



Thinking Ahead

- An Assessment of the Dynamics of Employment and the Potential for Social Transformation in Afar Region

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Table of Acronyms

BOLSA	Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
HEA	Household Economy Approach
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
OTJ	On The Job
POTENTI AL	Promoting Opportunities through Training, Education, Transition Investment, and Livelihoods for Youth Project
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
SCI	Save The Children International
SMEDA	Small Medium Enterprise Development Agency
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training

Executive Summary

This report describes the work undertaken between August 21 and September 3 to assess the dynamics of employment amongst the youth of Afar Region. It describes the responses of young men and women in group-discussions that focused on employment, as well as the observations of employment brokers and employers in Mille, Logia, Chiffra and Gewane. An analysis of the current situation is made, based upon these observations leading to recommendations regarding the facilitation of constructive employment within the Afar Region.

Against a background of prolonged drought, a substantial proportion of the poorer pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households in Afar Region have adopted coping strategies that include the migration of youth to seek temporary employment. Many of those households will not be able to resume their former livelihoods and must find new ways to survive. The strategies that they are currently adopting appear to be based upon existing coping strategies, especially the prolongation of migrant work.

This assessment considers the current dynamics of employment for Afar youth from the households that have been rendered effectively destitute by the recent drought. *It is not representative of, or indeed relevant to the entire cross section of Afar youth.* It finds a marked preference amongst these young people for short-term solutions that offer little hope of long-term improvement in livelihood status. The reasons for this are investigated and found to include lack of skills, limited exposure to employment opportunities, family commitments, a reluctance to undertake menial or low paid work within the local context, but above all, a lack of aspiration. This results in little willingness on the part of young people to take a long-term perspective and invest in employment. In consequence, the common local perception of Afar youth is that they lack commitment and rarely stay at one job for long.

By contrast, in their places of employment in Djibouti, and the Gulf States, Afar youth are regarded as quite adequate employees who demonstrate normal levels of commitment, including a willingness to stay in employment for periods of up to two years. To support their families they will undertake arduous and menial work that they do not like and which has previously been considered as demeaning.

At the same time, this assessment found that all employers interviewed in local Ethiopian cities (Logia, Mille, and Gewane) considered there to be more jobs available than people qualified to fill them. BOLSA in Semera reports that there are currently 70,000 jobs in Afar that are filled mainly by young people from SNNPR.

These observations suggests that there may be opportunities for the youth of Afar Region to find more and better work than they are able to do at present; they do not lack the capacity to do work, but their employment is largely constrained by culture, attitude (of different parties, including employers) and a marked lack of self awareness and aspiration. Given changes in these areas, Afar youth might be able to develop livelihoods based upon employment that could offer them more than the recurrent coping strategies in which they are now engaged.

Constraints to the process of change are analysed in more detail. It is evident that a lack of aspiration that appears to be prevalent amongst Afar youth is a fundamental

constraint that requires attention. In many cases, young people have little ambition beyond the experiences of their immediate lifestyle and no idea of what they might become, or what line of employment they might like to pursue. Enhancement of self-awareness, self esteem, and aspiration are critical first steps to the change process.

Lack of skills is a second major constraint to change. Training capacities are considered and appear to be severely constrained by resource limitations. Alternative training methods emphasising on-the-job, and soft skill training, in partnership with government are proposed as one way of developing much-needed skills within a limited budget. The definite impact of the POTENTIAL programme in terms of soft skill development and employment awareness is also noted.

The analysis also considers the constraints imposed by negative attitudes to employment, not only those of the individual but also of the community. It is clear that religion, culture and community attitudes play a major role in employment choices of the individual. The impact of family and friends is particularly important and appears to be a major reason why young people prefer to migrate to find work rather than undertaking jobs for similar levels of remuneration locally.

The main recommendations follow from the analyses: First that aspirational development is critical. Exposure to successful peers, savings group development and support to sporting activities are proposed as mechanisms to enhance aspiration and self esteem and should be undertaken at an early age, preferably from age 12 onwards. Secondly, training in both hard and soft skills is essential. To offset resource constraints it is recommended that increased emphasis be placed upon training in soft skills that have a greater relevance to a broader audience. Nevertheless, hard skills remain essential and to address this need, it is recommended that training focus more upon on-the-job apprenticeship schemes according to which the role of government would be reduced from hands-on training to the accreditation of businesses capable of providing acceptable on-the-job training, and supervision of the apprenticeship schemes.

Thirdly, the importance of attitude is emphasized at the individual, community, and employer levels. Individual attitudes are inevitably shaped during training, but the attitudes of individual young people are considerably affected by those of the surrounding community. The disparagement of migration for employment has been commonplace amongst traditional communities, but has become less shameful amongst poorer communities who have been forced to adopt this strategy. This process of change can be enhanced through behaviour change communication, as can support for the training of young women whose considerable responsibilities within Afar households would otherwise confine them to the home. The attitude of employers and brokers also needs to be addressed through their involvement in the training process so as to break the vicious circle of cynicism that restricts both access and commitment to employment.

One further recommendation of this assessment is that young people migrating to the Gulf States should be supported, by strengthening the current brokerage mechanisms to provide both training and protection to those who would otherwise be vulnerable. NGOs are well placed to provide that support, linking the private sector (i.e. brokers) with government as an accrediting and regulatory agency, and channelling young people towards a formal system that can provide greater protection than the current informal alternative.

Nevertheless, the overarching outcome of this assessment is the observation that levels of aspiration amongst Afar youth are low. This fundamental aspect of development requires attention before other interventions can hope to be successful. In this regard there is a need to think ahead, introducing aspirationally-focused interventions two or three years before young people might be able to participate in more conventional employment-focused interventions.

Introduction

This report describes the work undertaken between August 19 and September 3 to assess the dynamics of employment amongst the youth of Afar Region. It describes the responses of young men and women in group-discussions that focused on employment, as well as the observations of employment brokers and employers in the towns of Logia, Mille, Chifra and Genawe. An analysis of the current situation is made, based upon these observations, leading to recommendations for the facilitation of constructive employment within the Afar Region.

Background

The last 16 years have witnessed substantial change in humanitarian and development interventions. From an initial situation of repeated relief distribution, research into destitution led to the development of a predictable safety net for chronically impoverished households. The subsequent recognition that a safety net alone was inadequate to lift such households out of poverty resulted in the implementation of numerous programmes designed to increase investment in poor households. This culminated in the Household Asset Building Programme that attempted to strengthen not only agricultural activities, but off-farm income generating activities as well. Nevertheless, the failure of HABP to achieve widespread graduation has resulted in a new focus, driven by the need to provide a solution relevant to all members of impoverished communities. In particular, the focus on off-farm income generating activities required beneficiaries to take the risk of starting their own small businesses. Global empirical evidence suggests that only a small percentage of people (between 10% and 20%) are willing to assume this risk, while the majority of 80%-90% prefer to work for somebody else and accumulate savings.

From another perspective, the Ethiopian Government has recognized the dominance of the agricultural sector as the engine of growth of the economy. Nevertheless, the employment elasticity of demand for agriculture is low (of the order of 0.3¹). In fact, both models² and observations³ suggest that growth in employment will result largely from the increased demand of more profitable farmers for goods and services. While the provision of such services may drive the development of rural businesses, simple economics, supported by observations suggest that most such businesses locate themselves in urban or peri-urban areas where they can take advantage of utilities, accessibility and increased access to clients. Hence rural youth seeking employment are more likely to find it not in agriculture, but in the small and medium sized businesses that depend upon agricultural wealth situated in or around towns. To be employed by such businesses they must migrate out of the rural areas into that urban environment.

These arguments are already being validated by the migration of young people seeking work, which is increasing in both frequency and duration. For many communities, migration to undertake casual work has been a traditional coping strategy, but

¹ Mellor and Dorosh (2014)

² Ibid

³ USAID Push/Pull Study 2013.

observation suggests that for those experiencing chronic impoverishment, that recurrent coping strategies becoming a long-term livelihood.

Such a livelihood, based upon unskilled casual work offers little beyond subsistence, and yet many of the young people that undertake it have the capacity to achieve much more than this. With targeted assistance they might be able to develop urban-based livelihoods that offer possibilities for individual and household growth far greater than their previous rural existence.

Aims of this assessment

This assessment was undertaken with the aim of understanding the dynamics of employment for young people in Afar Region. It focused on young people between the ages of 15 and 25 from those households who have experienced loss of assets and livestock, many of whom have congregated around food distribution points as internally displaced persons (IDPs) over the last year. The assessment also included responses from employment brokers and employers in towns in the area (Logia, Mille, Chiffra and Genawe).

Currently these young people are choosing high-risk solutions (such as migration to the Gulf States), or short-term solutions that offer no possibility of advancement to resolve their predicament. An understanding of the dynamics underlying these responses is essential to the design of interventions that might mitigate the dangers of migration for work, while improving the effectiveness of the process. Ideally such interventions will help young people to adopt livelihoods that offer them a future as long-term employees who can participate in the economic growth that is happening in Ethiopia.

This report includes the observations drawn from interviews and focus group discussions and an analysis of the main factors that are shaping migration for work. It then considers potential interventions that might help to overcome some of the constraints faced by young men and women in finding sustainable employment with the potential for personal growth and development. In doing so, it is hoped to reduce the reliance of young men and women upon the dead-end or dangerous options that are increasingly perceived to be the only livelihood options available.

Methodology

This assessment relies almost exclusively upon qualitative primary data drawn from focus group discussions and guided interviews. Focus groups were held in the following communities:

Dubti
Asayita
Mille
Chiffra
Gewane
Ewa
Billo

In each community, young people between the ages of 15 and 25 who were unemployed at the time were asked to attend. The first such groups (at Dubti and Asayita) consisted mainly of POTENTIAL beneficiaries. The responses from these groups differed considerably from those elsewhere, and provided a useful indication of the impact of the

programme. Nevertheless, that impact did prevent an effective understanding of many of the issues, and especially the constraints facing young people looking for employment. Subsequently care was taken to ensure that the remaining groups consisted of those who had not been exposed to POTENTIAL messaging.

Ten volunteers were requested for each group. Two discussion groups were held in each community, one with young women and one with young men. A template to guide the discussion was prepared (Annex A), but was not exclusively adhered to and provided the key points were addressed, discussions were allowed to develop without constraint. As in other assessments, it was the issues that had not been pre-considered that proved to be most illuminating.

Interviews were held with two employment brokers in Logia. These were identified by SCI field staff. A template was used for the interviews (Annex B), although the discussions were more wide ranging. Interviews were also held with employers in Logia, Mille, Chiffra and Genawe.

In addition, interviews were held with staff from the Bureau of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs, Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs, as well as Woreda officials supporting youth and women in Mille, Chiffra and Genawe. It was intended to interview officials, employers, brokers and young people in Awash, since this is a major source of employment for young people. Nevertheless, the team was unable to obtain permission from the woreda administration at the time of the assessment, and this part of the exercise remains to be performed.

Little secondary data was used in the compilation of this report. References are provided where relevant.

The current situation

Background

The Afar Region has been subject to a prolonged drought, beginning in early 2015 with the failure of the *Sagum* (March to April) rains followed by delayed and poor *Karma* (June to September) rainfall, so that dry weather effectively continued from October 2014 until February 2016. Grazing that should have become available from March 2015 did not materialise so that many animals were in poor condition by April/May and supplies of milk for children and general household nutrition declined, while the terms of trade weakened as increasing numbers of animals came onto the market at a time when grain prices were increasing. As a result, little commercial destocking took place and pastoralists were left with more animals than they could feed as they waited for the *Karma* rains. When these rains also failed, livestock began to die in large numbers throughout much of the Region. By the end of what would have been the rainy season, many herds had lost more than half their livestock and human nutrition was also badly affected. The government began distribution of food aid within the Region even before the end of the year, and by January 2016 the humanitarian response was gearing up to full capacity within Afar. Nevertheless, the almost complete lack of grazing meant that livestock mortality continued. Rains fell for the first time in late January 2016 and continued as above-normal *Sagum* rainfall until well past April. Nevertheless, livestock took some time to regain condition, and supplies of milk were only resumed after sheep

and goats had been able to give birth to offspring, i.e. a further four months after the normal conditions had resumed, so that the impact on human nutrition would have lasted considerably longer had it not been for the relatively robust humanitarian response.

The impact of this drought was particularly severe in the northern parts of the Region, where malnutrition was evident as early as August 2015, as well as the southern parts of the region, where malnutrition and livestock mortality occurred slightly later, but all areas were affected to a greater or lesser extent. Following the drought it became apparent that significant changes had occurred within pastoral populations. Significant numbers of especially the poorest households had lost almost all of their livestock, to the point where they could no longer expect to be able to regenerate their herds from the remaining animals. These households had been obliged to resort to food aid for their survival and many had congregated around food distribution points. Under more normal conditions, the poorer households in Afar would commonly have been loaned animals by the better off households in order to promote restocking. In 2016 the widespread impact of the drought has meant that few better-off households are able to extend this assistance and in the absence of a massive donor-driven restocking programme, many of the poorest households currently face a future without livestock.

The impact of the drought in Afar has not been limited to pastoralists; many agro-pastoralists have faced the same pressures, including not only the loss of the more limited numbers of livestock that they might have owned, but also the near-total loss of their crops. Under these circumstances, they too face a future in which they have lost all means of survival. They may have access to land to be worked, but they lack the means to work it.

Pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in Afar now face a situation in which significant proportions of both communities face destitution. In the past it was not unusual for households to face drought and to adopt appropriate coping strategies. For the poorest households the current situation is different. They face a permanent change in their conditions.

At present, the permanency of that change has yet to be appreciated by many of the affected households and their response to the situation continues along the lines of the coping strategies that they have adopted in the past. Migration for employment has always been one of those coping strategies, albeit a relatively unimportant one. That has changed and work outside of the community has become one of the most important coping strategies adopted especially by young people. This study looks at that strategy, the way that it is applied, and ways in which it could be modified to become a transformational strategy for young people in Afar.

Who is the target group?

This study is focused primarily upon young men and women aged between 15 and 25 who were potential candidates for migration for employment or who had already engaged in such migration. Respondents were drawn from vulnerable communities, specifically of internally displaced people (pastoralist IDPs) and of agro-pastoralists and farmers in areas that had suffered from the recent drought. As such, *they are not typical of the wider pastoralist/agro-pastoralist/farming population and the inferences and recommendations drawn from the field observations are not relevant to those broader communities.* They are very relevant however to those who are leaving those

communities to look for work. This group has been increasing in number over the last five years especially recently as a result of last year's drought.

It is also important to emphasize that this assessment does not cover all Afar people, many of whom continue to live sustainably as pastoralists. Some of the responses described are not typical of pastoralists and have provoked a degree of skepticism. Nevertheless, they are the responses of some households and young people living in Afar, who now face a future outside pastoralism. These people are making difficult decisions under new circumstances that are often alien to them and it is that decision-making process and its consequences that this assessment seeks to understand.

The study investigated four different types of respondent. Focus Group discussions were held with young men and women who might migrate for employment. Guided interviews were held with employers in the towns where they might find work, as well as brokers in those same areas, and unstructured interviews with government authorities in the offices most related to this issue (Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs, TVET, Small Scale Enterprise Development, Ministry of Youth and Women's Affairs).

In contrast to previous studies conducted in Sitti and Wag Hemra Zones, there was considerable heterogeneity amongst the different groups interviewed. As a result, it is difficult to draw general conclusions. Nevertheless, some responses were common to most respondents these have been described and analysed. Differences in response are also important and where these occurred they have also been noted and some explanation attempted.

Current coping strategies

Livelihoods mapping for the Afar Region was undertaken ten years ago and is no longer completely accurate. Nevertheless, the mapping identified eight different pastoral and agro pastoral livelihoods within the Region. All but two of these showed a dependence upon food aid throughout most of the wealth groups⁴ during the reference year⁵, suggesting that the livelihoods were under stress, but only three included any reference to employment as a coping strategy. Migration of livestock, sale of livestock, sale of natural products, increased reliance upon famine foods, reduced consumption overall and increased inter household sharing and support were coping strategies common to almost all livelihoods, but the migration of one or more household members to find employment was scarcely referenced.

By contrast, in 2016, although the households interviewed did not represent the full range of livelihood zones, (omitting the pastoralists in the north and north east of the Region, as well as those dependant upon the salt trade), it was quite evident that following the recent crisis, coping strategies of the households interviewed have altered substantially. The widespread impact of the drought had reduced inter household sharing capacity, and its intensity had resulted in the loss of almost all livestock for some households. For these, migration was of course futile and they had gathered as IDPs around food distribution points, where food aid had become their main means of

⁴ The livelihoods analysis noted that strongly developed sharing practices meant that even those in the better off wealth groups consumed a significant proportion of food aid.

⁵ Reference years varied from one livelihood zone to another, but were selected by communities as having been "normal" to "good" years.

survival. Amongst these households, it was repeatedly reported that more than half of the youth (aged from 16 to 25) had left their households to find work.

Migration for work has thus become much more important as a coping strategy for households under stress today than it was ten years ago. The increase in significance was not well investigated, but appears to be related to the almost total loss of other means of support, due in part to the severity of the recent drought, but also to a general impoverishment of the community. That general impoverishment includes the degradation of the environment through *Prosopis* invasion, loss of dry season grazing, reduced access to water points, as well as weakening social structures as the pastoral livelihood becomes increasingly commercialised. The net result is that those households who have lost their livestock and are obliged to seek other means of survival will find it hard to go back to a pastoralist livelihood. Instead, they face the prospect of developing new livelihoods from whatever means they might have. For most, with virtually no assets at their disposal, new livelihoods will be based upon employment.

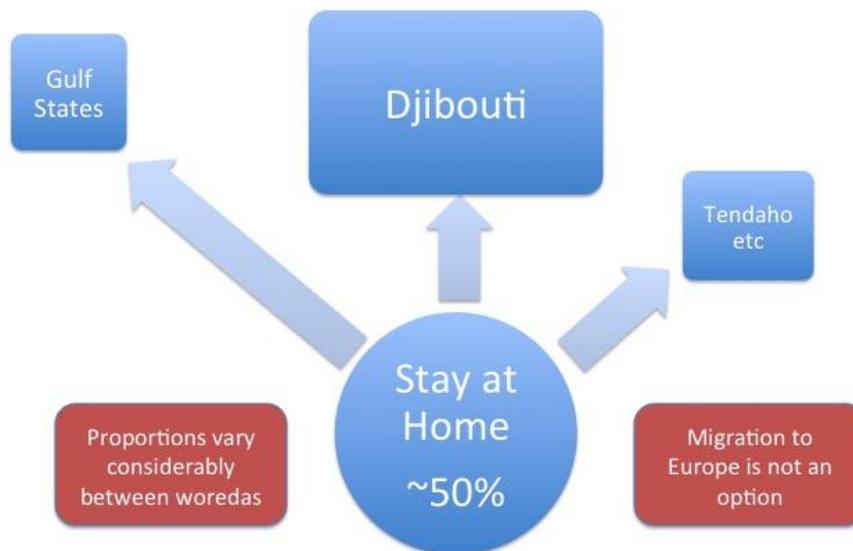
Where do young people go to find work?

The young people interviewed in Afar went to a variety of places to find employment. In contrast to Somali youth, none of those interviewed expressed any interest in migrating to Europe. The destination was not mentioned by respondents and when challenged it was evident that young people had no interest in moving beyond the current short list of destinations. These were first, Djibouti, and then the Gulf States and work within Afar in approximately equal proportions (Figure 1). There was no interest whatsoever in working elsewhere in Ethiopia. Distribution, in terms of who went to which destination, was partly ethnic, partly geographic and partly associated with status and expectation. There was no distinct pattern evident from the small sample size that formed the basis of this report. More detailed assessment is required to tease out these interactions.

Migration within Ethiopia

Those who migrated within Ethiopia represented approximately 10% of migrants. They left their families mainly to find agricultural work (most often at Tendaho Sugar Estates, but also at other commercial farms along the Awash River), and to herd livestock for less poor households in other areas. Otherwise employment could be found at various businesses along the roads leading to Djibouti and in the past, as part of construction teams along the roads themselves. The nature of the work meant that it was mainly men (both youth and older men) who would migrate, although in some cases, women would also go to, especially young women from the poorer households. In this latter case however, young women from labour-poor households were less likely to be allowed to leave the household.

Figure 1. Patterns of Migration



Migration to Neighbouring Countries

Migration to Djibouti was particularly common, especially amongst young men and occasionally young women. For almost all respondents, the border between Ethiopia and Djibouti was of little significance. They considered Djibouti as much their homeland as the Afar Region itself and indicated that they could move across it at will. If queried as to their origin within Djibouti they would simply indicate the *kabele* that they had come from in Ethiopia and that would be considered sufficient evidence of their right to be in the Djibouti itself (although no doubt, language and ethnicity would also play a large part in the interaction). Nevertheless, for most respondents, migration to Djibouti appeared to be an easy process undertaken without consequence or concern. Such phrases as “it is our second home” or “they let us keep our own animals in Djibouti” or “food is not a problem in Djibouti and you can always find somewhere to sleep” were common. In other cases however it was reported, “you need money and contacts to go to Djibouti”. These different responses appeared to reflect the different types of work undertaken. In the first case, respondents were doing mainly agricultural work (herding livestock) in the second; the work was more associated with construction and the port as well as domestic service.

In fact with regard to Djibouti, responses in Afar were consistently markedly different from respondents from Sitti Zone in Somali Region who talked about the border crossing into Djibouti with concern and described life within the country in darker terms, including the fear of being caught and abused (by police or others) as an alien with little or no rights within the country.

There were no respondents who had migrated to look for employment from any other neighbouring countries (Eritrea or Somaliland).

Migration to Gulf States

Both men and women migrated to the Gulf States, especially to the Yemen and Saudi Arabia, although some reportedly went further to the UAE and Dubai. All such migration was informal⁶. As a result, all those entering the Gulf States were effectively illegal aliens and risked discovery and deportation. Migration required travelling overland to Djibouti or Eritrea and then by boat across the Red Sea to the Yemen, followed by further movement to the eventual destination. Such a journey would not be undertaken lightly. Indeed it could not be undertaken without the support of brokers who work at both ends of the chain. Within Afar (and especially in the West of the Region) brokers can be accessed by young men and women and provide them with the necessary guidance and contacts to make the journey to the Gulf States⁷. Such guidance would include arrangements to make contact with other brokers within the Gulf itself, and these brokers would coordinate the placement of both men and women with employers. The employees are obliged to pay the brokers within Afar for the initial contacts. They are also required to pay individual guides along the way for their services, (including the boat crossing) and are finally required to pay the broker at the other end of the chain a percentage of their initial wages.

The efforts and resources required to migrate to the Gulf States are thus considerable. Moreover, once in the Gulf States, there is a constant risk of discovery and deportation that may render the whole process futile. This suggests that such migration would not be undertaken if the work were not lucrative. Overall, it would appear that migration to the Gulf States is a “high risk, high return” strategy that is only undertaken by a small proportion of young people within the Region⁸. Amongst young women, these people appeared to be more prevalent in the West of the Region, close to the border with Amhara, who were not ethnically Afar people. The distribution of men moving to the Gulf was broader, including both young and older men from the West and more central area of the Region who could afford the travel costs.

Those who go nowhere

A substantial proportion of young men and much larger proportion of women would resist the pressure to migrate if they could, even though this might mean substantial hardship. There appeared to be at least three reasons for this. A major influence appeared to be the cultural tradition of households to support each other, reinforced by kinship. This has meant that those families who have been affected by the drought are often well supported by clan members and will be helped to obtain new livestock when the effects of the current crisis have subsided. This can reduce the pressure on young people to move. Even though they may live a very “hand to mouth” existence that may

⁶ Migration for employment in the Gulf was banned in 2013, but access was renewed in 2015 upon the creation of a formal regulated mechanism that provided both training and a small element of protection to those entering the program. While this is a beneficial development, it has not prevented people who lack access to the programme from continuing to migrate informally without documents or protection.

⁷ Unfortunately it was not possible to meet the brokers. Given the illegal nature of their business this was not surprising.

⁸ There is one exception to this in that it was reported by BOLSA that men in Zone 2 traditionally migrate to Saudi Arabia and have well established routes to do so, but this was not investigated.

challenge their own cultural concepts⁹, they are nevertheless confident that their community will not allow them to starve.

The second constraint derives from the central role played by Afar women in their households, including home construction, food preparation, childcare and other activities that render them essential to their families and prevent them from leaving.

The third constraint is the religious prohibition of any contact with alcohol or non-halal food, which prevents women from taking up work in most of the institutions or service occupations that dominate private sector activities along the main roads to Djibouti.

All of the above combine to constrain some young men and many more women to meagre lifestyles in IDP settlements to be found around schools or clinics or on the edges of agro-pastoral communities. In these situations they survive through a variety of means. Women collect firewood for sale as wood or as charcoal. They also engage in petty trade, buying goods from nearby towns and selling them in their local communities. Young men find casual labour where they can, including construction work in nearby settlements, road maintenance and portaging. Both men and women appear to rely substantially upon extended family support and food aid.

The lack of any interest in working elsewhere in Ethiopia was quite marked. This was especially the case amongst those respondents who were living closest to potential labour markets in Amhara and Tigray (such as Dessie, Woldiya and Mekele). It might be expected that young men might find agricultural employment in the more productive areas of Raya Azebo and North Wollo and that the young women might be able to find domestic work in the towns. In practice, respondents suggested that this was not the case. Instead, young men and women preferred to move east to Djibouti and the Gulf. There are two possible reasons for the reluctance to work in Highland areas. First is the cultural reluctance to work for non-Afar people, especially in a menial position. This reason was often suggested by non-Afar people. Afar youth themselves indicated that the work was simply not adequately remunerative, that most of the positions would be taken by people from the SNNPR who were willing to work for a lower wage and that they were better off looking East for work.

What do they do?

As noted above, those young people who remain within the community eke out a somewhat precarious living. Those who leave to find work gave a wide range of responses as to what they do. These are briefly described below:

In Ethiopia

Work on construction – road construction was an important source of employment, but there are few ongoing road projects at present. Construction work is now limited to building, mainly in Semera, but occasionally in other towns, all of which are gradually expanding as trade along the roads to Djibouti increases. Afar men find employment as casual labourers, working as gangs for specific construction projects on an as needed basis. The work may last for a week to several months, but is unskilled (digging trenches, carrying blocks, mixing and carrying cement, offloading trucks etc.) and offers no opportunities for advancement. Young men may remain within a gang of casual

⁹ For instance, even though it is commonly taboo for Afar people to cut down trees, this practice has become increasingly common amongst destitute households.

labourers, or may move in or out of it according to their need for cash and appetite for the work. It is not uncommon for an Afar worker to spend no more than a week or two at such work and then to return home with the money earned.

Work on Tendaho sugar estate – when operational¹⁰, the sugar estate employs 12,000 agricultural workers who cut and carry cane on a piecework basis. The estate has an affirmative employment programme favouring Afar people, but the proportion of Afar amongst the work force is small (less than 20%) and the bulk of the workers are reportedly from SNNPR. Nevertheless, the estate is a significant source of employment for both male youth and older men from Afar. The work is considered hard, not only physically, but also because of the obligation to take direction from non-Afar people, but respondents suggested that they might remain there for two months to as long as a year at a time.

Work on commercial farms - this was not a common response. It was noted that commercial farms had offered more employment in the past, but that the amount of water available for irrigation had diminished and that there was less work available now. Such work as was available appeared to be casual or piece work (especially weeding and harvesting as well as portage), undertaken as and when necessary. The work might last for as little as a day and as long as a month, but rarely beyond that.

Work as guards – from an employer’s perspective, this was the most obvious role filled by Afar people. Almost all the guards of all businesses and private homes were of Afar origin. The level of turnover was reportedly high (Tendaho sugar estate reported a six month turnover, but other businesses had higher retention rates). Nevertheless, there was a common perception that Afar guards were the most effective (see below).

Work as employees in other businesses – a small number of Afar people were found working in other occupations including waiter, cook, cleaner, fuel attendant, mechanic and some others. There are many such jobs available in Afar and brokers report that the numbers are constantly increasing. Nevertheless, the proportion of Afar people taking up these jobs remains very low and those that were found tended to be remarkable exceptions. In particular, Afar women do not take up positions as waitresses, cooks, cleaners or domestic servants within Ethiopia.

Work for Government – one particular niche was reported that highlights a prevalent attitude towards menial work, namely work as government employees, that was preferentially allocated to Afar people, especially women. Afar women were reported to be employed as cleaners but would rarely if ever undertake the work. Instead, official premises would either remain un-cleaned until other cleaners (generally from SNNPR) would be brought in to clean if and when conditions required. Nevertheless, the formal employees would receive their monthly salaries as a matter of course and without demur. This highlighted on the one hand, the widespread acceptance that Afar women would not undertake menial public work, and on the other, the expectation that a Government of Ethiopia (GoE) salary was nevertheless an entitlement to be provided to Afar people when possible. It was explained that the salary would undoubtedly be shared amongst other family members so that the “employment” was affectively a social support mechanism.

¹⁰ At the time of this assessment, Tendaho Sugar Factory was not operational and little work was being undertaken in the field

In Djibouti

Casual labour – undertaken both for construction and also at the port, loading and offloading ships and trucks. Both young men and young women reported that they would do this work. Indeed some women clearly stated that they would do construction work in Djibouti in preference to domestic service there, or to casual labour in Ethiopia. It would appear that this preference is a result of the higher wages available for casual labourers in Djibouti as compared with Ethiopia. Casual labour was undertaken for periods of two to three months on average, although some men said they would stay for longer.

Herd livestock in Djibouti/Ethiopia – a preferred occupation for some young men who scarcely differentiated between this employment and their normal livelihood, except that the latter was unpaid. Although it appeared that remuneration was not high, nevertheless, the conditions were quite acceptable and both young and older men reported that they might do such work for a year at a time, returning for annual festivals, but otherwise remaining away from their families. (The possibility that second families might exist in the work area was not investigated.)

Work as domestic servants – was undertaken by a small number of women from the poorer (but not the poorest) households. Previously considered shameful, such work was now tolerated and remittances were definitely appreciated by family members. Even though the wider community might still disparage domestic work, poorer households reported that they no longer discouraged young women from migrating for such employment. It appeared however, that the decision to migrate was normally taken by the young woman and tolerated by the household rather than dictated by the household itself. Domestic servants normally stayed away from home for long periods (1- 5) years. They did not return with the same regularity as young women from Somali Region, suggesting that they had fewer problems adapting to the Djibouti environment than their Somali counterparts. A small proportion were reported to have found husbands in Djibouti, to the chagrin of their households in Ethiopia who suggested that this reduced subsequent levels of remittance.

Gulf States

Work as domestic servants – undertaken by only a small number of young women interviewed in the western part of Afar. This appeared to be a result of both ethnic conditions and close proximity to a much larger population of women from Amhara who have regularly undertaken such work. None of the women interviewed liked the work, reporting that travel to and from the Gulf was difficult and dangerous, the hours were long, they were vulnerable to abuse by their employers, and as illegal immigrants there was no guarantee that they would be paid, and their employment might be terminated at any time if they were discovered. Nevertheless, it was the principal occupation for young migrant women in Ewa as well as some in Chiffra, who would stay for a year or more or “until we are discovered”. Obviously, to undertake such work, the level of remuneration must be substantially higher than anything available in the local community and it was reported that wages could be as high as ETB 5,000/month.

Work in the Gulf States appeared to exert a paradoxical attraction beyond remuneration alone. Respondents suggested that approximately 20% of young women who migrated to the Gulf would eventually get married there and this was definitely a focus for some of the others. Those who had been deported stated that they would return to the Gulf as soon as they could. This seemed strange in the light of the risks and the dissatisfaction

that they had expressed, but they were adamant that they had little alternative. Having experienced the lifestyle of the Gulf, they found it very difficult to reintegrate within their home communities noting: “If you stay here you go crazy”. Amenities and lifestyles in Afar Region were simply not comparable with those that they had experienced overseas and this compelled them to migrate again if they could.

Herding livestock – in contrast to young women working as domestic servants, young men working as herders in the Gulf States considered the lifestyle to be almost the same as at home, except that the level of remuneration was higher. As a result they were content to stay away from home for as long as they could - “until they make us leave” – which could be up to five years. They expressed no dissatisfaction with the conditions but equally noted no problems in reintegrating into Afar society. The only constraint on taking up such employment was the cost of travel.

Work on irrigated farms - this was viewed in much the same way as herding livestock, i.e. it was an acceptable and lucrative occupation for young men that would be undertaken for as long as possible. This was in contrast to work undertaken at Tendaho Sugar Estate or other commercial farms, which seemed to last for much shorter periods. Responses suggested that the context (i.e. not working for other Ethiopians, and working where others from Afar could not see what the manual work that they were doing) made work in the Gulf more acceptable than similar work elsewhere. It was not assessed whether the work was seasonal or on a full time basis.

What do young people earn?

Focus group discussions provided various estimates of the earnings of young men and women in the different work environments (Table 1).

Table 1: Average Earnings for Young Migrant Men and Women from Afar Region

ETB	Men	Women
Tendaho	45-60/day	
Semera (Guard)	60-100/day	
Semera (Casual labour)	70-130/day	
Djibouti (Casual Labour)/Domestic	150/day	1,000-2,500/month
Djibouti (Herding)	1,500/month	
Gulf States (Herding/Domestic)	1,500-2,500/month	3,000-5,000/month

Source: Focus Group Discussions

The following conclusions can be drawn:

First, the level of remuneration available from the Gulf States is clearly the highest. Nevertheless, this attracts relatively few young women from Afar. The reasons for this are not entirely clear. It is possible that due to the informal/illegal nature of much of that migration, focus groups did not mention it. In fact responses suggested more that such migration was culturally unacceptable in many communities and was simply not to be undertaken. The high risk of abuse and loss of earnings might also have been factors restricting this migration.

Secondly, young Afar women were able to remit significantly more than young men. For the poorer households, the migration of young women was hence particularly important.

(Significantly, the poorest households who had little labour capacity would be even more disadvantaged since they could not afford to allow their young women to leave.) This has meant that attitudes to migration and work are changing, especially amongst the poorer households.

The earning capacity of young men outside the country is not substantially different to that within Ethiopia, but there is a reluctance to take up employment within the country.

Nevertheless, while in some communities, more than 50% of young men and 30% of young women will migrate for employment, in many Afar households, the possibility of earning cash through relatively low status work, especially domestic service, remains culturally unacceptable.

Why do they go?

The primary reason for migration was always the lack of the means of survival at home. While some young people in other Regions would move to towns to enrol in secondary or tertiary education, this was never reported by any of those interviewed. Instead, the focus was upon the fact that accessible food was inadequate and that there was no possibility to earn money within the community to buy any more. As a result, one or more household members was obliged to leave, either to allow the remainder to survive on the existing resources, or to provide additional cash through remittances. In this way, young people are being effectively pushed out of their communities.

It is important to reiterate that the communities that the young people interviewed were leaving are not the stable pastoral communities that are conventionally associated with Afar people. Rather they consist primarily of IDP camps around schools, clinics and other food distribution points - agglomerations, rather than communities, of disparate households that share the common feature of having lost all or almost all of their livestock and being in no position to support themselves. Other migrant youth came from agro-pastoral communities some members of which had once been pastoralists, but all of whom were now facing hunger as a result of repeated crop failure.

A consistent feature of migration for work from Afar Region was the reluctance of young men and women to leave their home communities to seek work. The only exception to this was that of young women returning to the Gulf States who found it difficult to stay at home. Nevertheless, despite this clear reluctance, an increasing proportion of young people are being obliged to leave. It is quite evident that their reason for leaving is not to acquire status, wealth or an improved livelihood that might offer better prospects than life within their home community, Rather it is the immediate survival of their families and themselves that is the fundamental motive for leaving.

It would appear that under normal circumstances the safety net provided by the extended family/clan would allow a household to remain together, but once the community structure has been disrupted (as in an IDP situation) then the need to migrate for survival becomes much more pressing.

How long do they go for?

The length of time for which young people stay away from home varies considerably according to the circumstances. Migration within Ethiopia may be only for a few weeks or months according to cash needs and the availability of work, but in most cases it is considerably longer than that. This is at odds with the observation above that few young

people like to leave their home communities to find work. Nevertheless, making that point consistently, young people also reported that they stayed away from home for considerable periods – certainly longer than young people in Sitti Zone who tended to stay away for no more than a year at a time.

In the case of migration to the Gulf States, prolonged absence from home reflects the need to maximise the return on the investment made in travelling to the Gulf and finding work. In other cases however, there is no such investment and it might be expected that absences would be shorter. In some cases that is indeed the case, workers spend relatively short periods at Tendaho, but in others, longer absences may reflect that fact that the work is often similar to livelihoods at home, so that once the initial settling in period has passed, it is not a burden to continue for a long period.

Given that the primary consideration in leaving home is to find the cash to bridge a consumption gap, it might be expected that young people would return home as soon as that need has been met. In practice this is not the case. The earning levels of most young men working away from home do little more than meet their immediate cash needs so that little or no remittance is possible. This is especially the case if they chew chat, in which case any surplus cash tends to be absorbed by that habit. For young women, working away from home is a worse burden than it is for men and they do not do it unless it is justified by the remuneration. Thus few young women will undertake casual work within Ethiopia, but they may do so in Djibouti where remuneration is better. Nevertheless, they will more often undertake domestic service in Djibouti. Such work allows them to save as much as 75% of their wage (since board and lodge are covered by their employer) and the remittance can justify their pains. Significantly however, few women reported that they had gone for work and then returned once their family's cash needs had been met. More often, it appeared that once they had embarked upon a migratory lifestyle, they would continue until marriage.

In the case of the Gulf States, the inherently higher level of remittances can do much more than bridge consumption needs. In some cases, not only the survival of the household, but the education of siblings can depend upon remittances of young women working in the Gulf. Under such circumstances young women will stay abroad for as long as they possibly can, since they may well be the most important providers in their households.

The Brokers' Perspective

In Afar there are two types of broker. Those that feed into the network leading to employment in the Gulf, and those that assist local employers to find staff. This study consulted only two brokers of the latter type in Logia and Mille. Neither was licensed, but both had TIN numbers and considered themselves to be formal brokers. They estimated there to be at least 20 brokers in Logia, but much fewer (less than five) in Mille and hardly any in Semera. The brokers indicated that they do occasionally work together to fulfill contracts, but that they do not have any formal association. Nevertheless, they would not be adverse to assistance in forming one.

The brokers both reported that the number of private sector employers was increasing each month, although the number of contract employers (i.e. those looking for groups of casual workers to undertake a specific piece of work on a single contract for the whole group) had stagnated. Overall, the Logia brokers place more than 7,000 individuals each year, as well as an indeterminate number of people in group contracts. They both

confirmed that the general trend was of increasing private sector employment and that it was difficult to find people to meet the growing demand. This was attributed to the harsh conditions in Logia and the surrounding area, especially the high temperatures and unreliable power supply, as well as the stressful nature of hospitality work. As a result, turnover rates are high; most people stay in one job for no more than four to six months.

The brokers noted that the demand for workers at Tendaho had temporarily declined and that while some were continuing to be paid, reduced demand had led to a temporary surplus of casual workers from SNNPR. The main positions available included domestic workers, waiters and waitresses, cooks cleaners, guards, salespersons, mechanics, cashiers/clerks and espresso machine operators. In most cases, the positions were associated either with the hospitality subsector or domestic households.

Very few Afar people ever approach a broker seeking employment. Groups of contract workers tend to be dominated by young men from Tigray and SNNPR, although they may contain men from Afar as well. While Afar youth may take part in contract work, almost all individual positions were taken up by people from outside Afar Region. The general perception being that Afar people lack commitment and will not stay in a job for more than a short time. Even the majority of Afar employers show a preference for non-Afar employees. As a result, brokers tend to be incidental to the employment of Afar youth.

The exception to the above would be the informal brokers who provide the first point of contact for young women looking for work in the Gulf States. Since the prohibition of such work in 2013, the informal brokers who remain within Afar operate illegally and could not be interviewed. The situation is regrettable since it is quite evident that the prohibition has not curtailed the business and that young women continue to migrate to the Gulf without reference to the GoE programme designed to provide them with training and assistance. It would be beneficial to all parties if these brokers could be supported to become part of the formal programme. This would reduce the frequency of illegal migration and the risks faced by the young women who, being unable to take part in the programme, feel obliged to follow the illegal route.

Employers' Perspective

Employers in Afar fall into three basic categories:

- Large institutions such as the Tendaho Sugar Cane Factory Potash Factory employing one thousand or more people.
- Government Offices at Regional and Woreda level.
- Private businesses – these are focused on providing services to the hauliers that regularly travel the roads from Djibouti to Awash, Woldiya or Mekele. These comprise mainly hotels, bars, filling stations, garages, chat sellers, coffee houses and some shops.

Small business employers within Afar were asked to indicate the number of staff hired annually, the proportion of Afar workers amongst their staff and their perception of young Afar people as employees. The results tended to vary according to both business sector and location but the following characteristics were common to most responses:

1. Lack of commitment – almost all employers reported a lack of commitment to the work, as evidenced by poor timekeeping and a frequent failure to stay at a job for

- more than a week or two. This was particularly noted by those hiring Afar men as casual labour.
2. Reluctance to engage in menial tasks, particularly any form of service or cleaning. It was reported that while some local authorities would hire Afar women as office cleaners they would not in fact do any cleaning. The work would either be performed by women from SNNPR or the highlands, or (as appeared to be the case in Semera) would not be undertaken at all.
 3. High suitability for work as guards. In marked contrast to either of the above, businesses almost universally employ Afar men as guards. It might be expected that placing Afar men in such positions would render a business vulnerable to theft by members of the guards' clans, but in fact the reverse is true. The ethics of the clan are such that as one employer explained, "the clan is the guard", i.e. if something were to be stolen, the possibility of bringing the clan into disrepute meant that the clan would itself identify the thief and return the stolen items. The individual guard thus represents the entire clan who assume an informal responsibility for the safety of goods and premises.

The significance of context

As was found in other areas, context played an important role in the employment decisions of Afar youth. Community attitudes and peer pressure militate strongly against working for non-Afar people within Ethiopia, especially for women and domestic service. Other work, including casual labour might be more acceptable, but it was judged better to be working for an Afar rather than a non-Afar person. By contrast, in Djibouti and the Gulf States, the social constraints were less obvious. Afar women reported that they would frequently work as domestic servants, while men would work as casual labour without demur.

Nevertheless, the strong influence of peer pressure within Ethiopia mean that perceptions of Afar youth as workers were markedly different as compared with perceptions outside the country, (Table 2).

Table 2: The Importance of Context	
Perception in Ethiopia	Perception in Djibouti/Gulf States
Afar youth are considered less reliable than highland/SNNPR staff	Afar youth are considered as reliable than local counterparts
Afar men have no commitment	Afar men and women will do manual work for long periods
Afar staff are considered to be more expensive than highland/SNNPR staff	Afar staff are less expensive than local counterparts
Afar people will not undertake menial work.	Afar men and women will work at construction as well as domestic service
Afar people don't want to work	Afar people will pay substantial amounts to brokers to reach the Gulf States and will actively seek work in Djibouti

These differences indicate the opportunities that would exist to increase employment of Afar youth within Ethiopia if local attitudes of both employers and employees could be broken down.

Local opportunities

The range of economic opportunities available to young Afar people within the Region is not great, but certainly does exist. Of the 70,000 jobs that are estimated by the GoE, a substantial number are not available to Afar youth as a result of religious prohibition. In particular, most of the hospitality subsector is closed to them as a result of the widespread consumption of non-halal food and alcohol, which prevent them from working in establishments serving such goods. The proportion of young Afar people working in hotels and restaurants is very small, despite the fact that they are well used to the harsh climate and would not therefore be expected to show the same high level of turnover as those coming from cooler parts of Ethiopia.

Other work is not affected by such prohibition, but the proportion of Afar people engaged as clerks, cashiers, mechanics or similar occupations remains low. At Tendaho Sugar Estate, the proportion of Afar people amongst the semi-skilled and skilled staff (supervisors and machine operators) is 25%. Considering the affirmative employment of Afar people, this figure is low, but it is substantially higher than the proportion in industry as a whole. This appears to be due to two main factors. On the one hand, levels of remuneration are maintained at high levels to encourage staff to tolerate the harsh environmental conditions and thereby reduce turnover. This factor undoubtedly favours the Afar people who are used to living under such conditions. Secondly, the Estate has its own in-house TVET programme which provides at least three months of training. This means that provided Afar youth are motivated to work, they will be given the capacity to do so.

Lack of training is a major constraint to employment in some areas, such as mechanic or cashier, but training opportunities within the Region are extremely limited and TVET capacity is limited to Tendaho. Attendance at government training programmes tends to be gender balanced when these are undertaken in towns, but male dominated in rural areas.

Informal on-the-job training was witnessed on two occasions, one being a mechanic who was training two young assistants in the repair of Bajaj Taxis and the other was a female hotel owner/manager who was training young women at various positions in her hotel. In both cases however, the trainees were from the highlands and the trainers expressed considerable doubt that Afar people would be interested in such opportunities.

There are few other opportunities for work beyond casual work, guards and domestic service. The latter is shunned by most Afar women within Afar, although they will accept such work in Djibouti. As has already been mentioned, almost all guards are Afar men, and casual work opportunities are often taken up (albeit in competition with youth from SNNPR) when they are available.

POTENTIAL

As suggested above, there are very few training opportunities for Afar youth within Afar Region. Nevertheless the USAID-funded POTENTIAL programme that has begun to be implemented at Dubti and Asayita may improve this situation. The aspect of the

programme that is being implemented in Afar includes a number of components designed to prepare young people for employment, including a “Youth in Action” module designed to enhance aspiration and job awareness, as well as “Work Ready Now”, designed to promote soft skill development and other subsequent components leading to work based learning and eventual employment.

The POTENTIAL programme had been operational in Afar for ten months when young people who had attended the first sessions were interviewed as part of this assessment. It was immediately clear from their responses that they had greater aspirations than young people from outside the programme, that they were more aware of the requirements of the work place and had already developed some soft skills that would help them become more effective employees. The nature of their responses was such that they could no longer be considered as representative of Afar youth. Instead they represented what Afar youth could become with minimal investment in their development. This observation of positive interest and development was supported by the fact that while the first cohort of POTENTIAL students had reached the stage of passing to the next module, the level of interest had tripled, so that a decision had to be made as to whether to fund the progression of the first cohort, or to expand the programme to encompass the new entrants.

Analysis

Domestic Employment Opportunities

This analysis is based on two key observations. The first was repeated by all employers and the few brokers who were interviewed. Namely that in the major towns, as in the main estates and factories, there are more opportunities for the employment of Afar people than there are Afar people qualified to fill those opportunities. This imbalance was also observed in earlier assessments in Wag Hemra and Sitti Zone. It was less pronounced in Afar, which appears to have fewer opportunities for economic development than other Regions of Ethiopia. Nevertheless economic growth through the exploitation of the Awash River for irrigation and through private sector development along the line of rail continues to create opportunities for employment that are not well exploited by Afar youth.

The second observation, also made by almost all employers within Afar, was that young Afar workers lack commitment and are unlikely to stay in any job for more than two or three weeks, after which they would frequently argue with their employers and then leave, or simply leave without notice. Nevertheless, that observation is not at all the experience of employers in neighbouring countries where young Afar people are employed for considerable periods, and where both young men and young women are willing to work hard and at the most menial of tasks (such as casual labour for construction) in order to survive.

It is important to recognise the considerable variation in socioeconomic conditions that exist throughout Afar and even within communities. This assessment could make few generalisations given its limited extent. Nevertheless, it was quite evident that the Afar Region needs employees, to the extent that it “imports” substantial numbers of workers from other parts of Ethiopia (notably SNNPR). At the same time many Afar youth from destitute households need employment, to the extent that they will travel to neighbouring

countries, especially Djibouti, but even the Gulf States to find work. Paradoxically however, Afar youth are rarely employed within the Afar Region.

The reasons for this are outlined in the analysis below, but the result of this dislocation is that Afar youth are largely confined to employment opportunities beyond their homeland where the scope for growth and development is limited. By contrast, within Afar, they should be able to participate in the economic growth of their Region in such a way as to develop their own livelihoods beyond the limitations of a pastoral existence and certainly beyond the limitations that they have commonly experienced as a result of the recent drought. For this reason, it is worth examining the dynamics of employment amongst Afar youth. This will allow the identification of interventions that might be most appropriate to assist young people in the development of transformational livelihoods, which might in turn allow them to move beyond a failing pastoral existence to a more productive future.

The Bias against employment within Ethiopia

This assessment found a number of reasons why local employment opportunities prove generally unattractive to Afar youth. These fall into four main categories:

1. Levels of remuneration
2. Cultural constraints
3. Limited knowledge of the market
4. Attitudes of employers

It might be expected, given the fact that they are well used to the oppressive local conditions, that Afar youth would take up most of the lower paid employment positions. This is not the case. Instead, these jobs are taken up by young people from SNNPR who despite the heat, are willing to work for less than people from Afar. Employers' responses suggest that this is a major contributing factor to the dearth of Afar youth in the work place, i.e. that they are unwilling to work for the level of remuneration (ETB 70-130 per day) at which other young people will work.

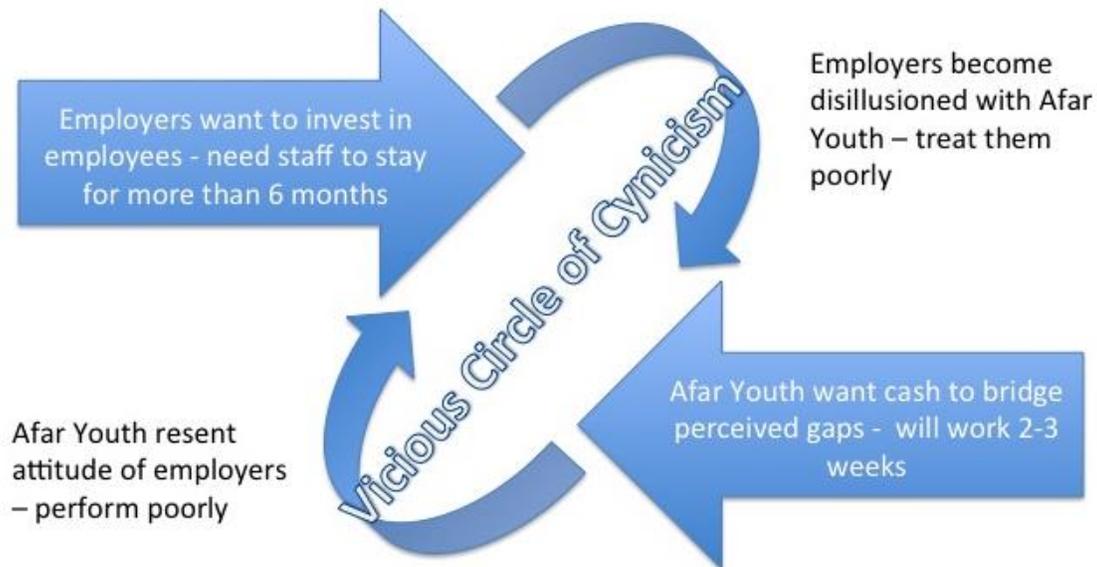
Cultural constraints include the religious prohibition against any contact with alcohol or non-halal food, as well as the cultural pressure on women not to work for non-Afar people in a service capacity. These are powerful barriers that prevent many Afar youth and women in particular from taking up employment.

The limited knowledge of Afar people of the employment market prevents them from appreciating the range of local opportunities that might be open to them given only a little training. Young people know only those jobs that have been taken up by their peers and such jobs tend to be mainly unskilled and short-term employment. As a result they do not aspire to or investigate the possibilities of other forms of employment since they don't even know such employment might exist.

The majority of employers who were interviewed were generally dismissive of Afar youth as workers. They considered their lack of commitment to be adequate grounds for ignoring them as potential employees and did not show any interest in trying to change that situation. Such an attitude is understandable given the availability of alternative labour from SNNPR, but it tends to reinforce the negative perceptions of Afar youth and contribute to the vicious circle of cynicism.

The combination of all of the above results in the rejection by many Afar youth of local employment opportunities, and an unwillingness to engage in or develop any sort of long- term or intimate relationship with the employment market. Instead their dominant attitude towards local employment *emphasizes arm's length, short-term interaction at the expense of potential long-term benefits*. This is entirely at odds with the needs of the employer who for the most part is looking to invest in employees with the intention that they should remain in employment long enough for the benefits of that investment to be evident in the profitability of the business (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Dislocation between Employers' and Employees' Expectations



With the exception of casual labour, an employee is rarely able justify his/her initial wage, but requires training to become effective within each unique work environment. Such training will normally take at least one month and more usually two or three months. The common experience expressed by respondents however was that very few Afar youth remain in local employment for this length of time. Instead, as a result of the factors described above, they are gone within a week or two which is hardly ever enough to justify the initial investment made. This leads to increasing cynicism on the part of the employers who treat employees accordingly, resulting in mutual cynicism on the part of employees and correspondingly poor performance/reduced commitment. Breaking this vicious circle will be an essential part of the transformational development that is foreseen in this report.

Shortcomings of the Current Employment Situation.

In leaving these communities to look for work, youth are largely following the coping strategies adopted by preceding generations in response to a shock. In the past, the coping strategy was driven by the need to acquire the funds necessary to recover from the shock and to resume a traditional livelihood. Under current circumstances however, it is unlikely that the households that the young people have left will ever recover from the shocks that they have suffered through the resumption of a pastoralist lifestyle. Instead, there is the danger that the short-term coping strategy will be repeated or extended on a permanent basis, becoming a new livelihood. Such a livelihood has little

to offer either the individual or the household. When reverting to life at home, the individual experiences little more than a subsistence lifestyle, and when working away from home he/she occupies the lowest rung on the ladder as a casual labourer or domestic servant. Similarly the household cannot expect to pull itself out of poverty on the back of earnings typical of such employment.

Migration for employment as it is commonly practiced at present is thus a short-term response that is scarcely adequate to address the longer-term problem that destitute households in Afar now face. It does not represent a pathway out of poverty. Instead it represents a poverty trap in which young people are prevented from developing better livelihoods for themselves and their own families as a result of not only limitations in capacity, but also the demands of their existing households. This is especially the case for young women in the poorest households, who are increasingly expected to leave home to earn remittances. (By contrast, young women in better-off households are discouraged from migration and expected to fulfill their obligations at home). Young men face the same sort of trap. Without skills to move beyond casual labour they are obliged to engage in migration for employment, returning sporadically to their communities, who have seen little benefit from their migration beyond a reduced demand for resources at home.

By contrast, if youth could be provided with the means to develop a livelihood that would generate more than the sparse returns from casual labour, they might be able to support both themselves and their families more effectively. Sufficiently improved circumstances might allow them to eventually break out of the cycle of poverty and progress towards an urban-based livelihood that could offer them a higher standard of living than they could possibly achieve as destitute pastoralists.

To this end, it is necessary to invest in the development of young Afar people so as to assist them to find suitable and rewarding employment. Such investment is necessary not only in skills alone, but in more fundamental aspects of character and awareness that must be resolved before additional skills could be expected to provide any real benefits.

Gender Differences

Focus group discussions highlighted major differences in the behaviour of young men and young women migrating for employment. Thus in Zone 2, it was reported that young men would traditionally migrate to Saudi Arabia, but that young women would never work there. Similarly, young men would be more likely to work within Afar, mainly as casual labour, but that this was rare for young women to work within the Region in any capacity.

Table 3 : Differences between Circumstances of Women and Men Working away from Home.

Women	Men
Mainly to Djibouti, few to the Gulf	Preferably to Djibouti and/or Gulf States

Most stay at home (but variable, up to 30% leave in some communities)	More than half leave
Work as Domestic Servants and casual labour	Casual labour, herding livestock, farm work
Earn ETB 50/day	Earn 150-200/day
Remit 75% -95% of earnings	Rarely remit, (every three months)
Very few if any work in Afar Region	Some work in Afar Region

On the other hand, both men and women would work in Djibouti, which was reportedly the preferred destination for most young women. There they would work as domestic servants, a form of employment that they would almost universally spurn within Afar itself.

The differences associated with gender are shown in Table 3. One critical factor is the relative levels of pay and remittance. While men are generally paid more than women, they were not often able to remit, while the women might remit as much as 75% of their wages. This was ascribed to the higher costs of living and transport faced by men (since those women working as domestic servants would have their board and lodge paid for¹¹) although it was also mentioned by a number of respondents that if men working in Djibouti, the Yemen or even at Tendaho developed the habit of chewing chat, it was unlikely that they would remit anything whatsoever.

Overall, it would appear that as far as men were concerned there was a marginal preference towards working in Djibouti or in the Gulf States, while for women, work in Djibouti was much to be preferred over the alternatives of work in the Gulf or in Afar itself. In terms of impact on the household at home, it was evident that while young women might be expected to provide substantial remittances, young men were not and did not often do so.

The Skills Gap

Young people are less aware of their soft skills inadequacies than employers, but both agree that hard skills require much greater attention than is currently provided. This is a fundamental constraint to youth employment. The current responses are limited, more by resources than by an immediate awareness of need. In fact local authorities appear to be well aware of the situation and decry the lack of resources at their disposal.

Nevertheless, some skills remain unrecognised and some deficiencies could be rapidly remedied. When asked what skills they would like to learn, most young men focused on practical areas including mechanics, carpentry, masonry and electrical work, while

¹¹ Men working at Tendaho Sugar Estate were paid on a piece work basis, but reported that they would earn about ETB1,500 per month. This is much lower than casual rates elsewhere, but the difference was offset by the fact that meals and lodging were provided by the Estate.

young women tended to prioritise computer skills. In neither case was the basic skill of driving nor other forms of plant operation mentioned, even though the development of such skills requires little educational achievement and can open up a wide range of career opportunities. In most cases, preferred skills related closely to jobs that young people had seen or jobs that they had the resources to do. Thus driving would be impossible since not only would lessons be too expensive, but the cost of a licence would also be prohibitive and the cost of a vehicle would put such a dream completely out of reach. The fact that a driver might be employed by someone else was not always well appreciated and as a result, that ambition never surfaced in any focus group discussion, despite the fact that it would be relatively simple to address and would have a major impact on a livelihood.

This example highlights the lack of understanding of the skills gap that exists in the minds of not only young people, but also those attempting to identify programs for their assistance. Young people in Afar did not always appear to be able to articulate the skills that they desired and researchers relying upon their input would not be aware of possibilities that existed. This was particularly evident in the more rural communities where it was hard to persuade young people to discuss their own ambitions because as a result of either limited exposure, or limited self-awareness, they had scarcely begun to articulate those ambitions themselves. Only after exposure to employment awareness and the development of aspiration would it be at all possible to conduct a sensible assessment of skills gaps in Afar.

Self-Awareness and Aspiration

In contrast to young people interviewed in other areas of Ethiopia¹², young people in the Afar Region do not show a strong sense of aspiration. This appears to be associated with the subsumance of individual entity within that of the clan. It has been suggested that clan influence is so all encompassing, that the concept of an individual's future beyond the clan is rarely considered. While this may be an oversimplification, it was nevertheless well evident that young people responding in focus groups from rural kabeles had considerable difficulty in articulating their future aspirations and when pressed to do so, would note that they rarely considered their future existence beyond the next six months. Such a short outlook allows little to no scope for aspiration. Indeed the concept of livelihood development or of career progression is almost completely excluded by such a timeframe.

A short-term perspective is not justified from a perspective of survival since from a traditional viewpoint, for most young people, survival is almost guaranteed through the support of the clan. Rather it may be the transient and uncertain nature of the pastoralist existence that reputedly constrains most thoughts of personal development. Irrespective of the cause, it is quite evident that limited aspiration is a major barrier to self-development for young people in Afar, and that unless this can be addressed, the provision of soft or technical skills will have little impact.

For many young people, aspiration is fostered by parents and schools with the result that by the end of the educational process they are aware of the need to succeed in life, and for the majority this is framed within a commercial context. This process is by no means as marked for Afar youth, and whatever aspirations that may be developed scarcely relate to the concept of employment. This means that if a household is forced into

¹² Wag Hemra and Sitti Zones.

destitution, its young people are not well equipped to handle the responsibilities that fall upon them.

Resources

Analysis of employers' responses suggests that technical skill development remains a key constraint to successful employment. Conventional TVET programmes focus on a short list of hard skill sets, with the intention of delivering competent workers to a limited number of trades. In Afar the situation is highly constrained. TVET resources are limited to Tendaho Sugar Estates and Awash. Their combined capacity cannot match the needs of the growing Regional economy, neither can they hope to provide the wide range of skill sets required by the multiplicity of employers within the Region. GoE responses suggested that resources to support increased training capacity were needed but not yet available.

Employers' and GoE comments suggest two ways forward. On the one hand, there is the possibility (or more accurately the need) to focus whatever technical training might be undertaken more precisely to match the requirements of the employment market. Technical training is expensive and time consuming. It entails both capital costs (for equipment) and recurrent costs (for trainers) and must therefore be appropriately directed if these resources are to be used effectively. Often it is difficult to predict the needs of a growing market and it is quite possible to prioritise training needs wrongly. One way of avoiding such errors and reducing training costs can be for government to promote on-the-job training in partnership with the private sector. The Regional Government recognises the need for work-based learning but has not yet moved to implement any sort of programme. Within BOLSA it is accepted that the government and private sector might play complementary roles in promoting training, with the private sector providing training to apprentices in a work environment while government provided the necessary accreditation of the in house training programme. Such a system would be particularly appropriate to large entities such as Tendaho Sugar Estates, but could equally be applied to smaller businesses. While one garage mechanic was found operating a micro apprenticeship scheme in Mille, another larger business¹³ in Logia expressed interest in doing the same, especially if some of the wages of apprentices could be met by an external programme. A large hotel/filling station in Genawe also indicated that it constantly needed new staff and would welcome the opportunity to train them up to an acceptable standard itself, if some of the initial training costs could be subsidised.

Overall, it appears that there might be considerable private sector support for work-based training, especially if it included some level of financial support to cover the living costs (or offset the wage costs) of trainees.

While the impact of resource constraints for technical skills development might be offset by public/private training partnerships in the work place, another approach to maximise resource availability might be to refocus training altogether, shifting the emphasis away from technical skill development and towards training in soft skills. Such an approach might in fact be complementary to work-based learning. If available public sector/programme resources were to focus on soft skill development, the relevance to overall private sector needs would be significantly greater than one that focused on technical skill development alone. The responses of employers who almost all noted the

¹³ Currently servicing all SCI vehicles in the Region.

importance of such soft skills – and the lack of them amongst most new employees - would suggest that soft skill development would assist a greater proportion of young people to transition to long term employment than would be achieved through a corresponding level of effort applied to technical training. Such a programme would allow young people to develop a greater understanding of their own potential and so look beyond the conventional activities that they have fashioned from coping strategies into dead-end livelihoods. POTENTIAL has already begun to develop soft skills, but evidence from Afar suggests that within that Region there is a considerable need for further assistance that has not yet been met. Programme interventions need to be rolled out to allow a greater intake over a wider area.

The Importance of Attitude

The fact that Afar youth face local unemployment and consequently migrate, appears to have less to do with the availability of work within Afar and more to do with attitude, not only of the young people themselves, but also of the community within which they live and of their employers.

Amongst young people themselves, there was a willingness to undertake work, but on their own terms. This could sometimes be for more than a year, but was often for as little as two or three weeks. Young men in particular had no difficulty in accepting quite poorly paid work if it was suited to their lifestyle (such as herding livestock or working on arable farms), but many would be reluctant to undertake casual labour for any length of time. This led to the common complaint by employers that Afar men lacked commitment. Young women would be equally willing to undertake work but again on their own terms. Some had an ingrained attitude against working in domestic service (insisting that they would undertake construction work in preference to domestic service), while others would accept such work. In all cases however, there was considerable reluctance to perform either type of task in Afar, but a willingness to do so in Djibouti. This appeared to be due to not only differences in remuneration, but also peer pressure in their local communities.

The prevailing attitude towards work of different types can be strongly affected by peer pressure, which prevents young women in particular from adopting any sort of occupation that might be considered menial or demeaning. It also prevents some young men from undertaking similar work if they could be witnessed by their peers. Nevertheless, for young men, this appears to be less important than it might be in other pastoral areas (e.g. Sitti Zone). It must be emphasized that this assessment recorded different responses in different areas and it is consequently hard to generalize on this point. Nevertheless while family attitude appeared to be strong factor in preventing young women from taking up menial work, especially where it might come to be known of by their peers (reflecting not only upon themselves but also upon their families), this was less of an issue for young men. Elsewhere in Ethiopia the aspect of “starting at the bottom” can be a strong barrier to entry for young men, when peer pressure suggests that one should enter a career as a manager or at an even higher level. This did not seem to be as marked amongst young men in Afar, where long term considerations and individual ambition appeared to be much less significant.

The attitude of Ethiopian employers reflected the attitude of Afar youth. The widespread perception was that Afar youth lacked commitment and were less hard working and more expensive than their counterparts from especially SNNPR, who appeared to

dominate labour markets¹⁴. This attitude was prevalent even amongst Afar employers who almost universally indicated that they would prefer to employ staff from SNNPR rather than young people from their own Region.

Only one Afar employer was found who reported that he employed Afar people on a regular basis. He operated a small mechanical engineering business that was installing watering points for SCI on a purely commercial basis. To do so he employed a number of local youth who he reported to be as hard working as any one else. He suggested that the Afar men were actually more suited than outsiders to work under Afar conditions. The fact that he appeared to be successful in his business suggests that there might be some Afar employers and employees who have found a way to achieve sustainable engagement, but unfortunately he appeared to be exceptional in this regard.

Ultimately however, it is the attitude of the community as a whole that is most influential in determining how a young person responds to the work environment within Ethiopia. That community consists not only of peers, but also elders, local authorities, religious leaders and especially direct family who influence the decisions taken by young people and especially their choice to work outside the country rather within Ethiopia.

At present, Afar communities appear to do little to foster and quite a lot to disparage migration for employment, beyond the assumption that young people will adopt traditional coping strategies as and when necessary. The concept of assisting young people to enter into a trade or to take up either training or an apprenticeship within Ethiopia appears completely unknown. Instead, family pressures act against this. In many cases young women are prevented from taking up employment away from home. While young men are not supported if they leave home and disparaged when they return. It is only amongst the poorest households that community attitudes appear to be supportive of migration, but even here, the onus is on the youth to provide immediate remittance to support the family. The idea that a household might invest in the development of an individual through training was not encountered. The need to develop community attitudes to work that will actually foster long-term employment as a livelihood is very evident.

Clan Connections

Intra-clan connections can be an important factor in the employment market. They often provide the entry point for most young men and women looking for work in Djibouti, but have no role in employment in the Gulf States. On the other hand, work within Afar is often dependent upon clan connections, especially employment within government which respondents noted almost always required family connections to obtain. The impact of the clan can be a two edged sword in that an individual who has been able to find employment is then expected to provide for many other relatives, so that it is almost impossible to accumulate any savings irrespective of the level of pay. Even those earning government salaries of more than ETB 5,000 a month report that this is rapidly disposed off amongst clan members.

¹⁴ Interviews with employers found that most businesses along the roads to Djibouti were run by people from Tigray and Amhara, with either family members or relatives as staff, or young people from SNNPR. There were also young people from Oromiya, but the majority of the labour force appeared to have come from SNNPR.

While this might be construed as a positive benefit for the poorest members of a clan that positive impact appears to have been significantly reduced over the last five years, and especially the last 18 months, when drought has reduced the capacity of the better off households to support the poorer ones. As a result, the informal safety net derived from clan connections appears to be unreliable for the poorest households who have been forced to adopt coping strategies, especially migration for employment, with increasing frequency. Indeed even the earnings of migrant workers may not entirely benefit those for whom it was originally intended¹⁵. The benefits that clan connections might have provided to the poorest in the past are by no means as evident today.

Peer Pressure and Social Media

In marked contrast to other pastoral areas, young men and women from destitute households in Afar did not interact much through social media. While some young people did have mobile phones, most households had only one phone shared amongst all members. While this is still good coverage, it does not permit the level of social interaction through Facebook or Whatsapp found elsewhere. This will almost undoubtedly change in the future, when it will become increasingly important to frame interventions within the context of social media, but at present, this is not the case. Nevertheless, the fact that change will eventually come does suggest that it would be worthwhile to use social media interventions “ahead of the curve” applying tools developed elsewhere (e.g. for deployment in Somali Region) to the Afar context so as to create an social media environment that supports transformational employment before one that disparages it can develop.

Breaking the constraints

Young people in Afar are moving to find employment, but only when their traditional means of livelihood have degenerated quite severely. By this time, they have few alternatives open to them beyond accepting work that provides only minimal remuneration and little opportunity for growth and development. They are thus constrained to a subsistence livelihood. This situation could be avoided if young people were sensitized to the opportunities that might be open to them elsewhere and were given both the time and the resources to prepare themselves for a future beyond pastoralism.

This is not to imply that young people should be persuaded to give up their existing livelihoods or to relocate themselves in villages. Rather that they should be helped to become aware of both their own potential within a broader environment and of the essential skills that might be required to not only survive, but thrive within that broader environment. This is a process that affects not just individuals but entire communities. It cannot be achieved overnight. Instead it requires considerable time to effect real change. Within that context, the following recommendations have been made:

¹⁵ Paradoxically, the culture of sharing has meant that pastoral households receiving food aid have regularly shared their allocations with better off households, even though the need was clearly greatest amongst the poorer households. This culture may also reduce the benefits derived from migrating for work.

Development of Self-Awareness and Aspiration

The development of self-awareness and aspiration is often overlooked or taken for granted, but it has been recognised as an essential first step to development by some¹⁶. The process is part of “normal development” for many young people in the west, but is by no means as evident for young people in Afar. This means that young people who are obliged to look for work are placed at an immediate disadvantage by virtue of their limited expectations. Young people in displaced or destitute households thus urgently need assistance and guidance in the development of aspiration.

There are a number of tools that can be used to develop aspiration, some are more intensive than others, the POTENTIAL programme is relatively intensive and contains many elements that all serve to develop self-awareness and aspiration, even to the extent of developing personal life plans. Nevertheless, because the development of self-awareness and aspiration is such a fundamental requirement, it deserves a broader application than can be currently achieved through the POTENTIAL program. If 10,000 young people can be assisted to develop aspiration, no more than one quarter might follow through with POTENTIAL, but amongst the other three quarters there will still be many who will now seek their own ways forward.

The strongest driver of aspiration appears to be peer pressure, or more accurately, the use of peers as examples of what might be achieved. Children and young people tend to model themselves upon their peers and if those peers are taking up casual or agricultural work, they will consider that to be an acceptable livelihood, irrespective of its long-term consequences. Providing young people with examples of people who have achieved more, *who they can relate to as peers*, can be an extremely powerful tool for the development of aspiration. If young Afar people are to be helped to transform their lives, then the most cost effective first step must be to develop programs that provide them with immediately relevant examples of what can be done, and is being done by their peers. This will mean recruiting from the small pool of successful Afar youth to find people who can motivate young people.

The design of a programme to disseminate relevant success stories can include face-to-face meetings with young people, but this is both time-consuming and expensive. The use of video to showcase success requires considerable skill in compiling footage in an appropriate and effective manner, but would allow much greater coverage, using video players linked to televisions, mobile video players, or iPads. Finally, the development of much more concise video messages for dissemination by smart phone requires even greater advertising skills, but can be expected to have even broader reach. Overall, there is considerable untapped potential for messaging, especially using relatively new, but tested technologies. Reaching a broader audience with general aspirational messaging rather than specific focused training is an important first step in assisting them to adapt to new livelihoods.

Again, it is important to note that this is not to suggest that all Afar people need to be exposed to a potential change in mindset. This is not a programme of mass indoctrination. Rather, it is aimed at assisting those specific populations of destitute people who need the tools to succeed in a new environment, the first of which being aspiration.

¹⁶ [http://www.cangoethiopia.org/assets/docs\(2\)%20Self-resiliency%20report%20-%20CANGO-CHF%20\(08.08.07\).pdf](http://www.cangoethiopia.org/assets/docs(2)%20Self-resiliency%20report%20-%20CANGO-CHF%20(08.08.07).pdf)

A second methodology for the development of self-awareness and aspiration that may be particularly appropriate to young women is the development of savings groups. Saving is not a feature of Afar culture – many respondents noted that those who received cash for whatever reason were obliged to share with other members of their family so that “your money does not stay in your hand for even a week”. This weakens the sense of self and prevents aspirational development. While the culture of sharing may be very appropriate to the pastoral livelihood, a culture of saving appears to be an essential aspect of most sedentary livelihoods.

In other programmes, it has been clearly demonstrated that savings/self help groups provide those who might otherwise be disadvantaged with the means to start an individual enterprise¹⁷ and develop a sense of self-worth as a result. Local examples of such self-development can be explosive in their impact since the “peer impact” is immediate. It is recommended that savings groups should be developed amongst the displaced/destitute communities from which young people are migrating. Their benefits could be twofold, on the one hand to increase household resilience (through the well-established “insurance effect”) and on the other to develop a sense of self-awareness and aspiration amongst some of the participants.

A third intervention that is becoming increasingly prominent is the use of sport to foster self-awareness and esteem. Young people who lack academic capacity, may nevertheless develop self-esteem, leadership capacity and ambition through participation in sport or other games. The Swiss NGO “Sport and Development” (SAD) has researched the role of sport in development¹⁸ and suggests that it can enhance the development of individual competencies such as self- confidence, self-esteem and respect for others. The evidence for such development is scarce and there is little guarantee that any particular approach involving sport would be effective. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that sport might represent one possible pathway through which both men and women might develop greater self awareness and esteem If resources were available, a pilot programme including different sports and games for both men and women might provide valuable lessons for future application.

The literature contains few references to programmes that might enhance aspiration and self-awareness beyond the three interventions described above. POTENTIAL contains a number of specific exercises that focus on self-development, but while these may be effective, they have been designed for a narrow audience. It would be useful to assess these exercises to see if there are any components that could be redesigned to accommodate a much wider and more general audience.

Overall however, the development of self-awareness, esteem and aspiration are critical first stages along the road to livelihood transformation. Interventions to promote these interlinked aspects of personal development should be implemented as early as possible within any social transformation programme. It is important that such a programme should plan beyond the obvious needs of employment awareness, soft skill and

¹⁷ Even if such businesses never progress beyond the “kiosk economy” stage, their psychological impact can be considerable.

¹⁸ M. Akhbari, V. Kund, R. Wijesekera, U. Selvaraju, Biel, 2010. Sport and Development: “A summary of SAD’s experiences and best practices”.

technical skill development. Self-esteem and aspiration constitute an essential foundation that needs to be put in place before other programmes can expect to achieve any success. This implies that a transformational programme should contain elements to be implemented not only amongst the youth, but even amongst school children below the age of 15, possibly from the age of 10-12. More research is definitely needed in this area. The current assessment can only highlight the importance of aspiration and the clear need for its development amongst Afar youth.

Changing Attitudes towards work

The fundamental attitudinal constraint of Afar youth reported by the majority of employers is a lack of commitment. This might be considered to be another facet of aspiration, but it is also derived from the attitudes of young Afar people towards employment, which are colored by considerations of gender, status and the social dynamics within the clan. Probably the most important to long-term development is the last of these, since this provides the foundation for all other attitudes.

Changing the social dynamics within the clan is widely considered to be a slow and daunting task. This is not necessarily so, for a number of reasons: First, it is not in fact necessary to change attitudes throughout the clan, it is only necessary to change attitudes within the communities from which young people are migrating. These communities are frequently already dislocated from viable pastoralism. Secondly, instead of being part of a social spectrum of better off and poorer households, most of the IDP communities from which young people are migrating are consistently poor. The households in these communities are almost all being forced by destitution to find new ways to survive that challenge social norms. Thirdly, respondents from these communities clearly indicated that they are already changing their attitudes towards work and migration. It is becoming acceptable for not only young men, but even young women to now leave households in search of work. Other sources have suggested that the latter would have been unthinkable five years ago.

All of the above suggest that there is an ongoing change in community attitudes amongst the poorer households that could be fostered so as to facilitate positive migration. Fostering that change will require interventions at a number of levels. A barrier analysis of migration for work (interviewing both those young men and women who do and those don't migrate to find work) is an essential first step. Its results can be used to identify the most influential members of the community so that appropriate behavior change communication messages can be crafted to influence their attitudes to work. An SBCC programme can then be implemented to promote a positive attitude towards work throughout the community, reinforcing individual aspiration and making it easier for young people to migrate to places of employment.

In other areas (e.g. Sitti Zone) it was suggested that a Facebook campaign might be effective in changing community attitudes, especially in redirecting peer pressure so that young people would be less averse to taking up low level employment (albeit with the eventual aim of progressing further). It is less likely that this would be effective in Afar Region. The ownership of mobile phones or smartphones is significantly less in Afar (the assessment found one per household on average) so that opportunities for reaching individual young people by this means are comparatively lower.

Gender plays a major role in shaping young peoples' attitudes to work. This is well recognized by both GoE and NGOs working in Afar. Although the GoE has an affirmative

action policy to promote the participation of women in training in rural areas, within some of the communities visited, there was still a considerable reluctance to allow women to leave to find work, and restrictions on the sort of work that women might be allowed to undertake. Work as a domestic servant was especially proscribed. This tendency is a specific aspect of the social dynamics within the clan that needs to be addressed if young women in particular are to be able to develop viable livelihoods through employment. While domestic service need not be the ultimate aspiration of any young person, the opportunity to migrate and work can of itself open up other opportunities that are otherwise foregone if the first step cannot be taken. Particular attention needs to be paid to facilitate those opportunities. This requires a focus on the role played by women within the community.

Women play a central role in Afar livelihoods. They are vital to house building, collecting firewood, preparing food, herding small livestock, earning cash from petty trade, looking after children and general housework. Their absence can create a large gap in the day-to-day fabric of the household, and hence young women are frequently prohibited from leaving. If women are to leave, either for employment, or even for training, the impact of their absence must be mitigated. This could be achieved through the provision of a stipend to the household that might compensate for their “loss”, (one possibility would be to utilize PSNP transfers in exchange for training). Irrespective of the mechanism, it is important that it is recognized that households themselves may need an incentive to permit young Afar women to leave to find work.

Finally, religion is a powerful constraint to employment in a private services sector in Afar that is dominated by non-halal food and alcoholic drinks. Although there are a small number of Moslem-owned restaurants and hotels, their employment capacity is small compared to the sector as a whole. There is little that can be done to mitigate this constraint which, given the importance of the hospitality sector to the roadside economy significantly limits employment opportunities for Afar youth.

Attitudes of Employers and Brokers

One of the most pertinent aspects of youth employment within Afar is the vicious circle of cynicism, whereby employers believe that Afar youth lack commitment and therefore treat them with a degree of callousness and contempt, leading the youth to become equally contemptuous of their employers and employment, thereby fulfilling the employers' expectations and creating a vicious circle. Breaking that cycle is an important aspect of opening up employment opportunities for Afar youth, but it requires a change in the mindset of the employers.

One possible way to start to change the attitudes of employers might be to enlist the assistance of brokers as advocates for Afar youth. Since the brokers' attitude towards Afar youth is almost as cynical as that of employers, it will take some effort to induce them to advocate in this way. A possible mechanism might be to recruit brokers as trainers of young Afar people under POTENTIAL. The programme would almost certainly benefit from the input of brokers to help young people to understand what employment entails and the responsibilities associated with a job. Conversely, brokers would definitely benefit from being able to supply staff to employers who had been exposed to the POTENTIAL program. If brokers knew what the programme entailed and had actually participated within it as teachers and advisors, they would be well placed to advocate for their own trainees when placing them with employers. Brokers who took

such a position would almost certainly try to ensure that employers treated their trainees fairly and without the contempt that would otherwise create the vicious circle of cynicism.

The involvement of brokers in training programmes represents a departure from their normal activities and a potential burden that they might be reluctant to accept. One way to encourage their participation would be to support the development of a brokers association in each town (and even amongst several towns). Brokers in Logia already work together to a limited extent, but indicated that further support, especially of networking would be very much welcomed. The provision of such support might provide the quid pro quo required to induce brokers to participate in POTENTIAL training programmes.

One specific area in which a major change is necessary is in the migration of young women to the Gulf States. The Afar Bureau of Women, Children and Youth Affairs reported that current regulations attempt to formalise that migration procedure through the use of specific channels and licensed brokers. The benefits of such a formal process are well recognised, but it has yet to be implemented on a scale that is adequate to encompass all of those who wish to migrate to the Gulf for employment. At the moment, there are many households who continue to migrate informally and who are at risk as a result. The linkages to licensed brokers are not yet well established and the licensing process itself appears to be progressing slowly. There is a need to support that process of formalisation. In particular, the training and licencing of brokers could readily be done by an independent institution (such as an NGO) that was accredited by government. This would allow the brokers to be trained to the required standards and would assist them to reach out to, or be contacted by potential clients – young women and men who could also be trained within the same programme on conditions, expectations, and rights within the Gulf States. This could substantially reduce the vulnerability of those who currently migrate to the Gulf States through informal channels.

Employment Awareness

Another factor promoting a lack of commitment to employment is the fact that few Afar people are aware of the opportunities that employment might provide in both the short and the longer term. For most, employment has traditionally been a solution to the problem of having insufficient cash. It was always a coping strategy that was only undertaken for as long as necessary before resuming a pastoral existence and continues to be viewed in that light. Only in focus group discussions with POTENTIAL beneficiaries was there any recognition of the possibility that employment might offer the means to support a new livelihood. Very few young people from the target populations in Afar are aware of either the considerable range of different employment opportunities available in the market, or of what being employed actually entails. Both of these are important aspects of employment awareness that can affect the perceptions and aspirations of young men and women.

In the first case, while it is impossible to describe all of the different occupations that might exist, there are a number of different exercises that can be used to help young people to recognise the complexity of the workplace and the vast number of different jobs within it. One such exercise involves the enumeration of all the different jobs in a given environment, (e.g. a construction site, or a shopping mall). When teams of young people are given the opportunity to actually investigate the number of jobs within such an environment they come to realise that the range of opportunities is substantially greater than the short-list that they might have first envisaged.

In the second case, the different basic aspects of employment might be considered elementary and fundamental to most employers, but are not always fully appreciated by those who have not worked before. Timeliness, reliability, respect for workmates and for the means of employment are aspects that cannot be taken for granted and specific training in these areas can help to reduce the vicious circle of cynicism on the part of employers as well as to help young people become fully aware of their obligations as employees. Training can be provided through formal courses, but can be more effective if developed through focus group discussions guided by peers who have actually been employed themselves.

Skills Development

Employers look for the necessary skills in an employee, but all of those interviewed indicated that almost all employees needed further training. There is a definite lack of technical skill training capacity within the Region. Government resources are inadequate to meet training needs, and even though on-the-job training is recognised as an important way to maximise the impact of available resources, GoE staff recognise that supply still lags far behind demand.

At the same time, employers place almost as much weight upon the possession of soft skills (e.g. communication skills, customer service skills, business appreciation capacity, teaming skills, leadership skills, etc.) and even more fundamental aspects of employment (e.g. timeliness, reliability, personal appearance cleanliness, basic hygiene) that not all potential employees might possess.

The development of both technical skills and soft skills amongst Afar youth is important, but in terms of cost effectiveness, it is the soft skills that have a greater relevance to a larger number of potential jobs. Technical competence is required in many areas, but classroom-training resources are limited. Nevertheless, such skills can be acquired through apprenticeship schemes that allow on-the-job training. This may well represent a more cost effective approach to technical training than the development of TVET capacity in anticipation of a job market that might not in fact grow as anticipated or even exist.

Soft skills are needed in almost all occupations, but are only rarely developed by conventional training programmes. POTENTIAL does place considerable emphasis on soft skill development, and this aspect of the programme could usefully be applied to as many candidates as possible within Afar, (provided they had developed the aspiration to be able to use the skills that they might learn).

It was never specifically noted in focus groups or interviews, but comparisons of the responses of different communities suggest that aspiration and soft skill development are linked and influenced by the cultural environment. Observations suggest that some cultures appear to have an almost innate capacity for specific soft skills, while others do not. This would in turn suggest that soft skills development programmes are not isolated entities, but might usefully be linked with aspirational development and SBCC programs and vice versa.

Summary

Young people in Afar face a variety of constraints to employment. The most immediate, and commonly quoted constraint is not the lack of technical skills, but the lack of

commitment. The disparity between the expectations of employers and those of employees appears to stem from differences in attitude towards work, especially the idea, still prevalent among young people, that such work is a temporary coping strategy.

Changing attitudes towards work is therefore critical to social transformation. Still more critical however is the need to develop self-awareness and aspiration, without which attitude change can have no impact. This is the essential first step that needs to be taken as early as possible - prior to young people reaching the age of 15 or 16 at which they might start to consider employment. There is a clear need for a transformational programme to think ahead, including elements that will help young people from destitute households to become self aware and open to the idea of self improvement through employment prior to their involvement in the programme as potential employees.

While technical skills are an important requirement of employers, there is also a strong recognition of the equal importance of soft skill development amongst Afar youth. This aspect of employment is being addressed by POTENTIAL, and it is evident that considerable demand exists to have that programme broadened in its coverage, reinforcing the importance of soft skill development. On the other hand, technical skill development is limited by resource constraints; a partnership between the public and private sectors focusing on on-the-job training subject to GoE certification might provide the most cost-effective way to ensure that training is undertaken on a demand driven basis.

Nevertheless, overall this assessment has concluded that technical skill development needs to be considered as the final element in a chain of interventions required to support Afar youth seeking employment. That chain stretches back to include soft skill development, employment awareness, changes in attitude at all levels, and the development of self-awareness and aspiration. In the case of Afar youth, *all* of these links need to be strengthened if a transformational programme is to be successful.

Annexes

A: Focus Group Template

1. How many people go? (what proportion?)
2. Who goes –
 - a. richer – poorer?
 - b. Youngest age....? Oldest age.....?
 - c. Men/Women?,
 - d. educated or illiterate?
3. What are the main reasons for going?
4. How do they find work – brokers? Other systems? On their own?
 - i. How long does it take to find work on average?
5. What are the main problems they face when looking for work?
6. What sort of jobs are they looking for
7. Does anyone look for a long-term job or is it only short term?
8. What sort of work do they find?
9. What sort of pay can they expect?
10. How much are they able to save?
11. Do they have a goal or savings target?
12. Are they expected to remit?
13. What are the main problems they face when they are working?
14. How long do they generally stay away?
15. What proportion of people settle down and stay away for good?
16. Where do they stay when away?
17. Do they receive any training before they go?
18. Do they receive any training on the job?

19. What sort of training do they think they need most?
20. How do they think they compare with urban youth when it comes to getting work?
21. What two things do they think employers are looking for? (hardworking, honesty, technical skills, people skills, reliability, initiative, just muscle/warm body)
22. Would they ever consider settling down away from home? Why? Why not?
23. What does the local community expect of them? That they must come back, or that they should go off and find a new life?
24. Do local authorities help them find work?
25. Do they use brokers?, are they fair?
26. Do employers generally treat them the way they would like?
27. If not, what needs to be changed? For them? For the employer?

B: Guided Interview Template

Employer Questionnaire																																										
1	<u>Key Characteristics</u>																																									
a	What does the business do?	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>Sector</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>Code</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Retail/shop/kiosk</td><td>RT</td></tr> <tr><td>Other trading/distribution, including fuel</td><td>TD</td></tr> <tr><td>Transportation</td><td>TP</td></tr> <tr><td>Food Service/Restaurant/Cafe</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>Food processing</td><td>FP</td></tr> <tr><td>Electrical engineering/installation</td><td>EN</td></tr> <tr><td>Garage/automotive engineering</td><td>AU</td></tr> <tr><td>Plumbing</td><td>PM</td></tr> <tr><td>Woodworking/carpentry</td><td>WC</td></tr> <tr><td>General construction</td><td>GC</td></tr> <tr><td>Other Engineering</td><td>OE</td></tr> <tr><td>Finance/Banking/Insurance</td><td>FB</td></tr> <tr><td>Healthcare/Medical</td><td>HM</td></tr> <tr><td>Security</td><td>SC</td></tr> <tr><td>Education/childcare</td><td>ED</td></tr> <tr><td>Legal</td><td>LG</td></tr> <tr><td>Real Estate</td><td>RE</td></tr> <tr><td>Non- Profit/NGO</td><td>NG</td></tr> <tr><td>Other (Please List)</td><td>Ot</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Code</i>	Retail/shop/kiosk	RT	Other trading/distribution, including fuel	TD	Transportation	TP	Food Service/Restaurant/Cafe	FD	Food processing	FP	Electrical engineering/installation	EN	Garage/automotive engineering	AU	Plumbing	PM	Woodworking/carpentry	WC	General construction	GC	Other Engineering	OE	Finance/Banking/Insurance	FB	Healthcare/Medical	HM	Security	SC	Education/childcare	ED	Legal	LG	Real Estate	RE	Non- Profit/NGO	NG	Other (Please List)	Ot
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b.	How many years has this business been in operation in this town?																																									
c.	How many permanent staff do you employ? (If zero, go to section II)																																									

d.	How many new permanent staff does the business hire per year? (due to staff retiring, moving, dying etc).																															
2 Employer needs and training needs																																
a.	What are the main types of staff that this business needs to hire? (List up to two types)	<table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>Staff Type</i></th> <th><i>Code</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Information technology expert</td><td>IT</td></tr> <tr><td>Human resource expert</td><td>HR</td></tr> <tr><td>Financial expert</td><td>FE</td></tr> <tr><td>Marketing staff</td><td>MS</td></tr> <tr><td>Customer service staff</td><td>CS</td></tr> <tr><td>Skilled worker - technical</td><td>ST</td></tr> <tr><td>Skilled worker - office</td><td>SO</td></tr> <tr><td>Semi skilled worker (eg. Domestic)</td><td>SS</td></tr> <tr><td>Unskilled worker</td><td>UW</td></tr> <tr><td>Craftsman</td><td>CR</td></tr> <tr><td>Trainer</td><td>TR</td></tr> <tr><td>Driver</td><td>DR</td></tr> <tr><td>Equipment operator</td><td>EQ</td></tr> <tr><td>Other (Please list)</td><td>Ot</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>Staff Type</i>	<i>Code</i>	Information technology expert	IT	Human resource expert	HR	Financial expert	FE	Marketing staff	MS	Customer service staff	CS	Skilled worker - technical	ST	Skilled worker - office	SO	Semi skilled worker (eg. Domestic)	SS	Unskilled worker	UW	Craftsman	CR	Trainer	TR	Driver	DR	Equipment operator	EQ	Other (Please list)	Ot
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b.	Is there usually a need for training amongst your new staff?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. Maybe 																														
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<p>c.</p>	<p>What are the two most Important qualities that your staff should have?</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Adaptability</td> <td>AD</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Be able to apply knowledge in new settings</td> <td>AP</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Be creative</td> <td>CR</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Be trustworthy/responsible</td> <td>TR</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Be able to handle customers well</td> <td>CH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Be able to speak in a foreign language</td> <td>FL</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have hands- on experience</td> <td>HO</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Be able to show initiative</td> <td>IN</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Be able to manage multiple priorities simultaneously</td> <td>MT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Work effectively with numbers and statistics</td> <td>NU</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Speak effectively</td> <td>SP</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Understand the commercial environment</td> <td>UC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Be able to work well in a team</td> <td>TW</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Write effectively</td> <td>WE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other (please list)</td> <td>Ot</td> </tr> </table>	Adaptability	AD	Be able to apply knowledge in new settings	AP	Be creative	CR	Be trustworthy/responsible	TR	Be able to handle customers well	CH	Be able to speak in a foreign language	FL	Have hands- on experience	HO	Be able to show initiative	IN	Be able to manage multiple priorities simultaneously	MT	Work effectively with numbers and statistics	NU	Speak effectively	SP	Understand the commercial environment	UC	Be able to work well in a team	TW	Write effectively	WE	Other (please list)	Ot
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<p>d.</p>	<p>Which do you think is more important when you are hiring staff?</p>	<p>1. Technical and/or management skills 2. Personal Qualities 3. No clear difference</p>																														
<p>4 New Hire Process</p>																																
<p>a.</p>	<p>How do you mainly find new staff?</p>	<p>1. Through public advertisements (newspapers, noticeboards) 2. Through friends or family 3. Through employee recommendations 4. Through an employment agency or Broker 5. Through word of mouth 6. Through TVET/College/University systems 7. Through other Govt agencies 8. Other (Please list)</p>																														
<p>b.</p>	<p>Where do you hire most of your staff from?</p>	<p>1. Urban areas 2. Rural Areas 3. Mixture</p>																														
<p>c.</p>	<p>What are the main differences between rural and urban hires in terms of <i>working hard</i>?</p>	<p>1. No clear difference 2. Urban hires are better 3. Rural hires are better</p>																														
<p>d.</p>	<p>What are the main differences between rural and urban hires in terms of <i>technical skills</i>?</p>	<p>1. No clear difference 2. Urban hires are better</p>																														

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e	What are the main differences between rural and urban hires in terms of <i>social skills</i> ?	1. No clear difference 2. Urban hires are better 3. Rural hires are better																		
f	What are the main differences between rural and urban hires in terms of <i>their expectations</i> ? (what they want from the you)	1. No clear difference 2. Urban hires expect more from their employer 3. Rural hires expect more from their employer																		
g	What are the main differences between rural and urban hires in terms of <i>ambition</i> ? (self improvement)	1. No clear difference 2. Urban hires are more ambitious 3. Rural hires are more ambitious																		
h	What are the two main challenges you face when hiring new staff?	1. Government regulations make it too difficult/expensive 2. New staff take too long/are too expensive to train 3. New staff are unreliable in performance 4. New staff have no loyalty to the business 5. It is difficult to obtain a family signature or guarantee/advance 6. Lack of capital to expand the business 7. Lack of technical skills 8. Lack of non-technical skills (team work, communication, customer service skills) 9. Other, please list																		
6.	Expected Changes																			
a.	Do you expect any change in staffing needs in the near future?	1. Yes - a big increase 2. Yes - some Increase 3. No - stable 4. No - decrease																		
b.	How widespread is this change?	1. Just this business. 2. All businesses of this type in this area 3. All businesses of this type across the whole country 4. Almost all businesses in this area, no matter what type.																		
7	SECTION II – Not Hiring																			
a.	Would you ever consider hiring additional staff?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Maybe																		
b.	What is the main reason why you do not hire additional staff?	1. Government regulations make it too difficult/expensive 2. New staff take too long/are too expensive to train 3. New staff are unreliable in performance 4. New staff have no loyalty to the business 5. It is difficult to obtain a family signature or guarantee/advance 6. Lack of capital to expand the business 6. Other, please list																		
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b.	Gender of respondent.	
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