The Burden of Women’s Work and the Role of International Non Governmental Organizations: Lessons from Rural Ethiopia

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Abstract

The general poverty of a population and upheavals in a country such as of Ethiopia in the last three decades highlights the vulnerability of women. Rural women in particular face particular deprivation due to gender roles ascribed to them by society, especially the burden of hard work.

Many women spend most of their long waking hours on the tedious drudgery of food processing, particularly the hard labour associated with the food staple insete\(^1\). Women themselves do not raise it as an issue because they believe it is their fate as women. Moreover, since they live in a food insecure part of the country and are still on food aid, cash for work or other safety net programmes, they feel lucky to find food to process. Thus the vicious cycle of poverty and helplessness continues. This drudgery however can be greatly reduced by the introduction of labour saving technology.

International Non Governmental Organizations (INGOs), which are perceived to have the opportunity and the capacity to reach the ‘grass roots’ have tried to tackle the problem from different angles, through basic service delivery, small credits and income generating activities related to gender roles. Subsequently, many promoted gender mainstreaming in all aspect of development planning and implementation. At present, many of these INGOs are also engaged in advocacy and lobbying for more fundamental change.

After three decades of INGO efforts in rural Ethiopia, village people in Badawacho district in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region (SNNPR), where many INGOs work, say that they are born into the bondage of manual food processing which they are sure their daughters will inherit. One of the key initial role of INGOs was filling the gap left by governments of Ethiopia, as it

\(^{1}\) Insete (insete ventricosum) is a drought resistant staple largely used in the SNNPR, also known as “false banana” and recently referred as “tree against hunger”
was in other Sub-Saharan Africa. As the gap widened, between government provision and community needs, INGOs scaled up to cover wider and more fundamental issues of poverty. In the opinion of the author, who has worked in development and relief in Ethiopia since 1975, INGOs are taken away from observing and listening to the themes of their beneficiaries and functioning in their specialised and focussed roles. Owing to the dilemma of what ails the poor and the ongoing trial and error prescription of different solutions by policy makers of donor countries, INGOs are forced to spread beyond their original mandates of the 1980s. At the same time, they have to function within complex local contexts that affected their effectiveness. Yet, there are very high expectations of aid and of INGOs. It is again the opinion of the author that INGOs would be more effective to fill specialized roles in gap filling while the expectation of addressing the wider issue of poverty should be pointed at national governments and the poor themselves.

This study, which includes field work in rural Ethiopia, recommends that INGOs in this country retrace their steps and ‘relearn’ many of the lessons of their activities from the 1980s development approach. Although it is true that many INGOs still provide basic services in their project areas, and some have left it with local partners, the momentum of working with communities towards change for the better is lost. INGO staff need to stay in villages to gain the trust of the people and to build local community capacity, which in turn for aid workers enables them also to find the strength and morale to fight poverty.

Secondly, research and action in basic, affordable time and energy saving household level technology could help to chip away at the mountain of poverty in a small - but effectively - way. As Casssen et al(1999:37) put it, “enhancing women’s engagement in productive activities becomes virtually synonymous with action against poverty”. What INGOs or the aid community in general can give rural Ethiopian women, is time and energy through technology.
Acronyms

BOPED  Bureau of Planning and Economic Development
CARE  Christian Action Research and Education
CRS  Catholic Relief Services
CSA  Central Statistics Authority
CSO  Civil Society Organization
FGM  Female Genital Mutilation
FHHH  Female House Hold Heads
IMF  International Monitory Fund
INGO  International Non-Governmental Organization
MDGs  Millennium Development Goals
NGO  Non Governmental Organizations
PRA  Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSNP  productive Safety Net Programme
RRC  Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SAPS  Structural Adjustment Programmes
SNNPR  Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region
UN  United Nations
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
WVI  World Vision International
5WCW  5th World Conference of Women
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Chapter 1. Introduction

In 1975, I had my first contact with aid delivered by International Non Governmental Organizations (INGOs) when I was employed by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in my country, Ethiopia. Although it was my first contact with this category of aid, I was familiar with Christian missions who had been running private clinics and hospitals for many years, and were also known to assist the poor. The one thing which was clear about INGOs from the outset was that they saw themselves being there for only a short time. The famine of the 1973-74 which claimed no less than 200,000 lives had just subsided, and INGOs were somewhat lingering at the time to redefine their roles. I was offered a nine month contract. It was felt at the time that this was about the length of time it would take for the next harvest to come in, and for people to stand on their feet again.

I was warned against this very temporary job by friends. In the mind set of the time, a meagre government salary with a small pension was preferable to joining a very temporary organization for a much better salary. I took the risk of joining CRS, and eventually my job lasted ten years. My consequent jobs with other INGOs started with a one year contract and lasted several years. In this way, I worked for International NGOs for over thirty years, both as an employee and through freelance consultancy work. This shows how INGOs came into permanence. It is essential to note here that when I refer to INGOs it is about NGOs whose headquarters are primarily based in the North, i.e. Europe, North America, and not local NGOs, i.e. those originated from Ethiopia. As with many other countries, local NGOs however are dependent on INGOs for funding.

During my career I had an opportunity to be involved in all aspects of INGO work - in emergency relief and the various phases of development. I had the joy and fulfilment of being able to help in any little way. I also shared the frustrations when, as organizations, we felt helpless in the face of...
overwhelming issues and restricting policy environments. I can also say I appreciate the complex contexts within which INGOs had to function. In the same way I have heard from aid beneficiaries of their disenchantment of aid. I have also had occasions to witness the annoyance of government partners when they are undermined.

Disenchantment with aid is not limited to aid beneficiaries alone. The topic of foreign aid is debated by academics and tax payers of the North more widely, around the issue of the performance of foreign aid in countries like Ethiopia and its effectiveness as well as the concern over aid dependency of the South.

While measuring the wider effectiveness of aid or evaluating the performance of INGOs is beyond the scope of this study, I will focus on an example of some lost opportunities in poverty alleviation through aid by discussing the case of the rights and opportunities of rural women in the southern part of Ethiopia, officially known as The Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region, referred to in this study as SNNPR. The discussion of INGOs was necessary due to the fact that Ethiopia had not been able to be weaned off foreign aid since the drought of the 1983-85. Any emergency or development issue in the country is not seen in isolation from INGOs, or “the international aid community” as they are also called. Moreover, INGOs have become a part of the Ethiopian way of life and we will not know what the situation would have been like if this had not been so.

INGOs have greatly contributed in informing their respective parts of the world of the famine in 1983-85, and played major roles in saving millions of lives. They have contributed to the alleviation of poverty in one way or another through the last three decades. The fact that Ethiopia is still aid dependent, that the situation of poor rural women of the SNNPR has not changed, and that the development world is still discussing how to fight poverty, may give the impression that the efforts
of INGOs have been futile. However, the domestic policy environment of the past three decades as well as the development agenda of donors, are contexts that should be put into perspective when questioning why aid has not made a difference. The author believes, based on her experience in the world of aid, that we all put too much expectation on aid. As the word ‘aid’ itself denotes, it means ministering to, assisting or supporting, and not doing everything. INGOs therefore may well have had more impact working in their niches, where they might have been more effective in ministering to the poor, so the poor could stand on their own feet and move ahead with the support of INGOs pointing the way.

I chose this topic because of the expressed disappointment in the way poverty persists in Ethiopia despite the volume of aid that goes into it. Seeing the lack of change over the past three decades can lead to a belief that the battle is lost. With this in mind it is therefore necessary to examine:

- The complexity of the contexts within which INGOs were trying to tackle the issues of poverty in rural Ethiopia where they were engaged mostly
- The situation of rural women of the SNNPR, who make up half the region’s population, and who are prevented from productive activities, thus increasing the number of vulnerable people needing aid
- How INGOs never seem to have the time required to work at the pace of the communities when implementing development activities.

To explore the effectiveness of INGO aid in rural Ethiopia, the focus of the study is the depravation of rural women. These women make up half of their population, where in Ethiopia more than 80% of the population is rural. In the SNNPR, only 8.9% are urban dwellers. The advancement of rural women could not be done through proclamations, international forums, lobbying and advocacy. It is through economic independence that they can attain the status of equal citizenship.
To gain economic independence and spare time to engage in productive activities away from the drudgery of food processing among other chores is crucial. This is where they need help, and this is how they can raise themselves out of their desperate situation. I have personally observed how easily tradition and norms change when a woman earns income for her family and household problems are solved with her money. She suddenly gets the respect and the freedom normally denied to women. Enabling women to participate in productive economic activities can have a profound and lasting effect on poverty. To realize this, women need to be helped with simple time and energy saving mechanisms.

The study therefore reviews relevant literature and the views of rural women and aid workers in Badawacho in the SNNPR have said, as well as my own critical reflections from thirty years of field work. From this, my overriding conclusion is that the mystifying subject of poverty and the daunting issues of gender and women in particular, can be tackled one little component at a time if done persistently. Key to this is the understanding and recognition of rights. In order to begin to accomplish this, there is a need to relearn from earlier experiences of rural development assistance, i.e. community focussed action that addresses genuine need, to address persistent everyday problems which women still experience.

1.1. **Aim And Objectives**

**Aim**

To explore the effectiveness of INGOs in assisting rural women, in Badawacho, Southern Ethiopia.

**Objectives**

1. To investigate from women’s perspective how much INGOs have contributed towards supporting rural women
2. To bring into focus, the environment which affected the impact of INGO assistance on the lives of rural women

3. To recommend activities and approaches which can bring women closer to attaining their rightful place in their societies.

1.2. Structure of the Study

The first part of the study reviews the literature on the extent of rights and opportunities of women their contribution to their societies, and how they can be empowered. The literature review also critically looks at available studies and views on the issues of women, focusing in particular on Sub-Saharan African rural women.

The second part of the study explore the evolution over time of INGOs, their role in emergency and development work, their impact on the issues of women, the changes in development theories, concepts, agenda and policy environment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The third part critically reviews the literature on the situation of women in the SNNPR and the issues that prevent them from engaging in productive economic activities. This part of the study examines the particular issue of time poverty particularly on the account of food processing by women. The comments and quotes from two villages, in East and West Badawacho in the SNNPR are presented in this part of the study.

The fourth part of the study deals with the findings of informal interviews from Badawacho, the summary of the findings and an analysis of the response.
The researcher concludes by presenting recommendations based on an analysis of current development thinking, efforts to date, quotes from the field and the author’s personal and professional experience on ways in which the empowerment of women may be realized.
Chapter 2. Research Methods

The study looked at recently published books, journals and news articles from the Oxford Brookes University library and other sources. For the area of focus, available secondary data as well as reports and websites of international donors, aid organizations, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies as well as government records were researched.

Informal interviews with key informants and focus groups were conducted in the Badawacho woreda\(^2\) in the SNNPR in Ethiopiaby a colleague of the author, a development practitioner of 30 years who is originally from that general area. The woreda is divided into two parts; therefore she talked to people from both East and West Badawacho. Informal interviews were conducted with 18 individuals, 8 men and 10 women of ages ranging from 16 to 78. Of these, nine were project aid beneficiaries, five observers, three project and two government employees.

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher and approved by her course leader which the author translated into Amharic\(^3\), and sent to Ethiopia. The author’s colleague had a full cooperation of the project office, the community people whose local language she speaks, and the Women’s Affairs office. She has clearly explained the purpose of the informal interview, and had received their full cooperation.

The interviewer conducted informal interviews with 18 individuals and two discussion groups, one with six female household heads (FHHHs) and another group consisting of a mix of men and women.

\(^2\) Woreda is a small administrative unit of government structure similar to district
\(^3\) Amharic is the official language of Ethiopia
The completed questionnaires were sent back to the author through the post. The author summarized the findings which are presented in tables.

The author was hoping to investigate the issue of time and labour consuming manual food processing. The reason for focusing on that is to show that women’s participation in economic activities cannot be achieved unless their work burden is alleviated through time and energy saving devices.

The researcher was surprised by the fact that the people steered the discussion towards the food security issue they are facing today, and the performance of the Productive Safety Net Project delivered by INGOs and others.

2.1. Limitations

Although designing the research, one of the (personal) limitations is that the author could not go back to Ethiopia to conduct the interviews herself and return due to the cost of travel. She also needed access to the Oxford Brookes Library and other resources without which she would not have been able to write the dissertation.

The interviews were conducted at a point in time when the major theme of the interviewees was food security. The discussions therefore persistently revolved around the INGO whose focus is response to the food deficit. The women therefore did not give the work burden issue the attention that the researcher hoped would give it. However, this is used as an opportunity rather than a weakness in that it reveals the pattern discussed in the study of how other factors overshadow the issues of women.
Chapter. 3. The Fate of Rural Women Today and INGO Assistance

This chapter reviews the literature regarding the status of rural women, and how much aid delivered by INGOs had helped them to exercise their rights and enjoy economic opportunities, in the region in question. In order to achieve this, the search focussed on three areas – the contribution of rural women to their societies, the impact of aid delivery on poor rural communities and the role of INGOs in Ethiopia from the 1970s to date.

3.1. The Status of Rural Women – The Extent of Their Rights and Opportunities

Women do not enjoy the entitlement to family assets or rights to household decision making. Even those decisions that affect their own persons are made by men. Sweetman (2009) argues that poor men may be excluded from social, economical and political spheres, but in the home, they own all family assets and make all the decisions including their family sizes. Concerning women, Nussbaum (2002) states that, “Women are not treated as ends in their own right, persons with dignity that deserves respect from laws and institutions. Instead, they are treated as mere instruments of the ends of others – reproducers, caregivers, sexual outlets, and agents of a family’s general prosperity” (Nussbaum, 200:2).

In many parts of Sub Saharan Africa, women are responsible for the production of most of the food. (Cassen et al,1999). Women comprise 60-80% of the labour force in African Agriculture where they undertake most of the work and spend most of their time. They also carry 80% of the food crops from the field at harvest time and are solely responsible for crude food processing and preparation, brewing beer, collecting fire wood and water. Nelson (1981) finds that women in Sub-Saharan Africa have a predominant role in agricultural production. Momsen (1991) describes how women who are almost half the world’s population carry two thirds of total hours of work and earn
only 10% of the world’s income and own only 1% of the property. Large family sizes which are the desire of men rather than women, add to the vulnerability of the women (Cassen et al, 1999).

Cassen et al (1999) also find that, “Enhancing women’s engagement in productive activities becomes virtually synonymous with action against poverty” (Cassen et al, 1999:37). Working outside the home and bringing independent income will not only improve the women’s status but also improves the living standard of the family. Sen (2001) argues that exposure to the world outside the home would be educational to the women who as a result become more informed, more skilled and gradually earn the power to share decision making rights.

The period 1976-1985 marked the United Nations International Women’s Decade. In June of 1975, the high profile International Women’s Conference held in Mexico City passed a resolution on the integration and full participation of women in development. In July of 1980, another high profile Women’s Conference agreed on key measures, among which was equal access to employment opportunities for women. In July 1985, in Nairobi, they agreed that not much had been achieved and they integrated more ideas into their resolution including constitutional and legal measures, equality in social participation, political participation and decision making. In September 1995, the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing convened twenty years after the first international conference. The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women was one of the issues discussed. It was agreed that women’s status has advanced in some important aspects but that progress has been uneven. Importantly, the conference took note of the diversity of women and their circumstances. They again passed resolutions to promote women’s economic independence including employment (SWCW, 2009).

Parallel to these international agendas is the practical efforts of INGOs in rural Ethiopia since the mid 1970s. The national government also has revised the constitution to uphold the rights of
women (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 1995). As of the turn of the millennium in 2000, The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were designed with high hopes of halving global poverty. The issue of gender which is Goal Number Three of the MDGs is addressed as a high priority agenda and remains so to the present.

Goal Three of the Millennium Development aims to, “promote gender equality and empower women”, recognizes the time poverty\(^4\) of rural women, and makes provisions for time and energy saving mechanisms to enable women to participate in economically productive activities.

These are:

- Water and sanitation facilities close to home
- Alternative fuel
- Improved stoves
- Transportation (UNDP, 2009)

3.2. A Glimpse on INGOs In Sub-Saharan Africa And The Impact of Their Intervention

The 1970s and early 1980s were the decades when the aid focus of the United States of America and the United Kingdom turned from growth to basic needs provision (Riddell, 2007). In the 1970s the World Bank was promoting the wishes of private commercial lenders to dispose of surplus deposits by dispersing loans to countries in the South. Manufacturers in the North were interested in developing Southern markets as export options. Aid to the South was also perceived as a peaceful means to counter communism. (Eade and Ligteringen, 2001). “Natural resource

\(^4\) Time poverty refers to women’s shortage of time for productive activities.
endowments were seen to be crucial, and agriculture and rural development were stressed. Large scale loans were disbursed for capital investment” (Chambers, 1999:16).

The 1980s saw a significant increase in the volume of aid to Sub-Saharan Africa as the economies of the major industrialized countries revived and poverty in Africa worsened, due to a variety of factors including drought, war, and, according to Riddell (2007) and Chambers (1999), the impact of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by the World Bank and the International Monitory Fund (IMF). In the 1980s, Sub Saharan Africa was faced with heavy indebtedness and the outcomes of neo liberal development policies (Chambers, 1994). The threat of debt default now prompted commercial banks to swerve from the last decade’s capital-export to capital-recovery (Eade and Ligtering, 2001). Imposition of the SAPs demanded that national states which were helped in the previous decade to enlarge were now asked to shrivel, to free their markets and thus pay their debts. As noted by Chambers (1999), “The 1980s followed with a heavy indebtedness and the neo-liberal lurch, leading to the imposition on weak, impoverished and now deeply indebted governments, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, of policies of structural adjustment by their creditors” (Chambers, 1999:16).

This had led to the public sector drastically cutting on provision of basic services. Partially as a result, donor organizations looked increasingly to NGOs to fill the gaps in service delivery left by governments. Although NGOs were not a new discovery, it is at this point in time that they came into prominence in the world of aid. NGOs became an important channel of aid delivery for donors and intergovernmental agencies. According to Lewis and Kanji, (2009) the role of NGOs in the 1980s was that of providing basic services which the public sector became unable to deliver. The breakdown of the public sector due to lack of resources and the inability of governments to provide for their people due to indebtedness, bureaucracy and other failures led to a general belief that
NGOs are better at addressing the needs of the poor than governments. There are those who point out that NGOs perceive themselves as more innovative than national governments, and that their work is more participatory (Fowler, 1990). In their book “The Foreign Aid Business” Raffer and Singer (1996) say that NGOs define themselves as non-bureaucratic, flexible and not stultifying of local initiatives. However, when the temporary gap filling role of INGOs continued for decades, becoming as permanent as the public sector, local initiatives were bound to be undermined. According to Riddell (2007) for example, people often prefer NGO operated schools and health services to free government services as they are of better quality.

Lewis and Kanji (2009) argue that creating a parallel system alongside that of the government amounts to replacing the governments who, as a result, become “left off the hook”. NGOs are referred to as having a more human face and that they are in a better position to work at the grassroots level. It is also said that they are well placed and efficient in picking up early signs of food deficit and the early stages of brewing conflicts (Raffer and Singer, 1996).

The position of NGOs in the South, and their contact in the North, gives them a unique opportunity to play this role. The case of the Ethiopian famine of the 1980s is an example of how INGOs working in the country have played a crucial role by reporting the situation to their respective headquarters, governments and public. As a result, they had prompted the unprecedented response of the time. INGOs are more resourced, more effective, well placed and are capable of addressing specific issues in given localities.

Since the focus and mandate of the public sector is permanent and those of INGOs change with time, there is a risk of putting too much emphasis on the reach and mandate of INGOs and too little on the public sector. Edwards and Hulme (1995) ask if there can be Non Government Organizations without government. They go on to argue that while NGOs can choose and pick their projects,
governments are faced with the entirety of a country’s issues which need a rigid standard and uniformity. Pinkney (2009) also states that as voluntary bodies, NGOs have the freedom to choose the cause they want to pursue. He goes on to say that NGOs have the advantage of being able to show the beneficial outcomes of their work, in poverty alleviation for instance, and gaining good public opinion without the responsibility of having to make hard decisions. NGOs are also perceived as cost effective. For example, Cassen et al, (1988) states that NGOs incur less overhead costs. This does not reflect the realities of third world countries where the public sector is poor and the private sector is not prosperous; INGO jobs offer significantly higher salaries and benefits. Due to this fact, well trained man power is drawn to INGOs. In the words of a Zambian aid critique Dambisa Moyo (2009), “Aid siphons off scarce talent from the employment pool.” Smillie and Minear (2004) find also that the budgets of country programmes of some NGOs are larger than their counter part government ministries.

3.3. INGOs and the Rights and Opportunities of Rural Women – Strengths and Weaknesses

NGOs are well placed and well resourced to work closely and effectively with communities (Raffer and Singer, 1996). In spite of this fact poverty, gender disparity, and other issues are still far from resolved. Some argue it is because the volume of aid delivered is not enough to deal with the problems, and argue for scaling up development aid to make it effective (Collier, 2007). Chambers(1997, 2005) finds that this is because those who truly need aid are not reached. Fowler (1997) attributes the success of aid, or the lack of it, to the efficiency and commitment of those who deliver it. Sen (2001) also finds that development should focus on people’s freedom to decide their own development agenda rather than just on service delivery. Moyo (2009) states that charities are criticized for being coerced by their donor governments, poor implementation and high administration cost.
The most critical problem with aid delivery by INGOs however, rests on the fact that their programme direction lacks continuity as their roles are continuously changing (Hulme and Edwards, 1996). In trying to explain why NGOs change focus, Korten (1990) states that it was necessary for NGOs to evolve by referring to the phases as “generations” the “emergency relief” phase as the first generation, the “mobilisation of local potential” phase as second generation and the “moving on to policy change and activism” phase as the third generation and so on. He attributes this to the lengthy stay it takes to mobilize local potential, which he says takes a “project life”, while the activism phase is supposed to take ten to twenty years. In reality, “project life” barely reaches five years. Twenty years in the same locality could make an impact on any project with all the phases put together. This theory is also questioned by Edwards and Hulme (1995), who argue that NGOs are known to go back to the previous development phases when there is a pressing need.

From the 1990s to the present time, many NGOs have developed largely from ‘change agents’ in community based rural development to rights based organizations, with activities geared towards advocacy and lobbying (Edwards and Fowler, 2002). Lewis and Wallace (2000) concur that NGOs have begun to move from a “development-as-delivery” to “development-as-leverage approach.” They argue that northern-based NGOs, with their experience of the South, have gained access to decision makers in government and International organizations. They also question if a shift into advocacy will make a difference to the lives of poor people in the south, or if it is the most cost-effective use of NGO resources. This role may even affect their co-existence with national governments. The new Ethiopian “Charities and Societies Proclamation” for example, prohibits Non Governmental Organizations or charities to engage in advocacy, lobbying, and other activism (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2009). According to Fowler (1997) and Caroll (1992), the constant change in NGO focus can in part be attributed to donors not being keen on the community mobilisation
approach because long term project activities are not in their interest. The type and volume of aid, the target beneficiaries and the length of the project is a decision driven by strategic interests of the donors rather than by the priorities of the recipients (Riddell, 2007).

Whether the recent trend of transition of many NGOs from development agents to activists is a strategic direction of the NGOs or donor driven, three issues remain:

- NGOs depend on donors for their fund. Donors do not seem to want to wait long for results while their beneficiaries seem to need time to internalize change.

- When NGOs move on to try other approaches, they may leave a vacuum of unfinished development process. In such cases, communities remain at the same stage no matter where the world is headed with new development thinking. The result is another ‘lesson learnt’ for the aid business and a mirage of hope for the beneficiaries.
Chapter 4. Case Study

4.1. Ethiopia Background/Country Profile


Ethiopia is a land locked country located in the Horn of Africa, bordered by Eritrea in the north, Kenya in the South, Sudan in the west, Somalia and Djibouti in the east. With an area of 1,104 million square kilometres, Ethiopia is five times the size of the United Kingdom. The central highlands are divided by the Great Rift Valley. The highest mountain, Ras Dashen, rises to 4,543 meters while the lowest land, the Danakil Depression, is 125 meters above sea level. The population is estimated to be about 88 million. Estimate of birth rate is 43.34/1000. General fertility rate is 6.7 children per woman. Life expectancy for men is estimated to be 53.28 years and 58.39 for women. Literacy is estimated to be 42.7 percent. Ethiopia’s economy is dependent on agriculture which constitutes 45 percent of GDP, 85 percent of total employment and about 50 percent of export. GDP per capita is $404 while annual growth rate is 9.9 percent.
4.2. Overview of Situation of rural women in Ethiopia

The estimated number of the total population in agricultural households in Ethiopia is around 54,550,000. Out of these, 27,000,000 are women. Of those in agricultural households, 49% of the women are said to be engaged in productive economic activities but do not enjoy the fruits of their labour equally with men (Desalegn and Taye, 2006).

Generally speaking, rural Ethiopian women cannot exercise their rights nor enjoy opportunities. This is in spite of the provisions in the constitution, specifically Article 35 which states that “women shall in the enjoyment of rights and protection provided for, have equal rights with men” (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 1995). Women do not enjoy equal rights with men in the rural areas due to the following reasons:

- There is little or no representation of the Attorney General’s office at the woreda level, leading to inaction at villages level
- Village women do not have the means and the information to go to the woreda to claim their rights through a long process by risking repercussions back in the village and at home
- The country is divided along ethnic regional borders with the autonomy of internal administration. The fact that the government representatives and some INGO employees of the region may be de-sensitised to issues such as gender roles, which are too customary, that they become quite acceptable.

Studies confirm that women’s participation in productive activities is crucial in fighting poverty. (Cassen et al, 1999; Sen, 2000; Chambers, 1999). From the author’s experience, the economic empowerment of women can make a difference faster, more effectively and without conflict than empowerment through advocacy. Chambers (1999), Sen (2001) and Cassen et al (1999) concur that
independent income empowers women to exercise their rights and opens doors for more opportunity.

‘Time Poverty’ in Rural Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, the responsibility of running the home is almost always exclusively women’s. This includes food preparation, washing, cleaning, care for children, the elderly and the sick. To this may be added other social responsibilities of helping neighbours, relatives and friends with work in times of death, weddings, sickness etc. The burden gets heavier when we go to the rural areas. Rural women have, to add to the above, farm work, growing food on the homestead, looking after animals, processing grains, milk, tubers, spices etc., brewing drinks and spinning cotton for their cloth, carrying heavy sacs of produce to the markets, carrying water and fire wood from long distances. Parker(1995) refers to this as Ethiopian women’s “15 hours day”.

The Status of Women in SNNPR

In addition to all the usual responsibilities women in other parts of the country have to bear, the rural women of the SNNPR carry the following additional time burdens:

- Tubers such as sweet potatoes, cassava, Irish potatoes, and insete (insete ventricosum) which are important alternative staples are grown on the homestead where the responsibility of women lies. The insete is an important drought resistant valuable during the food deficit seasons. Although men prepare the land and plant the insete, women tend it and are solely responsible for processing, preparing as well as marketing it

- Land is fragmented and in shortage while the population is increasing. Women have to alternate livelihoods, juggling petty trading and other odd jobs to sustain life
Polygamy, although illegal in Ethiopia, is still practiced in some parts of the country, such as the SNNPRS, the purpose of which primarily being for men to benefit from the income generated by the women. One man could be succeeded by up to three widows who will become female headed household heads, who are almost always among the most vulnerable. It is thought that almost a fifth of women in the SNNPR are in polygamous relationships (SNNPR, 2010).

4.3. Overview of INGO work and its Impact on Rural Women in Ethiopia

By presenting the background of the beginning of INGO work and presenting the overall context of the country during the past decades, the author draws the scene within which the rural Ethiopian women live and INGO activities.

The Arrival of INGOs in Ethiopia

The importance of INGO work in Ethiopia began in earnest in the 1970s, when people greatly suffered from famine, war, drastic policy changes and other upheavals. The height of their work was witnessed in their response to the great famine of the 1980s. Following this, they had been working both on development projects as well as the recurring drought. Some church affiliated organizations such as Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Swedish and Norwegian Missions and others were already in place when International Non Governmental Organizations such as CRS and World Vision International (WVI) joined in early 1970s. The later categories established themselves and engaged in discreet activities, while looking for opportunities to engage in their respective areas of interest.

During the widely reported 1973-74 famine, which claimed the lives of over 200,000 people, the INGOs already in the country and others who arrived in the event helped to fight the famine, in
coordination with the newly established governmental Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC).

According to the Commission, Catholic Relief Services, Norwegian Save the Children, Swedish Save the Children, UNICEF and Irish Concern worked in Elkere, in the Ogaden, where they had set up a presence and fed and treated the drought affected population in that area. WVI, along with the Society of International Missionaries, the Catholic Secretariat, Oxfam, the Ethiopian Nutrition Institute and others engaged in feeding programmes (RRC, 1985).

**Factors Affecting INGO Impact**

After the relief work was completed, many INGOs remained in the country and engaged in various development activities. During the famine of 1983-85, INGOs scaled up and engaged in famine intervention programmes. For example, WVI had scaled up to respond to the famine in a massive operation. Its budget grew from $3.5 million to $64 million. It employed hundreds of people and operated nine relief camps in the affected areas of the country helping over a million people a month, with food, shelter, and medical care (WVI, 2005). CRS also responded with its Nutrition Intervention Programme, distributing 36,000 metric tons of food commodities and helping 750,000 people. (CRS, 2003). In the book “The Challenges of Drought” (RRC, 1985) the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission gives detailed report on the life saving humanitarian assistance of the 1970s and 1980s, acknowledging the contributions of NGOs, the International League of Red Cross, church organizations, the UN agencies, governments and individuals. According to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, during the second famine of the 1980s, 520,000 metric tons of cereals and supplementary food was distributed to about six million famine victims (RRC, 1985).

After the famine subsided, the rehabilitation phase was next on the agenda of all involved. A major issue was how the famine victims could be helped to stand on their feet again. The RRC, in coordination with INGOs, distributed farm implements, seeds and some grain and drought oxen.
The expectation was that the farmers would go back and put their lives together (RRC, 1985). At this time, the government ventured into a large scale settlement scheme in an attempt to move people from drought prone areas to more fertile and less populated parts of the county. This activity did not go well, with strong criticism directed at the attempt from all directions. According to Ofcansky and Berry (1991) the intention was to avert famine and ensure food security in the long term. The government claimed it was an opportunity to make the farmers more productive in other locations while the degraded highlands could be reclaimed. Ethiopia did not get assistance for this effort donor governments were not willing to support a scheme based on a socialist political and economic policy (Pankhurst, 1992; Pausewang, 1990).

Since the settlement programme was top priority of the central political party, local enforcers were determined to fulfil their quota designations at any cost. People were snatched like objects from wherever they were, be it relief camps, church, market, home or on the streets, and thrown on trucks or buses and taken to settlements. Preparation at destinations was very poor due to a lack of resources. There are those who believe the programme should have been consultative, and done in small scale in phases (Pausewang et al, 1990). Around the same time, villagization was carried out by the government to bring together scattered settlements so that they could be provided with agricultural extension, water, schools, clinics and roads etc. (Pausewang et al, 1990).

Other factors that affected rural life at this time were food shortage, mass political executions, mass detentions and resettlement which have deprived rural households of their work force. In the absence of men, women had to assume even more responsibility for their households and the extended families.

In March 1990, corresponding to the policy shift of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War, the Ethiopian government announced the new economic and political reform. Peasants were given the
right to dispose of their crop in any way they chose, and the right to dissolve the co-operatives if they wished. Nevertheless, land still belongs to the state technically. The farmers can work on it, and so can their sons, but they cannot sell or change it into an investment. It remains a “dead capital” as Soto puts in his book The Mystery of Capital (De Soto, 2000).

The efforts of INGOs in Ethiopia had evolved from the emergency famine intervention phase of the 1970s and 1980s and the rehabilitation phase of the mid 1980s to longer term development phase to date. Between the famine relief, which was conducted brilliantly saving millions, and the development phase, on which a significant volume of resource was invested, lies the rehabilitation phase. This phase, which was not properly addressed due to the above mentioned factors, in the opinion of the author, as a practitioner, had become a weak link in INGO impact.

**The Development Phase**

Most of the INGOs working in Ethiopia in late 1980s became committed to long term integrated development with the objective of helping the rural communities to become self reliant. WVI for instance engaged in child sponsorship, reforestation, horticulture, water well construction and small business loans. Regarding women’s issues, they report that they aimed to raise awareness on girls’ education and women’s rights (WVI, 2005). CRS engaged in agriculture, natural resource management, health and nutrition, as well as water and sanitation (CRS, 2003). Other INGOs were involved in a host of development activities of their interests and specialisation.

In development projects, INGOs designed programs, obtained funding and then had the Ethiopian government approve the project. The general idea was then shared with local government bodies at the various local administrative levels and village leaders.
In the late 1980s, more emphasis was given to people centred development approaches, such as community participation. It was realised that project beneficiaries had to be encouraged to show more interest in the development activities rather than being mere spectators. Attempts were made to insure participation. As a transition from top-down, paternal project design approach to a more inclusive one. The steps taken in the journey included:

- Informing the community people as a whole about the project rather than just their leaders.
  
  This was polite but did not achieve involvement
- Mobilization was another term used, what happened more or less was that they were made to attend meetings or assigned duties
- Sometimes, villagers’ actively participating in information gathering exercises such as the PRA was in itself considered as participation
- Contribution of labour and locally available material was thought to be a means that would ensure participation. Having a stake was believed to enhance the sense of ownership.

The approaches evolved gradually until it was agreed that projects should be identified by people, representing all sectors of the community and that they should be fully involved in its planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. To these ends, empowerment of the poor, gender mainstreaming, integrated development became development themes of INGOs.

**A Shift in INGO Focus**

To the issues of upheavals and the failure of the rehabilitation phase is later added the shift in INGO focus, which affected their impact on the needs of rural people in general and women in particular.

Even as the rehabilitation phase was neglected due to national policies and donor agenda. The
phases of development also moved quickly. INGO focus changed often and a project’s life was made short. The result of this ‘speeding up’ was that many of the previous longer term efforts lost momentum. Although INOs have greatly contributed towards various projects with the aim of bringing change, field practitioners did not have enough time for community interaction to contribute towards attitudinal change on gender roles and the rights and opportunities of women and other issues crucial to poverty alleviation. Many INGs had their project offices and living quarters in villages. This had been an opportunity for mutual learning, for community exposure to new ideas, for experience exchange and for a functional partnership with their beneficiaries in fighting poverty.

In the 1990s, the development trend focused more on approaches such as empowerment and gender equality. Having seen that impacts of the past two decades were not what they were hoped to be, INGs began to engage in such activities as advocacy and lobbying (Lewis and Wallace, 2000), as well as fair trade issues and influencing the policies of their donors. Nonetheless, as INGs and national Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) became bolder in their new role, the government of Ethiopia adapted a proclamation which prohibited NGOs and CSOs to engage in activities other than their original role of aid delivery.

4.4. Badawacho, Southern Ethiopia

The SNNPR is one of the largest regions in Ethiopia, accounting for more than 10% of the country’s land area. The population is estimated to be 15,745,000. With the majority of the population being rural, only 8.9 percent live in urban areas. While regions are divided along ethnic borders, what makes SNNPR unique is that it extremely diverse cultures. It represents about 80 ethnic groups of which 45 are indigenous to the region, with distinct cultures and languages (CSA, 2005; SNNPR Government, 2010). The Region is divided into 13 administrative zones which are further divided
Badawacho is one of the 75 woredas of Kembata Alaba and Tembaro Zone referred to as KAT. The ethnic group is the Hadiya who speak the Hadiya language.

With a population of 224,000 people living on an area of 500 square kilo meters, over 400 persons per square kilo meters, Badawacho is one of the most densely populated woredas of the region (CSA, 2005).

**Women and food production**

A major activity engaging women’s time lies in food production, in particular growing and cultivating staples, including sweet potatoes, cassava, Irish potatoes and insete. The scraping of parts of the insete is a labour and time intensive job (Zippel, 2002). The starchy base of the plant, the “corm” and the leaf-sheath provides the food. This is served as boiled corm “amicho”, fermented flat bread “kocho”, or processed product from mature plants “bulla” used for gruel, porridge or dumplings (CSA, 2005).
The leaves of this plant are used as food rapping and animal feed. The bi-product is used for rope making. In their study of this plant, Brandt et al (1997) refer to it as “tree against hunger”. A study by Shank (1994) conducted on “The Insete Culture” is the result of the interest of the emergency unit of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) based on the importance of insete as an alternative in times of food shortage. It also provides shade for plants growing under it such as coffee and potatoes. Its cultivation which involves the use of animal dung enriches the soil. It is also claimed in the study that the deep roots of this plant minimize erosion. In addition to all these advantages, this plant has also become a delicacy for the capital city and town dwellers that it is in high demand. While the majority of the research is about the importance of the plant, very few highlight the pressure it puts on the time and labour of the women Fekadu (2009) states that the woman does not get even one day off in the year from the drudgery of its processing or dealing with it in one way or another. Women may find some help from neighbours or fellow wives in the case of polygamous households. However, they do not get help from their men. It is considered shameful for men to even see the women processing insete, let alone being involved in the work.
Yet, when according to Negash (2001) an improved implement, a gadget invented by the Bio Diversity Centre was introduced, the men were eager to try it; not that the nature of the chore had changed but because the intensity of the labour had been minimized.

There may be grain mills available to some villages, even if a few kilometres away. It is customary to see rural women carrying up to 35 kilograms of grain on their backs to the mills, as it would save them time grinding grain manually on a stone grinder or pounding in mortar and pestle daily. However, they have not still found a technology that would save them time and energy for the processing of insete.

Prior to the emergence of International NGOs in the 1970s Badawacho was one of the rural communities where Missionaries worked. The kale Heywot church was the first of these. Later NGOs such as the Irish Concern, World Vision and others have worked out of Shone, which is now divided into the East and West Badawacho. NGOs operating in Badowacho at present are World Vision International (WVI), who are involved in water resource Development, the Ethiopian Catholic Church - involved in agriculture and livelihoods recovery and Kale Hiwot Church Development Programme which is following up on the prevention of female genital mutilation, or FGM (BOPED, 2009).

Due to food insecurity caused by recurrent droughts and famines from the early 1990s to the present time, the Ethiopian government initiated a Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in 2005, with the aim of reducing household vulnerability and increasing the resilience of the community to shocks. The idea is to break the cycle of dependence on food aid. The objectives of this approach are to:
• Bridge the food deficit gap in food insecure farm households who are affected even when there is no drought
• Prevent household from disposing of their assets to buy food during food shortages and protect them against future shocks and dependence on external assistance.

Able bodied members of needy households work on crucial public infrastructure projects such as road construction and maintenance, small scale irrigation and reforestation. Direct support is given to vulnerable households with no able-bodied member to participate in public work projects.

**INGO project PSNP Plus**

In 2009, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the NGO CARE and other consortium partners launched the PSNP Plus Project to scale up the intervention. The consortium includes national and international NGOs. In the lead is CARE, which is taking responsibility for overall management of the consortium and implementation in collaboration with CRS, the Relief Society of Tigray and Save the Children UK (SC-UK). The Dutch bilateral agency SNV is responsible for technical assistance of value chain development and Feinstein International Centre at Tufts University leads impact assessment while CARE is responsible for microfinance (US Embassy, 2009).

We have seen from literature that for women to enjoy their opportunities and realize their rights they need to engage in economic activities, and earn independent income outside the home. This would to sharing in decision making. The exposure would in turn give them more awareness and more opportunities further leading them to exercising their rights (Chambers, 1999; Sen, 2001; Cassen et al, 1999). While this would surely make a difference, in reality, it is impossible, due to their endless, time and energy consuming work. The interest of this study is to investigate the time
poverty of women through the case of the rural women of Badawacho and particularly their perception of the manual processing of food focusing on the manual processing of insete.
Chapter 5. Findings and Analysis

These findings reflect the themes and opinions of rural people in Badawacho and demonstrate the capacity of poor, illiterate rural villagers in making critical analysis of aid and suggest ways in which it can be improved and how they can contribute towards its impact.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Figure 1- Respondents’ composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Employees</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Employee</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 – Age Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 30 yrs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40 yrs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 50 yrs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 60 yrs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60 yrs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3- Expectations

- That more would be paid for the work done
- That it would bring change in the lives of the poor, that the assistance would go beyond food security towards development projects
- That we would be treated in fairness
- That it would free us from poverty
- I thought the package programme would include most of us and hoped to be self reliant
- Hoped it would be transparent
- Expected it would incorporate other development activities which would have a long term effect
### Figure 4 - Roles of the PSNP in enhancing women’s engagement in economic activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Men’s Comments</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Women’s Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the project have a role in giving assistance in training, extension etc. for women?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>There is no effort or contribution in this</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>We would have benefited greatly but there are no such efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the project’s role in girls’ education?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Some capacity building assistance to schools in general (project employee)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If there was assistance, I would be going to school (a 16 years old girl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We use some of the food money to send children to school, when it gets too hard, they are pulled out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the project’s role in increasing the awareness and decision making of women in family planning?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>None except what we hear of the effort attempted by the government Health Bureau</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>“Not heard not seen” Common response of the women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the project’s role in alleviating the work burden of women such as food processing which prevent women from engaging in economic activities?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing like that Done nothing No contribution</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No one thinks of our work as an issue. It is our slavery we were born in as women. Grain mills can be accessed although far away, but the insete has no solution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5- Strengths and Weaknesses of the PSNP and Ideas for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Ideas For Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It gives us a chance of earning our daily bread</td>
<td>The payment is too little. Not enough for the work done.</td>
<td>Include more people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It alleviates hunger even if temporarily</td>
<td>Partiality in recruitment and bribes are involved</td>
<td>Fair pay for work and employment all year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping the poor and weak with food for existence</td>
<td>Employment on cash for work is only 6 months out of the year. Does not involve all the needy</td>
<td>Need to think of sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those included in cash for work can earn money for daily bread in dignity although not throughout the year</td>
<td>The package programme enrols only 150 individuals a year, there are too many poor people not reached through both programmes.</td>
<td>Avoid corruption through transparency and the participation of the beneficiaries. Give the people responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevents people from getting too desperate to sell assets for food</td>
<td>Does not seem to have the capacity to assist all the poor</td>
<td>Long term solutions such as small scale irrigation, basic technology etc planning with the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who are in the package programme have been able to support their families and improve their lives</td>
<td>Lack of transparency and participation.</td>
<td>Include all in the package programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6- Project Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Observers</th>
<th>NGO Employees</th>
<th>Government Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Useful</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Useful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmful</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 - Analysis

The questionnaire was designed to bring out women’s work burden which would indicate the issues which are preventing rural women from economic activities. Women are responsible for the production of up to 80% of the food in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Cassen et al, 1999; Momsen, 1994). Due to the high prevalence of polygamy in the SNNPR, there are many female household heads who may not benefit from agricultural extension.

Respondents were asked if INGOs have made efforts in improving women’s access to agricultural extension, trainings and technology. All the respondents gave short answers such as “nothing like that”, “no such effort”, “no contribution”. Almost all the women responded in a particularly interesting way with, “I have not heard nor seen” which means there is none, and may also imply “I have no access to information” or even “I am a woman, what do I know?”

The question on INGO efforts in girls’ education was important in investigating opportunities that young girls of today and tomorrow’s rural women could have through education. From the answers given, it would appear that the issue is not the lack of attendance, but the lack of opportunity to be in school due to poverty, eg. helping out in the home instead. The women’s group of female household heads said they want to send their children to school by cutting down on food. However, when the food insecurity tightens, they pull the children out of school, both boys and girls. The other important factor here is the fact that the labour of young girls is also needed by the mothers at home.

The question regarding the role of INGOs in giving rural women access to family planning information and services, was to learn if there had been INGO contribution towards the issues of
both the increased vulnerability of women (Sweetman, 2009; Cassen et al, 1994) as well as the effect of overpopulation on the food security issue of Badawacho. The responses to this question went the same way as the above. Men responded with answers such as “not contributed”, or “no such effort. Almost all women responded with “not seen not heard”. A male respondent said he had heard that the Health Bureau is making some efforts. The SNNPR (2010) reports that only 11% of SNNPR women use contraceptives. In the same report, a remark that polygamy may have a restricting effect on fertility in that the man alternates his contact with two or more wives, thus limiting the number of children born. It is to such desensitization the author referred to in discussing government representatives and NGO practitioners coming from the same regions being conditioned to the culture and tradition so much so they see the problems acceptable.

The discussion of INGOS revolved around the PSNP. This happens to be the major actor since the government adapted Productive Safety Nets as the way forward, which is not any one individual NGO effort but a consortium of many. The project gives free aid to those with no able bodied family member. The cash for work component employs able bodied people to work on public works. The public work includes building and maintaining roads, small scale irrigation, forestation etc., which at this point in time is the development effort for the area. The third component is what they refer to as the “package” which gives money on credit for specific income generating investments. Therefore the discussion was focussed on the PSNP and its activities around food security, which happens to be their central theme.

Respondents from the informal interviews said that the programme was crucial for their woreda because there in not enough land for people to grow their own food and there are too many people. According to the Ethiopian Statistics survey, more than 400 people live on an area of 500
square kilo metres (CSA, 2005). They said the cash for work employment is good in that it gives them a chance to work and support themselves with dignity but the payment is too little to make an impact. They said they get PSNP Plus employment only for 6 months out of the year and paid only 50.00 Ethiopian birr (£2.30) per month.

The “package” is the component which is highly regarded by all the respondents. Those who benefited the package as well as those who have not, speak of how it changes lives. However, it reaches very few people, only 150 individuals in the woreda per year. As one beneficiary stated,

“I was fortunate to be in the package programme. I was given a donkey with a cart which I use to transport goods for people. It is good business because there are no cars in our area. With the money I am able to take care of my family and send my children to school. I am now the equal of other men I earn my living. The programme has benefited me and is therefore up to my expectation. However, the package enrolls only 150 individuals in a year and the cash for work programme does not reach enough people, and those who are enrolled only work six months a year and do not get paid enough.”

- 35 year old male package beneficiary from a mixed men’s and women’s group

Although the PSNP Plus encompasses the vulnerable areas of the whole country, and people are kept from starving, the reach of the project seems too thin for a consortium of a horde of International and National NGOs, bi-lateral organizations and the government. This coordination of the government and other actors seems like an opportunity to tackle poverty more effectively. From the response of the people, there is a chance at alleviating poverty. The “package” facilitates self reliance and the cash for work gives people the dignity of earning their own living. Free food aid is given only to those who are unable to work and are at risk.
The observation of the community people and that of the project expert is quite similar. They all feel the project is in line with how the people see themselves overcoming poverty. There is also agreement over its shortcomings; believed to be in its limitation to reach all those in need.

“The Safety Net project has been operating for the last five years in Badawacho woreda. It targets those who have become the poorest of the poor due to shortage of land, drought, and other reasons. The objective of the project is to give the people some income so that they do not sell their property and become destitute. Since the employment lasts only for six consecutive months, the people become indebted to money lenders during the remaining months. The project focus is only on giving employment on public works for cash for work and does not give other services. The cash for work payment of 50.00 birr we pay them is very little. They cannot buy enough with this, especially with the high price of food. We are not reaching enough people either. I believe the programme should include all the needy people and the payment as well as the length of employment need to be increased.”

( Project expert)

While the package programme of the PSNP is the right approach towards self reliance, and has the high rating of the beneficiaries, it does not seem that it can succeed with its present reach and capacity. Enrolling 150 individuals in a woreda with a population of 224,000 is spreading it too thin. The beneficiaries feel the process is not transparent and not participatory. Moreover, they feel they should be given responsibility, that they should be included in the process. This could be another opportunity for the effectiveness and sustainability of the project.

The close interaction of INGO field practitioners with the community they serve is crucial for a shared understanding, for feedback and mutual learning. Proximity helps gain the trust and confidence of the people. The respondents value the nearness of the project office to their community for follow up and communication to prevent corruption. As one respondent sated:
“The Project office being close to us is advantageous. It is not so for all localities. They have only one office and needed to locate it in the central place, which makes it too far for some”.

Close follow up of the project personnel is important. As another respondent from a focus group discussion of female headed households stated:

“Since it is the head of the family who receives the payment of cash for work, the men drink away the money with their friends, letting their wives and children starve. Where possible, women complain and sometimes receive some of the payment directly from the project. This also has its setbacks because the men beat wives for exposing them. Proximity of project people helps minimize this problem. As most of us are female household heads, both the household chores and other livelihood activities wait for us. If the project office is close by and we have to wait to be paid, we can come and go between our chores and out business at the project office. If it is far, we travel there and wait on a queue spending almost the whole day. When we get back, we have to take care of our chores no matter how long we have to stay up at night.”

A focus group discussion with female household heads. Photograph by Ruhama Esrael
“Rural female household heads are the most wretched and unseen people in the world”
(Chambers, 2008:36)

According to Yewubnesh Dando, a development practitioner for thirty years and the conductor of the field study, who also happens to be from the locality, the women’s group comprises landless returnees of a recent settlement programme. She said that they are the rejects of polygamous relationships. When the PSNP registers beneficiaries, they do not register a man as the head of a multiple wife household. The man registers with one wife and abandons the rest who, as the most vulnerable, are registered in their own right. These women support themselves, says Yewubnesh, especially if they are included in the package, which unfortunately is limited. Common reasons from men in favour of polygamy, is that one wife grows tuber, brews the drinks and sells it to buy him clothes. Another wife would run here and there to do petty trading and odd jobs to pay the tax. Thus, they do it for the economic benefit they get out of the women.

Photograph by Ruhama Esrael
One such woman is Almaz Sulamo, a 42 year old mother of five from East Badawacho. “I am a female house hold head with five children and have a small plot of land. Four years ago, I was given a cow and it has given me a second calf. I sell butter and cottage cheese and am able to send my children to school. In comparison with the others, I consider myself wealthy. I wish the package reaches more people.”

The case of Time Poverty

Although the issue of food security has diverted the attention of the women from their work burden of food processing, those who talked about it said that it is their burden to carry because it is their fate as women. They accept it because they do not think there is a solution, and none considers it as an issue. They even project the problem into their daughters’ generation:

‘The next generation rural woman, helping with processing inse te.’ (Photo source: http://www_aaas)

In the words of one of the women, Ayelech Lambebo, concerning the work burden issue, especially of the scraping of inse te:

“Processing inse te is a slavery we were born into. Our men do not consider it hard work. No one is ever concerned about the hardship we face in our work. Whether we scrape, grind, carry up or down. We are women therefore we accept it as our fate. Women of our area live in darkness all their days. We have to do this to our end. The grave is our boundary. We do not however complain about our work load. Landless, poor and with continuous drought, we would be grateful to find grain to grind and inse te to scrape.”
The response of the people interviewed also indicated that the livelihood of the community is threatened by drought. Therefore, food security is on top of their agenda. They felt that they should not complain about processing food when it is in such shortage that there is none to process. Nonetheless, they expressed the hopelessness of their situation because they do not believe anyone cares. The men in their homes and communities do not consider it an issue, INGOs do not seem to see it, and the government has food security issues on its hand. The women themselves have been numbed to it that they seem convinced that nothing will make it go away.
Chapter 6- Conclusion and Recommendations

The Status of Women: Valuable yet Vulnerable

Rural Ethiopian women work on the farm, grow food on the homestead and look after livestock. They are solely responsible for food processing and preparation in addition to being the sole caretakers of family. As seen from the responses of the informal interviews in Badawacho, women have to diversify their livelihoods by engaging in petty trading for the sustenance of their families. Due to this fact, and the fact that single women are marginalized, they are predisposed to polygamous relationships.

However valuable they happen to be for their families and the community, they have no right to enjoy the fruits of their labour. At the household level, they have no decision making rights on family resources and assets which they have developed (Sweetman, 2009; Nussbaum, 2002; Desalgn and Taye, 2006). They cannot even make decisions that affect their own persons such as family planning (Cassen et al, 1993). In many parts of Ethiopia and particularly in the SNNPR, daughters do not inherit properties of their parents or claim marital property upon the death of the husband or the settlement of divorce. The country’s constitution states that women have equal rights with men (Negarit Gazeta, 1995). However, the reach of the constitution is as far as the end of the tarmac roads. Chambers describes how tarmac and roadside biases take services and visits towards the less needy and away from the neediest (Chambers, 2008). The formal government units closest to village people are the woreda which are the administrative centres for many villages. Although this government structure has skilled manpower in the relevant disciplines, they are extremely under resourced. Especially due to the lack of transportation means, they cannot interact with rural people on regular basis. The government has brought the representation of the attorney general's
office up to this level. The rural women on the other hand will not try to take their grievances to the woreda because:

- They are not aware of what rights they have or where to go
- They have neither the money or the information for opening a case
- They would fear the repercussion in the household as well as in the community.

**INGO Assistance**

INGOs have been working in Ethiopia for over three decades. From the 1970s onwards, the situation in the country has been complicated by several life altering factors which could have had an impact on the effectiveness of INGO aid. Even though many development efforts have been made, the impact is not impressive. To judge the overall INGO aid is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to say that INGOs have had to evolve over time to be in harmony with the changing development thinking and donor agenda, which has forced them to shift their focus constantly (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). Therefore the gap filling role of NGOs has changed, which could be one of the reasons that rural development had not progressed in Ethiopia. Prior to the 1970s Ethiopia was not food insecure. Today, due to a combination of different factors, about 5,000,000 rural people are faced with food insecurity and are dependent on aid (OCHA, 2010). On the other hand we can ask if the number would have been more, or the situation worse, was it not for INGO assistance. We can also ask if the aggregate INGO assistance to Ethiopia has the capacity to support so many people with emergency as well as development schemes. The question would be: is the aid enough at all? These questions are the subject for further study.

What we can however argue is the fact that women are affected more severely during food insecurity, they benefit the least during assistance and their special needs are overshadowed by
chronic poverty. Riddell and Robinson (1992) reported that NGO assistance did not reach the well off, neither did it reach the poorest, and those who had benefited the least among the poorest were women.

What we learned from the respondents of Badawacho is that the PSNP, which is a project run with the combined resources of several international and national NGOs, bilateral agencies and the government of Ethiopia, reaches 150 persons out of a population of over 200,000 with the income generating component of its programme. In addition, they said that the cash for work Safety Net component employs people for only six months out of the year, and pays only £2.30 per month, while the objective of the project is to protect the people from selling their little assets to buy food. The respondents’ comments was, that it reaches very few people, and that it just is not enough to make a difference.

Much has been attempted through international forums and campaigns, government proclamation and NGO advocacy efforts. Ten years after the ambitious Millennium Development Goals were initiated, and all the effort that is going into meeting them, we still talk of very basic needs of rural people and the desperate status of rural women. It is seen that, in spite of the staggering volume of aid and the efforts of INGOs as well as the national governments, poverty persists and the situation of the women worsens.

The way forward in alleviating poverty and ensuring the empowerment of women is to enable rural women to be economically independent (Cassen, 1999; Sen, 2001; Chambers, 1999). Economic independence leads to the freedom to make decisions on family planning and the household assets. This can in turn have important effects on poverty reduction and such major issues as population and the environment.
For them to engage in such activities and contribute towards minimizing poverty in their homes as well as their communities, they first have to be relieved of the daily drudgery of work. Among these is the manual processing of food. In the SNNPR, where the insete plant is an important staple, the processing of it is particularly labour intensive and time consuming, taking up to eight hours to process a single plant (Negash, 2001). The tools which the women use to process insete are crude local knives and bamboo (Fekadu, 2009). The women usually do not complain about this burden as they see it as their fate as women, and moreover, this issue is overshadowed by food insecurity. Therefore, they feel it should not be their priority when the major issue of the community is the shortage of food to process. The author argues however, that tradition conditions women to bear the pains and burdens of their gender roles without complaint. Women learn from very young age that complaint and rebellion is not the virtue of good women. Therefore, the fact that they chose to bear it with dignity and patience most of the time does not mean that the women of Badawacho do not feel suppressed by time deficiency due to food processing. Those who talked about it said it is a slavery they have long accepted which their daughters will inherit.

To break this cycle, the introduction of basic, appropriate and affordable technology for household food processing implements, particularly for scraping insete would be half the battle of halving poverty faster.

**Recommendations**

1. **Gap filling**

In rural Ethiopia, INGOs are needed to work more closely with the people and to innovate ways in which poverty can be tackled in one small way at a time while the government deals with the overall country wide dimension of chronic poverty. INGOs are well placed, well resourced and have
the regard of the people for their interventions in emergency situations and their efforts in development niches of their speciality. However, they need to work more closely and in collaboration with the local government and not as a separate parallel structure. The permanence and the potential of the government structure with the innovation and resource of INGOs can, if combined, make a lasting impact.

The tendency to believe that INGOs are better in addressing development than national or local government departments can be argued in that this could incapacitate and exclude them. Oakely et al (1991) argue that to work in participation with rural people, NGOs are financially and administratively stronger than weak governments. They say NGOs must work on participation with the people where the government is found to lack technical skills, knowledge and capacity and is unable to coordinate activities. This wisdom is borne of concern that people do not get the assistance or services they need if they are left to governments. While governments of many poor countries greatly lack what NGOs have, this may not be quite the case in the areas of knowledge and technical skills. In the case of Ethiopia, INGOs attract most of their technical and management staff from government employment with better salaries and benefits. This skilled manpower happens to be that which is trained by with the country’s meagre resource. What is lacking however would be the modern systems, efficient procedures, well functioning and non-bureaucratic structures, and transparency of INGOs.

This is why assistance in strengthening existing institutions and infrastructures and coordinating efforts with the government could ensure sustainability. Besides, as Lewis and Kanji (2009) argue, NGOs may be letting governments off the hook by doing their work for them. The capacities of governments to give efficient assistance to the people especially in reaching the grass roots, may not have improved twenty years after Oakley et al (1991) stated the justification for NGOs to take
the lead. This study argues that building the capacity of national and local governments rather than duplicating efforts and working independently, one from the other, may be advantageous in fighting poverty.

2. **Proximity**

The People of Badawacho emphasized the importance of the proximity of the project office. It saves time and energy in trips and enables them to discuss issues thus avoiding misunderstandings and even corruption. To these ends, INGOs have the resource to assist the government structures that are already in place but lack the resources to:

- Have access to transportation means to reach village people
- Build the capacity of the woredas with basic survival equipment and supplies essential to make it possible for field practitioners to stay in the villages long enough for proper interaction. These include camping and communication equipment etc.
- Coordinate with the local government to improve water and sanitation, and other infrastructure in rural areas which physically deter field practitioners of NGOs and government from regularly visiting village people
- Design projects that have long enough life spans to make a difference
- Retrieve their steps and work on development efforts as in the late 1980s by being in close proximity, engaging in awareness raising and facilitating change in rural communities.
- Avoid spreading themselves thinly over a large area with too many strategies in development work, but to persevere and operate in one area making significant change so that their experience can motivate neighbouring communities to replicate.
3. **Transparency and Participation**

As the interviewees of Badawacho highlighted, communities needed to know what the projects are about, how they work, who is eligible, how long it will last and what they should expect etc. Moreover, they expressed the importance of communication as well as the need for giving beneficiaries more responsibility. Projects can be designed with full participation of community people, even illiterate villagers.

INGOs could transfer their experience of democratic processes by planning projects with their beneficiaries by sharing information their plans, schedules and resources thus setting a good example and precedence which people could get used to and require it of government planning. Other actions could involve sharing their experience through workshops or other means with government departments on more efficient systems, procedures, the fostering of a more conducive work environment, and coordinating field visits, discussing progress and issues with government colleagues. Also, crucially, the emphasis of aid needs to be more on its recipients and less on the delivering institutions, be it governments or NGOs.

4. **Women’s Work Burden**

INGOs have the resources and information to sponsor and promote basic, affordable and appropriate technology, in coordination with the relevant government structures, to assist rural women to find time to engage in economic activities. In the MDGs, the mechanisms to alleviate women’s work burden include water and sanitation closer to home, improved stoves and alternative fuel as well as transportation. It is possible that food processing technology is not included in the MDGs and not looked into by others because this might no more be an issue in most other parts of the world. In rural Ethiopia almost all the women manually process food. While the
processing of food in general is the main constraint on women’s engagement in economic activities, inseete processing is the hardest for the women of southern Ethiopia, where this food is essential. It is important to note that when technology is discussed, arguments to its disadvantage the women, is argued. There are those who report that when technologies are introduced, men take over women’s livelihood means thus making them impoverishing them further (Momsen, 1991).

This study however is not about innovations such as agricultural mechanization, production means or commercialization schemes. It is concerned with household day to day food processing for the consumption of the family which involves tedious, time and labour intensive chores. If such implement as an inseete scraper or grain grinder for the home is invented, husbands and sons may well assist in food processing thus transforming gender roles.

In the study of Negash (2001) there was once an attempt sponsored by the Biodiversity Department of the Ministry of Agriculture of Ethiopia, and innovated by the Rural Technology Department of the same Ministry, who invented a prototype but did not produce it for wider use even though farmers were willing to buy. Although information was not found on what happened then, financial resource or the lack of support from the government departments may be a possibility a gap INGOs might be well suited to fill.

Therefore this could be further investigated, owing also to the importance of inseete in food security in southern Ethiopia. Access to time and energy saving device for inseete processing does not only relieve women to engage in productive economic activities, it also has the potential to improve the school attendance of girls, who otherwise would stay home to help their mothers with their work burden.
Bibliography


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Annexes

Questionnaire for Beneficiaries and Observers

1) Age

2) Male ☐ Female ☐

3) Locality

4) Project in discussion

5) Name of organization

6) Is the Project office/camp/post in your locality? Yes ☐ No ☐

If not, how far is it? ________________________________

7) What is your connection with the project?

Beneficiary ☐ Employee ☐ Government Staff ☐ Observer ☐ Other ☐ Please specify ________________________________

8) How long has the project been operating in your locality?

9) Do you think the project is needed? If so, why?/ If not, why not? ________________________________

10) What is/ was the project’s role in making a difference on the issues of women’s participation in Project aid, training and extension etc? ________________________________

______________________________

______________________________

11) What is/was the project’s contribution towards making a difference in girls’ education?

______________________________

______________________________

12) What is/was the project’s contribution towards improving the awareness and decision Making roles of women on family planning? ________________________________

______________________________

______________________________
13) What is/was the project’s efforts in alleviating the problems that prevent women from participating in development activities such as fetching water and fire wood from long distance, processing ‘insete’ (false banana plant) and grinding grain etc?

14) What are the strengths of the project, if any?

15) What are the weaknesses of the project, if any?

16) How do you rate the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Not useful</th>
<th>Harmful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Reasons for your comment

17) What do you/ did you expect the project to achieve?

What made you believe so?

18) In what ways do you feel the project can be improved?
Questionnaire for aid workers

1) Age

2) Male □ Female □

3) Locality

4) Project in discussion

5) Name of organization

6) Are project staff office or field based? What are the reasons for the answer? Would it be better for staff to be closer to the project? Yes □ No □

Please give reason for your response ______________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

7) What is your connection with the project? Please specify

_________________________________________________________________________________

8) How long has the project been operating?

9) Why is the project needed? _____________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

10) What is/was the project’s role in making a difference on the issues of women’s participation in Project aid, training and extension etc?

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11) What is/was the project’s contribution towards making a difference in girls’ education?

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12) What is/was the project’s contribution towards improving the awareness and decision Making roles of women on family planning?

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_________________________________________________________________________________
13) What is/was the project’s efforts in alleviating the problems that prevent women from participating in development activities such as fetching water and fire wood from long distance, processing ‘insete’ (false banana plant) and grinding grain etc?

14) What are the strengths of the project, if any? ________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

15) What are the weaknesses of the project, if any?

__________________________________________________________________________

16) How do you rate the project

Very useful [ ] Useful [ ] Not useful [ ] Harmful [ ]

Reasons for your comment

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

17) What do you/ did you expect the project to achieve? ________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

What made you believe so?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

18) In what ways do you feel the project can be improved?

__________________________________________________________________________

19) How were people involved in the decisions made?

__________________________________________________________________________

20) What will you do next in this location?

__________________________________________________________________________