Wage labor is a critical means of coping with failed harvests or other shocks, particularly among the most vulnerable households. Men will work on the fields of better off—or less affected households—within or around Kejima during periods of stress. Aside from PSNP—which is available to only eligible households—such labor constitutes the foremost source of resources during periods of stress or crisis.

“Some who do not have cows, they go to some area and work some small business and bring some money to their family. Those who do not have such a capacity, they also work for the better-off people. By that way people are struggling and just passing that year.”

“Last year was very bad year. I even went to some people to work for them by myself. I just work different types of things to make my family survive. Other than selling my cow. It was very bad.”

“People have passed that year in a very, very bad situation. Some people who are getting some assistance from the government, they get some assistance. Those who do not get assistance from the government, they
sold their cows. And the others went to another area to work for some other people and get some money from there. And government has brought some powders for children here and those malnourished children have got that powder. By that way we passed that year, she says.”

Such wage labor agreements might, in some cases, be a means of legitimizing redistribution between better- and worse-off households. A number of better-off individuals reported working for other better-off households without pay; while worse-off individuals worked aside them—doing the same tasks for the same person—but received food or money in exchange for their work.

Male labor also fits into many households’ income diversification strategies more generally. Households in Kejima often engage in multiple off-farm income-generating activities. These strategies are motivated by a number of possible objectives, including: filling gaps between on-farm production and consumption demands; obtaining birr to purchase goods from the market; obtaining birr to pay schools fees; and generating income to save in anticipation of future challenges or needs, including social obligations. These off-farm activities are highly gendered. As mentioned, only men will labor on other households’ fields; the same is true for livestock trading and ‘local transport’ services (i.e., transporting people/goods on donkeys, pictured above). Women often engage in food preparation for private individuals and to sell in the market. Both men and women are often involved in petty trade and arbitrage between the community and local markets. For example, two women described their off-farm work:

“I am working a small business like, just salt, the other bananas, very small business, I am working that on the market—some spices, I am just selling that one. My husband is working on the field.”

“Men are going to the market and just they are working as a broker in the cattle market. Some women are just doing a small business like butter and bananas and salt. Selling that to the market and buying some powder for the children.”

Four men also described common off-farm activities:

“Before I started PSNP, I have just been working for different fields, and even sometimes me and my wife were going and begging for food from some people without working for them, but begging them because we are hungry”
“Because I got some food from him last year, right now I am working for him by just pulling the weeds, and sowing the crop… Today he also gave me some maize. I will take that maize to my house.”

“We sell cows to the market and buy food from the market with that money. There is no exchange of food for other things in this area, simply you buy from the market.”

“They are working on their farm and some other businesses, like they are buying a motorbike and transporting people here and there. Buying some donkeys to transport locals, serving as a local transportation means. By that way they are generating some income outside of agriculture. That is what the reason the change has come.”

Such labor opportunities are, of course, extremely contingent since they rely upon the demand of others:

“Last year I didn't work for money, only food. Because the crop has failed, people are not interested to give you a wage for working on their field because they don’t like to pay money.”

With respect to the environment, a coalition of community members, government officials, and an international NGO have mobilized resources to begin combating the long-term decline in natural resources in the area. While it is unclear which of these parties initiated these conservation efforts first, all three have provided some degree of leadership in efforts to improve natural resources in the community.

A subset of households in the community are, by nature of their location, more affected by erosion than others, and have lobbied for the community to initiate the landscape-level changes needed to protect vulnerable topsoil from runoff. These households recognize that these changes require a community-level effort. For example, one man who lived in a particularly vulnerable part of the hillside called for his community and the local government to create an ‘enclosure area’ (pictured above) where permanent vegetation could grow to protect the soil and limit runoff. As he recalled:

“Yeah they can hear my voice… The one who just started this land to be closed, it is me. Because the erosion is a very big problem here. My land was every year eroded by the erosion and I am the one who started just shouting to close this land. My voice also heard by this way.”
The *woreda* government has also initiated projects and training to improve natural resources in Kejima. These efforts are led primarily by one of the *kebele’s* ‘development agents’ (DA, i.e., a development-related extension agent), whose specific task is to promote soil and water conservation strategies. Higher-level officials and community members that have been selected by the government for conservation-related training also supplement his work. Respondents describe these efforts:

“The government has brought some experts on how to construct soil and water conservation structures there, and then the community participated with their labor”

“During the Derg era… the land, all the forest has been cleared and became farmed in this area. Then, after this government came, and the leader told so many people about the forest and its use. Me, myself I went to different areas for experience, because I was elected from this kebele to go and to see different areas like, Alaba and Gedeo, I went to see how the forests are protected there. After that we came here and we taught our people that forest has a good use and it is very useful for environmental protect. And not only government, people just like you who are doing some research. They just collect data about this forest, about the deforestation, about the erosion occurring in this area. Those people also helped the government to set a policy to protect our land. Then they gave us training about this forest, its use, and the function of the structures which are constructed for soil and water conservation. Then we started to protect this land.”

Interviews suggest that there is a high degree of buy-in with respect to these government-led efforts. Community members expressed a strong belief in the importance of trees, due largely in part to government messages:

“I have got some training from the government. How to plant trees and what is the use of trees, and if you plant trees, how trees can eradicate this drought. The government has given us a training to plant different types of trees in our area. To get rain on time, to have a good, fresh air. They told us… if there are trees, many trees, you will have a fresh air, you will have a rain on time, you don’t get any drought. I just got that training from the government.”

This buy-in may also reflect self-policing associated with the ‘development cell’ structure.

“We have a norm to ask those people who do not use these agricultural technologies. We have norm. We call them, the one who didn’t use the agricultural technology—fertilizer, improved seed—…if he doesn’t do that one, we will call him to the village and we will ask him, why don’t you use that one? …One leader will register everything about the five farmers…”

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He registers and he bring to me, and I will see if somebody didn’t use that one, and we will call that one. But everyone has used it this year.”

This structure may also, however, work the opposite way and facilitate conservation-related communication from the people to the kebele government.

“For example, when looking at this hill... I [village leader] represented my farmers and went to the kebele officials and I told them, let us just protect this land from animals, from people, and not to cut trees. Let us close it. Then the kebele officials took that idea and they discussed themselves and we discuss among ourselves. We decided to close this area. Right now as you can see, it is just rehabilitating.”

Finally, at least one international NGO has recently provided assistance with natural resource regeneration in Kejima. The Czech development agency, People in Need, implemented a conservation program in 2012. This involved planting trees along the steep hillside on the northwest border of the community. According to interviews, People in Need brought the trees and paid community members to assist in the tree planting (dotting the hillside pictured below).

“No one resists this one because they knew that this land, if this land protected, there will be less erosion in this area. That’s why they need this land to be protected. And before one month, one organization has helped us to plant...around 3,000 seedlings. All my villagers, forty-five of them, went there and planted that trees.”

It is important to emphasize that the community’s response to environmental problems is in part contingent upon the particular type of challenge. Erosion control appears to be a manageable problem, one that stems from an observable cause. Other problems, such as those related to rainfall and land fragmentation appear less controllable, and tended to be described in more fatalistic terms.

“I will pray god to bring a good year [of rain] just like this year every year”

“If god closes the sky, what can we do? We don’t have any capacity to protect our crop. Only god protects it.”
“When the year is bad, only god helps us to survive. That and getting some support from PSNP.”

“The decisive factor is not only rain, god is also a decisive factor. What god gives us. What we will have in the future, we only know after it arrives... You can only say ‘I have got this one’ once you have it. Right now I can’t say anything.”

It is difficult to disentangle the social and political resources being mobilized in Kejima since the government plays such a pervasive role in many aspects of life there. This is primarily an analytic problem, of course, and a number of notable processes are occurring nonetheless.

For one, there has been a generational shift in education. As mentioned above, this is largely due to parental aspirations for their children’s future; but government expansion of educational infrastructure has also played an important role. One older respondent describes changes in education, and related changes in economic activity:

“When I was a child, a boy, people were not learning. People were not sending their children to school. But right now, people started sending their children to school. Some of them became teachers, some of them became agricultural officers, some of them are holding diplomas, some of them holding different certificates... Many of our people are starting to send their children to school... When I was a child, people did not know how to do some small businesses or other businesses. Except farming the land. Right now, people start small businesses here and there, and are using different technologies. Like buying motorbikes and other things. And the other thing is that people are just starting to change their life through different modern agricultural technologies. That is what I am seeing.”

Beyond the formal school system, government extension agents provide a number of important services to Kejima related to agriculture, soil and water conservation, and health. In a number of cases, DAs will work with formal and informal community leaders to conduct training and awareness programs. Knowledge from such programs is then disseminated throughout the community.

“Those who have access to training will learn much, a lot about agricultural practices... Five or six years ago, we were just planting our crop by broadcasting. Right now we are just planting the maize in a line, as government gave us training to do.”

“Those who are better off in the different institutions like church or FTC [farmer training center], they bring the training down to the one to five [cell] level. Then they teach those who are below them... they just pass that training for them. And sometimes I collect forty-five of my villagers
here and... just show them what the government has taught me. By that way we are passing the training to everyone. “

“Those technologies and agricultural practice are taught by the government, by the agricultural office of the woreda and some DAs that are just moving inside of us. They are teaching us how to use the different agricultural technologies like fertilizer, like improved seeds, and how to plant or sow. We were sowing in broadcast before five or six years, right now we are just planting on rows and that is from the training given by the agricultural office.”

The demand for this training is generally high. Many respondents expressed an interest in any knowledge that might help them improve their situation. As one farmer stated,

“I don’t care whether the government or another organization gives us the training. I just need training... If they come and give us training on the business, on the farm, how to cultivate, how to use modern technology.”

These training programs also provide opportunities for community members to gain leadership experience. For example, one woman described her experience:

“The health post that I am working for, it is just from the government. Government told the kebele to select two women to run this program with the health extension workers for the kebele. Three years ago, the NGO GOAL was working for five years in this kebele. During that time, I worked with them. After that... after their program was phased out... I continued my work just with the health workers in the kebele...”

Later in this interview, she described the empowering effect that this experience has had on her.

“... I learned how to speak to people like you [men, foreigners]. Before this meeting, before this experience, I fear talking to some people. If you look at some women in our village, they don’t want to talk to people like you because they don’t have experience talking, because they are just living in their houses. They don’t have an exposure to other people. I have learned from the experience which I have shared with the other women... the trainers also told us that you have to speak loudly when you meet with people without any fear, without any suspicion, you have to communicate with people as much as you like because you, boys—men and women are equal. Why don’t you speak? Why you are keeping silent? That’s what I learned.”

The government is also an important actor with respect to social organizations. It sponsors a number of saving and insurance groups, which are usually separated according to sex and/or age. Saving groups provide a generally secure means of saving money and
in some cases allow members to utilize the groups’ savings as credit on a rotating basis. This is important given the significant credit constraints that most households in Kejima face. As the excerpts below show, however, these groups are not without their challenges:

“I am participating in one of the savings groups… [It started] three years ago, we are just saving ten birr per month.... [There are] 120 members...we can withdraw whenever we’d like. When problem erupts, we can withdraw any of that money for solving that problem. It was started by the local governing officials told us to start our savings. We started saving 20 birr, then we reduced it to 10 birr right now… Anybody can join our group”

“The saving groups are just organized by the community. When we save our money, our money will be collected and goes to the microfinance organization, Oromo Microfinance… This savings group has started three years ago, but in the middle it was stopped because people were frustrated that the government had promised them...loans. But the government didn’t do that, so people got frustrated and stopped in the middle. And the group had already just separated, but ten months ago we started again. And the government also come and told us again, we will make some loans available for starting the group again. Then we started ten months ago…”

A number of informal savings groups run parallel to the government-sponsored programs, including a group focused on saving for home construction.

“It’s informal. We ourselves, we just made a group to help each other with construction of our houses or for buying different vehicles like motorbike…We started one year ago, and the members, most of the members are businessmen.”

There are also a number of insurance groups in Kejima. These are generally intended to provide assistance with funerals, which involve costly social obligations in the area. Members of these groups contribute on a monthly basis, and can draw upon the groups’ funds when a death occurs. This allows households to meet social expectations about funerals without having to sell off productive assets or take out loans.

“We have one group that helps each other when death occurs… we help each other as villagers. We do have such a group here, around 30 people together… We save every thirty days for that purpose. When someone dies, we will buy something for that family, help that family with the funeral ceremony… Ten years ago it started. We just, we the villagers, we came together and we organized that group to help each other.”

The kebele leader holds frequent kebele-wide meetings, which provide an important interface between the government and community members. These are forums for the government to spread messages, and for community members to air complaints
and make demands. As such, it provides an important location for the community to mobilize and command public resources. For example, a number of community members reported that they were recently able to lobby for a change in government seed and fertilizer policy through these meetings. As they variously describe it:

“The woreda officials are responsive, are responding in a good way. Sometime when we ask them to bring the improved seed and fertilizer on time, they bring that one. They just give an answer on time. And when drought comes and crop failure come, people are getting hungry. We ask them and say that we are hungry right now, so why don’t you ask for some assistance for us, to just assist us. They just respond for that also. I think that the kebele officials and woreda officials are responding.”

“A success which I have seen this year is that everybody has planted his or her crop with fertilizer because the government has improved the price of fertilizer. Last year and the year before last year, we didn’t even seen fertilizer with our naked eyes because it was very expensive. No one had a capacity to buy that one. But this year the government has brought an improved price for that fertilizer. That means that we pay half of the money up front, and the government also helps us with half of the money [the second half is paid after harvest]. By that way, everybody has taken that fertilizer and planted their crop with that fertilizer. Before we were not using this fertilizer for our crop because people did not have a capacity to buy fertilizer. They simply planted the crop without fertilizer. And even some people did not want to take improved seed because the fertilizer price was very high during the last two or three years. This year everybody asked to buy improved seed with fertilizer because the price fallen lower. That is what, some a success which I have seen.”

“Local government officials are working good things for us. Sometimes government just facilitates some loans for fertilizer and improved seeds. This local government is just working very hard so that every farmer gets that loan and plants that improved seed and fertilizer. By that way they are working a good thing for us. I think that they are representing us very much.”

In addition to kebele meetings, knowledge sharing and social mobilization also occurs on a neighbor-to-neighbor basis. Often, however, neighbors are sharing government-sponsored or -promoted ideas. This is evident in the excerpts below, which variously demonstrate that community members value knowledge from the government more than other sources, and that neighbor-to-neighbor discussions often repeat a government-endorsed discourse focused on agricultural modernization.

“Yeah it’s obvious that we learn a lot from our neighbors, especially from those better off. We work for them and when we work for them, we just see which kind of improved seeds he is using, which kind of fertilizer, what
kind of technologies he is applying, and what kind of... everything we can take from him.”

“The experience which you shared from the community is not as good as if you get some training from the government and government officials. That one is better than the experience which we share from the villagers.”

“Yeah when I started my business, first I learned this business from other people. That’s obvious. And agriculture also, I am learning from the other people. How to use fertilizer, how to use improved seed, how to prepare the land. I am just getting an informal training from my neighbors”

These knowledge-sharing relationships are also structured by the ‘development cell’ organization described above. On the one hand, this organization may be seen as promoting social interaction, mobilization, and communication; but it may also be a means of social control and promoting self-policing and disciplining.

Indeed, knowledge sharing in Kejima is highly government-oriented, in terms of both content and the means of knowledge dissemination. In one notable exception, however, the respondent below describes a more experience-based, informal knowledge:

“People did not get any business training or education. But five and six years ago, people are getting hungry and there were problems those years. So some people migrated from here to towns in search of a job, and they learned that business, how to do some business there. And they come here again and they started small businesses. They had an experience going to the town to work with businesspeople there, learning something from them and bringing it back here and starting a small business here. Then the villagers also learn from them and start a business. This, the business training, started with a problem. Because of problem, people were going to search for jobs for survival, and by that way they brought this technology here. Those who are better off farmers, who have a big land and bigger cattle, they do not know how to do a business.”

This response suggests that in some cases, knowledge can only be obtained through the process of coping with challenges. Government officials and those who did not have to struggle through such challenges, therefore, could not be in a position of authority in such instances.

Overall, economic, environmental, social, and political resources are being mobilized in Kejima to construct and defend livelihoods in a challenging environment. In nearly all cases, this mobilization is occurring in a highly centralized manner. While this may be efficient in some respects—and under certain governmental leadership—such centralization may also have negative effects, such as limiting responsiveness to self-perceived needs in the community, stymying intellectual debate, and promoting self-policing. Moreover, most of the changes that have resulted from recent mobilization appear to have only affected incremental change in conditions and community members’ ability to withstand shocks.
**Local notions of resilience**

Respondents were asked to explain their understanding of resilience—*dandano* in the local Sidaminya language—and describe a hypothetical resilient household. Broadly speaking, three types of responses were observed. First, some respondents described resilience as a set of feelings or experiences; other respondents described the characteristics and possessions of a resilient household in the context of Kejima; and third, some respondents described a resilient household in more abstract or ideal terms—as if that household could live anywhere in Ethiopia. Although many of these responses appear somewhat reductionist in relation to academic discussions of resilience, respondents’ focus on food, savings (monetary and livestock), and environmental threats reflects the narrow margins at which households in Kejima live. Interestingly, there was relatively little systematic variation in discussions about resilience (i.e., women did not tend to respond differently than men). Finally, it is worth emphasizing that many of these factors may both reflect and contribute to resilience (i.e., no clear direction of causality).

**Resilience as a set of feelings and experiences**

The first type of response focused on the subjective feelings that resilient individuals or households would have, as well as the activities and relationships that might participate in. A number of common processes and feelings emerged from these interviews. The first was a lack of fear: resilient households do not fear the future, and are not in constant preparation for a ‘bad year’.

“They are resilient to something which is coming in front of them”

“When something like the dry time happens, his family passes that time without any fear… When I see my life, when drought time comes, I am afraid because I have many children who need food. And those who are resilient people have a small household… have a good land, a good production, a good cow. Whenever something comes, they don’t fear. But right now we are fearing.”

According to these responses, resilient households are not only free from fear of short-term, acute crises, they also unaffected by the regular seasonal fluctuations in food availability that shape the calendar for the rest of the community.

“When you go to his house, everything is full, whenever time, rainy season or drought season, he is the same.”

Related to this independence from crises and seasonal environmental fluctuations is an independence from other community members. Resilient households do not rely upon other community members for work or assistance to secure the resources needed to subsist.

“The one who is resilient for me is that the one who is independent… the one who does not need any help from the other people. Who stands by himself. Who faces a problem by himself.”
However, independence from community members was not equated with social isolation. Instead, respondents suggested that resilient households are often positively engaged with other community members, supporting others and providing leadership.

“They who help the poor in his area when the poor comes to him and ask for some food from him”

“They can help other people with that false banana. Just calling some of the poor and giving them that false banana. He says, “please take this one and when you pass this bad time you will pay me the next time”. That is the one who is resilient.”

“And agreeing with people… The one whose voice is heard by the community, and the one who hears the other’s voice.”

**Characteristics of resilience in Kejima**

A second type of response focused on the social, demographic, and economic characteristics of resilient individuals and households in Kejima. The first set of characteristics that respondents mentioned were centered on land and savings. This includes the size and geographic distribution of landholdings; the presence and amount of *ensete* planted on one’s field; livestock quantity and type; and monetary savings.

With respect to land, respondents suggested that those with large landholdings are more likely to have surplus production during good years—allowing for storage/saving—and meet basic subsistence requirements during bad years. As mentioned above, those with geographically dispersed land may be less exposed to adverse environmental conditions than others.

Respondents often mentioned *ensete* because it is a relatively drought-resistant plant that serves as a key ‘coping food’ in Kejima. However, it takes multiple years for the plant to reach a consumable state. The land allocated toward *ensete* production is effectively taken out of production during the maturation process, so those with small landholdings and/or few savings are unlikely to sacrifice annual maize production to grow *ensete*. More abstractly, the association that respondents drew between *ensete* and resilience suggests that resilience is, in part, about the ability to actively deal with and mitigate both short-term shocks and long-term risks; those who are not resilient tend to be oriented toward dealing with short-term crises only.

Finally, respondents suggested that resilient households had large herds of livestock and/or monetary savings. Both livestock and monetary savings provide key ‘buffers’ for households, allowing them to meet food consumption needs during years of crop failure and address other shocks (e.g., acute illness) without making potentially harmful sacrifices in food consumption or children’s education.

A number of responses that described these factors are illustrative:

“On my part, resilience describes the one who has a bigger land, the one who has a bigger cow, and bigger false banana. And the one who has
enough food in his house, and the one who has extra money from a
business… Those people are considered as resilient people in our area.”

“The production of the land which is near to me failed completely. But I
have got some production from the land that is thirty minutes away from
me…”

“He can use his land or his cattle, selling them to the market and having
money, and if there is no food at home even, he can buy larger food from
the market… And having larger false banana, when a drought comes he
can consume that one also…”

“The one who has good access for land, big land, big resource, and the
one send his children to school and those children became government
officials. And the one who has deposit in bank because… when problem
comes they can protect themselves from that problem.”

A number of respondents noted the importance of family size. One respondent noted that
although his family appeared well off in terms of many of the resources described above,
his large family size put him in a relatively precarious position. As he put it, “Yeah it
looks like we are resilient, but because we have many children in the house, we are very
much exposed to everything.”

Finally, some respondents suggested that resilient households in Kejima were
those who constructed their house from corrugated iron or possessed a motorbike. One
respondent described resilient men as those “having a good house that is built from iron
sheet. And if he can buy motorbikes too, then he can build different houses in the different
towns.” While iron sheet houses and vehicles reflect household wealth, they may
contribute to resilience in other ways. For example, iron sheet houses are more sturdy and
sanitary, and require less time to maintain, thereby improving households’ quality of life
in a number of ways. Likewise, motorbikes provide their owners with autonomy,
 mobility, and the ability to engage in income-generating activities that would otherwise
not be possible, as the respondent quoted above suggests.

Ideal or universal descriptions of a resilient household in Ethiopia

The final type of response described resilient households in a more ideal or
universal sense—that is, what they would imagine a resilient person doing or having if
they could live in any part of Ethiopia. For many respondents, discussing resilience in
these terms was necessary because they believed no one in their community was resilient.
As one person put it, “We can’t say that someone is resilient in our area because
everybody needs help.” Others simply acknowledged that households were ‘measured’
according to different criteria in different places across Ethiopia. As one respondent
explained:

“… In our case, there are no big business workers here. Those who have a
big shop, or those who have a car… there are no such people here. The
people who are living in this area, they are just measured by their land, by their cow, by their goats and sheep.”

In nearly all cases, this type of response focused on living in towns or cities and having secure employment that was not contingent upon the rains, other people, or other uncontrollable factors. Despite some complaints about corruption, government employment was the preferred option because of its good pay, stability, and power. The latter (power) was important given many respondents’ powerlessness against external and environmental conditions, and dependence upon PSNP and other government aid. Finally, a number of respondents mentioned car and motorbike ownership, which were both a marker of wealth and a means of autonomy.

“Even though the government is not looking and going with my, our interest, I want my children to go and work for government. Because if they are there, they may recognize us here.”

“…If they become a government official they can have a good car, and… they will have a nice place to live in good towns… And they have their salary on time, and they can also help us when they get that salary.”

“…They will continue to finish their school, and I hope that they will start their business. Some of them may get office work. By that way, I hope that many of them will stay in the town.”

“If a boy has a chance to get a driving license, he can go somewhere, he can drive and he can leave, and survive by himself.”

Subjective understandings of resilience in Hawassa Zuria reflect the highly resource-constrained and shock-affected conditions of the community. Resilience is foremost a matter of having the resources needed to maintain adequate food consumption and monetary savings in the face of seasonal and stochastic stresses and shocks. It also, however, involves maintaining relationships with worse-off households in the community, and participating in community decision-making. This highlights the importance of inter-household social relationships and insurance/transfer mechanisms. Finally, resilience involves independence from aid or assistance, and autonomy to escape challenging conditions.

It is worth emphasizing that many respondents suggested that there were no resilient households in Hawassa Zuria. This runs contrary to the idea that many households are suffering from a ‘dependency syndrome’ related to PSNP that is limiting their aspirations for self-improvement and sufficiency. Instead, respondents suggest that given the few resources that households possess and the frequency of shocks, no household in Kejima can plausibly feel confident that they will be able to withstand future challenges. Until that situation changes, households’ interest in continuing to benefit from PSNP is far more likely to reflect desperation and fear about the future than dependence and complacency.
IV. Data collection process and reflections

Data for this report were collected during twelve semi-structured interviews and two focus groups. Respondents for the interviews were purposively selected to represent primary age, gender, and wealth groups in the community. The focus groups were segregated by gender to improve female participation, and increase the likelihood that both male and female participants would be forthright about gender issues in the community. This research also drew upon background material from previous fieldwork in Kejima during the spring of 2013.

Overall, the assessment guide/tool was extremely helpful. It provided the right balance between structure and flexibility, and I suspect that it will allow for fruitful comparisons between the various case studies.

V. Addendum: Gender dynamics in Kejima

Gender dynamics were mentioned at various points in the pages above. Given Oxfam’s explicit interest in gender, however, this may not have been sufficient. This addendum supplements the above discussion on gender by describing key axes of differentiation between men and women in Kejima. This is important because, as one female household head described:

“Male-headed households and female-headed households are so very different. Male-headed household, he helps his house a lot, and he has a voice to be heard in the community. Female-headed household, she is struggling, everything is not successful for her. It’s very difficult. She has no acceptance in the community as males have. Male-headed households, he can work on other’s field on share or on contract. Female-headed households do not have such a capacity to work for other’s field… I can’t sleep. I am just running here and there, struggling to bring up my children. Female-headed households and male-headed household are very different. Even in the community, it is very different.”

Challenges

Women in Hawassa Zuria face a highly constrained labor market, with limited income-generating opportunities available to them outside of the household. These opportunities are generally restricted to petty trade and food preparation.

“… I am working some small businesses like butter, like the product of false banana, like powder, salt, like this…”

“I am working a small business like, just salt, the other bananas, very small business, I am working that on the market—some spices, I am just selling that one. My husband is working on the field.”

“Men are going to the market and just they are working as a broker in the cattle market. Some women are just doing a small business like butter and bananas and salt. Selling that to the market and buying some powder for the children.”
This has implications for both accumulation and coping strategies. With respect to accumulation strategies, female labor may be underutilized as a result of norms against certain types of labor, such as cattle trading and working on other households’ fields. As a result, households must forgo potential earnings that could otherwise be added to their disposable income or savings, which is critical for upward social and economic mobility.

Similarly, regulations against certain types of female labor may limit household coping strategies during periods of stress (e.g., drought, health shocks). This may lower the level of income or food available to fill the gap in food consumption caused by the stress/shock. As a result, households may face larger shock-related food deficits, declines in monetary savings, or losses to livestock herds than would otherwise have occurred in the absence of such gender norms.

Such restrictions on female labor have particularly severe consequences for female-headed households, who are not supported (economically) by an adult male with access to a larger set of earning opportunities. At best, these households may include male youth of working age who can engage in male-only labor activities. However, male youth are still unlikely to be able to command the same wages or have access to the same opportunities as a male head of household. Moreover, the short-term benefits of youth labor may come at the expense of education, with potential long-run costs.

“…Even though we are working hard, we don’t get as much production as when our father was alive… It’s obvious that [my brothers] are not as good workers as my father. And they are very little boys. They are even younger than me. So they, they simply just—because we don’t have other person who helps us, they simply work on the field because we don’t have somebody else. That’s why they are working on the field. They are not working as my father was working…Those who works on the field, they went four grade but right now they withdrew”

Female-headed households may also face constraints with respect to social interactions and mobility in the community. Although norms around female political participation appear to be changing (see below), the absence of a male household representative in the community may render female-headed households ‘invisible’—or less visible—than other types of household. For example, prior to implementing a survey, our team received a roster of households in the community with female-headed households excluded because the community leaders did not consider them ‘legitimate’ households. As a result of gender-based norms, women may also be less likely to assert themselves and make claims on local leaders.

“I am comfortable when I meet with women, but it is different when I meet people in the kebele office, the chief, or manager there, and the ideas which he will discuss, I will take them there. But when I discuss with a woman, it is much more comfortable than when I discuss with kebele officials…”

Interviews yielded conflicting evidence about whether or not female-headed households are recognized as a vulnerable population by government officials. One
female head of household suggested that she had been selected as a PSNP beneficiary because of her status:

“The local officials are responding very well. It’s because the chairman. When I ask, when I tell my problems to him he responds very soon… For example, when the PSNP retargeting came, I told them that I am a female-headed household, and I have a problem. Then they say that she must be selected to be a beneficiary. Then they decided to select me. Right now I am a PSNP beneficiary because of their decision.“

It is worth noting that this woman emphasized the role of the kebele chairman, which other respondents emphasized as well. This suggests that government assistance to female-headed households was contingent upon the local chairman or a small number of local leaders. In a contrary example, another female household head—from another kebele—reported losing her PSNP support despite her status as a female household head and extreme poverty.

“I was in PSNP—I was in PSNP for four years, and now it is three years that I am not in PSNP. I didn’t graduate, I didn’t graduate by myself. They forced me to graduate. I don’t know who removed my name from that one. When the retargeting came, people in this village also retargeted me to be a beneficiary, but when I go there, my name is not on the list. I don’t know why…. I didn’t know that I am going to be graduated from PSNP, and I didn’t even prepare myself for that. And because I am poor, they know that my husband is dead, I don’t think that they remove me from such a system.”

Similarly, others expressed fear that because they were a female household head and lacked power in the community, their PSNP support was vulnerable.

“Yeah I fear that because I am female… No one is supporting me. If some, if right now the retargeting comes people are just pointing the finger to female-headed households first. Because if I was a male, they fear that male. They don’t want to point a finger to him. But because I am female, I think that if the retargeting comes they will just point finger at me first. Why don’t I fear that one? I fear it.”

Recent changes

Despite these important barriers to economic participation among women in Hawassa Zuria, respondents described two recent changes that appear to have an empowering effect on women.

A number of female respondents had recently participated in various government training programs, and many held positions in community organizations. These include development groups, microcredit organizations, health groups, and governance groups that were organized to facilitate communication between female community members and the kebele government. Although many of these organizations were female only
(with parallel groups for youth and males), many respondents nonetheless viewed them as empowering. Many of these groups were designed to put resources in the hands of women (e.g., microcredit) or provide women a collective voice in the community (e.g., governance).

“I am one of the representatives of women in this kebele. I am in the committee of women in this kebele. I am also working as a messenger for health. That means I am participating in health issues, like going to every household and telling them to dig a latrine—toilet—and to keep their area safe. When I got some information about an outbreak, I will just take that information to the health office. By that way I am one of the messengers of the health post, I am working that one.”

“I have taken some training on saving. Before five months I take three days of training about saving and about these health messages. I took many trainings from the government… the NGO called GOAL has given me a training on polio also. How to eradicate polio.”

However, participation varies among women in the community:

“I don’t participate in any community organizations… Nothing. I don’t know about savings groups even. They didn’t tell me anything about that one.”

Beyond the primary objectives of these groups and training programs, respondents also reported that these programs gave them the skills and confidence that they needed to make claims within the community, talk to outsiders, or take other steps that challenged existing gender norms.

“It’s obvious that we share an experience from other women who are coming from different villages, from different kebeles, who just like us, who are working in the women’s association and women’s league. We are sharing an experience during our training time. What is there in the village, what is there in the kebele, what is missing, what, what we missed and what they missed—just we are sharing an experience.”

“…I learned how to speak to people like you. Before this meeting, before this experience, I fear to talk to some people. If you look at some women in our village, they don’t want to talk to people like you [foreigners] because they don’t have experience talking, because they are just living in their houses. They don’t have an exposure to other people… The trainers also told us that you have to speak loudly when you meet with people. Without any fear, without any suspicion, you have to communicate with people as much as you like because you, boys—men and women are equal. Why don’t you speak? Why you are keeping a silent? That’s what I learned. The other thing which I learned is to be on time. Whether a meeting, or
you’re called for meeting or for something else, time is very important... The other thing is that I learned to discuss around the table. Everything, any issue. In the house or outside the house. When the conflict erupts in the house, or outside the house, I believe that people are sitting around the table. If they discuss they can solve.”

Nearly all respondents reported a generational shift in norms about female education. Educational attainment among the current generation of adults living in rural Hawassa Zuria is, on average, much lower than the current generation of youth and young adults—and the differences among women are particularly stark. With near uniformity, adult women did not receive any formal education as youth because, as they describe, women simply did not go to school.

“I didn’t go to school… My father, my grandfather, they are illiterate people. They do not want to send girls to school during my time. My youth. But now I am very much disappointed with them, and I started to send my children to school. That’s why I didn’t go to school. They just simply send me with cows in the field, that’s why I didn’t…”

“During my time, people are not, no girls are learning and going to school. That’s why I didn’t go. My family didn’t send me.”

However, many of these same women—and in many cases, their husbands—place a premium on educating their children, male and female alike. This emphasis on education partially reflects a belief that agriculture and village life are a ‘dead end’.

“I was foolish because I didn’t go to school. [My female children] should not be foolish like me. They must be educated. And because I am foolish I gave birth to around nine children. They are not going my way. They must not be like me. That’s why I’m sending them to school.”

“Right now I am sending my boys and girls to school because I learned a lot from my experience… I am very tired of working on the field, the farm. I don’t want my children to work like me in the field and the farm, and become tired like me. And I don’t have the ability to meet with other people because I fear that I am illiterate, and I need them to learn and to face, to communicate with other people outsider, that’s why I send them to school.”

It is also worth noting that many female respondents reported that household decisions were often made in a joint manner among husbands and wives. This suggests that inequalities in economic opportunities outside of the household did not necessarily translate into unequal power within the household.

“I cannot decide by my own. The decision is just with my husband. I cannot decide on my own, because everything we have right now is owned
by him and me, so how can I decide on myself... Becoming poor, rich, or whatever, we are together so nothing is, just we are equal. His power is just like my power.”

Of course, one should interpret these responses with caution given the low sample size and likely response biases associated with an interview between female respondents and a foreign male interviewer. Indeed, there is some evidence to the contrary:

“Many challenges are there, when you get married. Right now when I am in my mother’s hand, sometimes she buys me clothes, sometimes I can go outside whenever I like, come back home whenever I like. These won’t happen when you get married. You will be controlled by your husband and you start thinking about giving birth. And after giving birth you are thinking about bringing up that child. Every responsibilities lies on you. That makes me worry.”

Implications for resilience

These barriers and changes have a number of implications for programming related to resilience building:

• Until viable off-farm income generating opportunities are available to women, female-headed household graduation is, in nearly all cases, not a viable objective. Female-headed households who appear ‘well-off’ are likely relying upon male youth labor or other support via social or kin ties. In many cases these forms of support are temporary, vulnerable to shocks, and in the case of youth labor, come at the expense of education.
  o Female-headed households’ PNSP support should be given institutional protection to avoid inappropriate re-targeting that is possible given their limited political power.
• Female training programs are having a positive impact on female empowerment. These programs should ensure that all women are given the opportunity to participate. The government and NGOs should avoid choosing participants and leaders based upon their prior experience in programming.
• Although off-farm economic opportunities are limited to certain sectors for women, credit may allow women to expand these small businesses or develop new enterprises.