

HPG Report

Multi-year humanitarian funding in Ethiopia

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Acronyms

ARRA	Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs
BRE	Building Resilience in Ethiopia
CRI	Core relief items
DFID	Department for International Development
ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EHF	Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund (managed by UN OCHA)
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
FGD	Focus group discussion
GFDRE	Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GTP II	Growth and Transformation Plan II
HEA	Household Economy Analysis
HEIP	Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme
HRD	Humanitarian Requirements Document
JEOP	Joint Emergency Operation Programme
MFI	Microfinance institutions
MT	Metric tonnes
MY	Multi-year
MYHF	Multi-year humanitarian funding
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PPP	Purchasing power parity
PRIME	Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (USAID-funded programme)
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (of WFP)

PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
SNRS	Somali National Regional State
TLU	Tropical livestock unit
TSF	Targeted supplementary feeding
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VFM	Value for money
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	UN World Food Programme

Executive summary

In early 2014 the UK Department for International Development (DFID) commissioned Valid Evaluations to carry out a thematic evaluation of their multi-year humanitarian funding (MYHF) approach in Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Pakistan. This forms part of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP) and is one of a number of studies into new or emerging humanitarian approaches. This report summarises the findings in Ethiopia and is one of four summative country reports. A final synthesis report will draw together the overall findings of the evaluation.

At the outset of the evaluation, DFID's multi-year (MY) humanitarian portfolio for Ethiopia consisted of three connected grants to the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund (EHF), managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). This thematic study, with substantive research taking place between 2015–2017, aimed to generate learning on how far a MYHF approach has enabled DFID programmes to ensure a timely and effective humanitarian response; build disaster resilience; and achieve better value for money (VFM).

The evaluation aimed to answer three main questions:

1. Are vulnerable individuals and households more resilient to shocks and stresses as a result of DFID-funded (and other) interventions? What lessons can be learned about how to best enhance resilience in protracted crisis? How do investments in resilience contribute to or compromise delivery of humanitarian relief and eventual outcomes for people affected by crisis?
2. Has the availability of contingency funding enabled DFID and its partners to respond more quickly and effectively when conditions deteriorate?
3. To what extent does DFID MY and contingency funding provide better VFM than annual funding for DFID and partners?

Research question one: resilience

The evaluation recorded a wide range of shocks and stresses affecting the study areas, one of which was a long and severe drought between 2014 and 2016 (the El Niño drought). The drought caused widespread asset and income loss. In Sitti Zone of Somali National Regional State (SNRS), research for this evaluation estimated \$275 million of losses, approximately \$4,000 per household. A small number of people died from malnutrition and measles,¹ and there was significant distress migration. Hundreds of thousands of livestock were lost, approximately half of which were over the two-year period, averaged across wealth groups.

Neither DFID-funded nor other interventions bolstered households' resilience ahead of this major shock, mainly because of the scale of the investments needed. This was also the case in other studied areas, where the impact of the drought was less severe, but arguably chronic poverty (and therefore vulnerability) is even more pronounced. However, the drought came very early in the lifetimes of the MYHF and resilience-building approaches; what resilience investments there were tended to be quite tentative in their reach and ambition. In practice, they were not sufficiently large, joined-up or focused to make a difference when faced with a major shock.

In contrast, the major aid instrument present across all study areas – the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) – played a major role in keeping people alive. While not enough to reduce people's exposure to shocks, the predictability of the transfer led to it being regarded as a budgeted item in the household economy. If this reliability is seen as part of the resilience approach in the broadest sense, then it is clear such investments contribute to the delivery of humanitarian relief. The major relief operation in response to the drought was not triggered until at least six months after the crisis had hit those followed in this study. Before this, relief reached them via PSNP transfers and other 'predictable' relief efforts.

¹ There was acute official sensitivity to drought-related deaths and so numbers were not released. Informal estimates are from tens of excess deaths to several hundred.

This study also sought to learn how resilience might be enhanced in protracted crises. A few factors stood out strongly from our interviews and analysis that either could, or did, make a difference to how people coped and thus enhanced their resilience. These were:

1. The meso-economy.
2. Social capital and community resilience.
3. Adaptive capacity.
4. Education (particularly for future resilience).
5. Secure access to land.

These areas are explored in depth in the body of the report.

Research question two: contingency funds

DFID and its partners deployed multiple forms of contingency in Ethiopia. These included contingency funding within each of the three partners' MY business cases; internal sources of contingency funds that partners had independent of DFID; and central emergency funds that were used to respond to the El Niño drought. All forms of contingency were used over the lifetime of the evaluation, principally to address two separate crises (the drought and the arrival of 200,000 South Sudanese refugees in 2014). An evaluation of the UNHCR response (Ambroso et al., 2016), for example, found that 'on the whole the response was timely and effective in saving lives', although it also noted that the availability of contingency had not led to better planning.

DFID provided an additional £33.5 million of contingency funds to scale up the food, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), nutrition and non-food responses to the El Niño drought, using innovative internal procedures to facilitate the early dispensation of those funds. This evaluation found that the contingency mechanisms allowed DFID to deploy funds faster than they might otherwise have done if such modalities had not existed. This is a positive finding. Nevertheless, the evaluation also found that the earliest point at which contingency-funded assistance might have reached them was some time after the peak of the crisis.

Contingency funds therefore were *early* in the sense that they might have been *later* without such a mechanism; but they were not early in terms of the crisis. This is not necessarily as bad as it sounds. In a crisis of the depth and duration of the El

Niño drought, earlier interventions might not have prevented distress and loss. To do so they would have had to continue for almost two years, meaning that not only would such funds have had to come earlier, they would have had to be significantly bigger. Moreover, relief was available through 'regular' distributions and the PSNP, meaning that people were able to survive, by and large, until contingency funds kicked in. The evaluation also found that this early deployment of funds could have delivered significant savings compared to a later response. In a scenario where procurement was left to the last minute, this could have cost the overall response as much as \$100–200 million extra (Cabot Venton, 2016).

This suggests that contingency is a great tool for mobilising a response, once it is clear that one is needed, and may well save money. Small, pre-approved contingency reserves placed with agencies and crisis modifiers written into project agreements are appropriate for smaller-scale emergencies. But for national emergencies there will probably always be a need for sizeable pre-agreed contingency finance. And for 'getting ahead' of crises there is a level of analysis and action that goes beyond simple financing mechanisms; rather, what is needed is significant and long-term investment in reducing extreme, chronic poverty.

Research question three: value for money

The theory of change underpinning the overall VFM analysis for this evaluation was that MYHF and contingency funding could lead to early (or earlier) response. Early response in turn could lead to (a) lower costs; and (b) better programming; which in turn leads to (c) improved impact. For this to happen, MYHF would have to lead to different ways of working within agencies.

The extent to which MY funding was genuinely used differently was questionable, however. Principally this was because DFID partners did not pass on the gains of MYHF to their downstream partners, meaning that at the point of delivery MY humanitarian funds were little different to annualised funding. Nevertheless, the predictability of MYHF and the reduced burden of bureaucracy led to some modest, quantifiable gains, which were mostly administration- and purchase-related. WFP made savings on staff time from a reduced proposal and reporting regime, as well as cost savings from local grain purchase at an optimal time of year. While mechanisms were being developed

internally for WFP to do this during the lifetime of the evaluation, it is nevertheless the case that greater predictability can support better planning to achieve savings. DFID's partners also reported 'qualitative' gains, where they felt their programmes had improved because of the greater predictability and flexibility. These included better analysis, relationships and learning. The evaluation was not able to quantify these gains, however.

The VFM gains were, on one level, rather disappointing given the promise of MYHF. However, it is early days. The insights gained on the potential for better value from better-informed aid hold promise for the future.

Conclusions

The complex humanitarian system in Ethiopia has evolved over several decades and will take time to transform. MYHF is relatively new and constitutes only a small proportion of the total at present (no more than about 2% a year). The evaluation found that MYHF has not yet altered the way that DFID's partners work, although there are encouraging signs that it will.

Resilience investments did not prevent people losing assets on a large scale during the El Niño drought of 2015, although the PSNP and predictable relief played a major part in limiting loss of life. This is mostly because there were very few programmes aimed at resilience building, and they were neither at a scale, nor joined up enough, to have an impact. The scale and duration of the crisis was also a major challenge to preserving assets.

DFID's willingness to experiment with new aid models is to be congratulated, and its influence is seen in how far MY humanitarian approaches in protracted or recurrent crises have been adopted by others since the outset of this study.

There are signs that future business cases for the use of MYHF can, and will, be used by DFID to orient partners towards different ways of working, specifically on food security and livelihoods issues in crises. Much has been learned by DFID during the course of this evaluation, some of it through the accompanying approach Valid has adopted. The next challenge is to turn MYHF's promise into tangible, large-scale benefits.

This evaluation found that resilience is rooted in the options available to a person, household or family. Economic and institutional policy interventions and investments at the meso level are likely to have the greatest impact on resilience. Helping people build social capital and adaptive capacity in the sense of the individual's willingness, aspiration and ability to take risks and grasp opportunities is also important.

Resilience-building projects need to be at a sufficient geographic spread and scale to address what are in essence structural problems. Several of the issues highlighted in this report require concerted policy action and longer-term, larger-scale financing; MYHF is part of this new thinking, especially where it is strategic and at sufficient scale. The next iteration of this important new instrument needs to help partners change both business processes and approaches. It also needs to integrate, where principles and ethics allow, better with development and policy initiatives to expand the opportunities available to the marginal and chronically poor communities studied for this evaluation.

1 Introduction

The multi-year (MY) thematic evaluation of the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) multi-year humanitarian financing (MYHF) approach in Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Pakistan was commissioned in early 2014. It is part of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP), seeking to broaden the evidence base and improve practice in humanitarian action.

The study took place from 2014–2018. Its purpose was to generate evidence on whether, and how, a MYHF approach has enabled DFID programmes in each country to:

- ensure a timely and effective humanitarian response;
- build disaster resilience; and
- achieve better value for money (VFM).

The evaluation will provide evidence to contribute to the management of these programmes at country level, as well as informing DFID's humanitarian policy more broadly. The evaluation findings are also expected to:

- contribute to the global evidence base on good humanitarian practices;
- suggest how to build resilience in the most fragile and conflict-affected states; and
- contribute to realising the resolutions made at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

1.1 Ethiopia context

Ethiopia's population in 2017 was estimated at 99.4 million (World Population Review, 2017) and population density 102/km (World Bank, 2016). The World Bank (2017) estimates that 36% of the population lives on less than \$1.90/day and about 23% on \$1.29/day.

For the past 50 years, and especially since 1984, Ethiopia has been perceived as a poor, famine-struck

country. Although the legacy of the great famine of 1984 has endured in public consciousness, the Ethiopian economy has grown steadily since the turn of the century. Large-scale infrastructure projects and urban construction funded by private and public sources (including huge loans) have contributed to impressive growth rates and the government set an ambitious target of 20% annual industrial growth from 2015–2020, to achieve middle-income status by 2025. Agriculture occupies at least 80% of the population and makes a significant, if declining, contribution to annual GDP (see Figure 1).

Ethiopia has widely varying climatic and geographical zones. The highly fertile territories of the west and south-west produce surpluses of staples, particularly maize, and Ethiopia's major export cash-crop, coffee, while the north-eastern and south-eastern highlands carry disproportionate population densities of subsistence farmers heavily dependent upon rain-fed agriculture and, in the case of East and West Hararghe, the two main cash-crops, coffee and the drug *khat*.² Off-farm employment opportunities are limited, but migration to urban areas continues apace.³

Ethiopia has historically under-invested in social services and infrastructure, with many schools and health facilities in rural areas still subject to extreme underinvestment (adult literacy stood at only 39% across the country in 2012).⁴ Increased availability of tertiary and vocational education in the past 20 years has not been matched by a rise in off-farm employment opportunities. Despite the lack of investment in healthcare, infant mortality fell from 122/1,000 to 41/1,000 between 1990 and 2015, under-five mortality fell from 205/1,000 to 59/1,000 over the same period, and, by 2014, 76% of the child population was vaccinated against the major childhood diseases. However, 25% of infants are born underweight and 40% of the population suffers from moderate or severe stunting.⁵

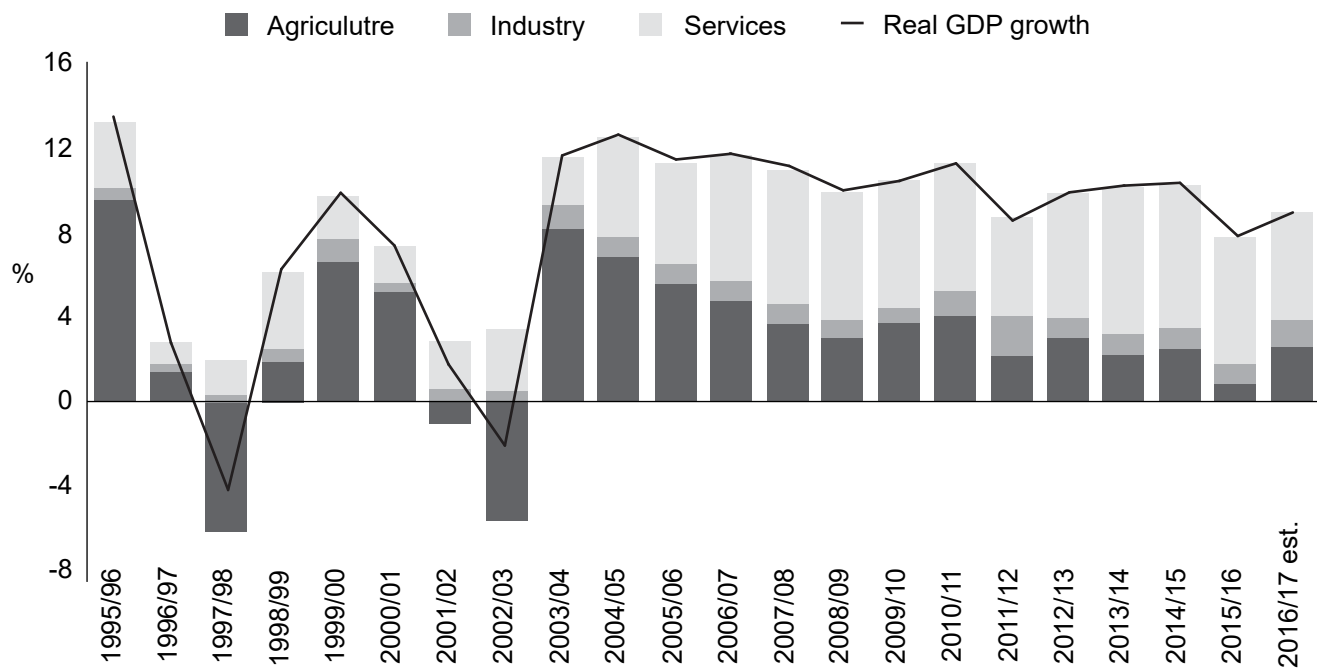
2 Addition to, or psychological dependency on, *khat* is widespread in parts of Ethiopia, although the leaves of the plant *Catha edulis* are chewed legally in Ethiopia. It is an illegal drug in most of the European Union and in the US. Its two amphetamine-like active ingredients are cathinone and cathine, the former classified as a schedule 1 drug in the US.

3 Estimated at 19% of the population, the urban population is expected to increase by an average of 4.3% annually until 2030.

4 www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ethiopia_statistics.html

5 All figures from Unicef (2016), correct to 2015, with caveats provided by the authors of the report.

Figure 1: Real GDP growth and contribution by sector



Source: IMF Annual Report (2016)

1.2 Vulnerability in Ethiopia

Ethiopia regularly suffers climate shocks of varying intensity. Drought is a perennial threat, with the Somali region alone experiencing major drought catastrophes on at least five occasions since 2000, culminating in the major El Niño/La Niña events of 2014–2017. Anecdotal and statistical evidence suggests that the belt (short rain)-dependent areas of the highlands are at particular risk of climate change.

For many years, vulnerability and food insecurity were crudely measured in terms of perceived food need and upon late indicators of impending hardship such as regular nutrition surveys. The ‘biblical’ famine of 1984, and smaller drought events that followed, prompted intensive research into the causes of vulnerability that continue to this day. Sharp et al.’s (2003) study showed that the legacy of the 1984 drought and long civil war meant that a whole stratum (14%) of Wollo’s rural population would never reach subsistence level, and their support network was also suffering a decline in income, thus implying that destitution was likely to increase.⁶

A growing demand from food aid donors to provide evidence of need prompted the understanding that the determinants of vulnerability, and resilience, in the face of shocks were far wider than simply a household’s ability or otherwise to survive at, or above, the subsistence level, and food aid’s efficacy in assisting this

process. The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (GFDRE) adopted HEA in 2004 and established a woreda-level disaster risk-profiling approach to disaster risk management, using the HEA methodology in 2008 (DPPC Guide to Needs Assessment in Ethiopia, 2004).

Livelihood zones were described across the country (completed in 2008 and revised in 2015) to assist in the targeting of livelihoods interventions. There is now an understanding of what is now termed household (income) resilience and how best to support this in times of acute need (which, for some, is a permanent state). However, the GFDRE is naturally reticent to recognise the full scale of need in the population.

The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is now in its fourth round, which includes GFDRE funding. It acts as a bridge between development (social protection) and humanitarian assistance, the latter funded through the Federal Government’s newly-established and MY Humanitarian and Disaster Resilience Plan, which in March 2018 estimated 7.88 million people in need of food assistance and 8.49 million needing non-food aid in the calendar year (Humanitarian and Disaster Resilience Plan, 2018). The PSNP’s expansion to embrace targeted urban populations (still technically at the appraisal stage) emphasises its function as an almost universal social safety net. However, there are questions as to whether

⁶ The study’s recommendation to invest in towns to improve access to income opportunities resonates today in, for example, the growth of kebele centres in Somali State.

Table 1: DFID's portfolio with MYHF in Ethiopia

WFP	Food	£95 million	Annual contributions of £20 million; £15 million contingency and a further £20 million to cover recovery from the 2011 drought. Set mostly against PRRO 200290, but including PRRO 200365.	2012–2015
OCHA	Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund	£25 million	£18 million for grants, £1 million for coordination and £6 million as a contingency.	2014–2016
UNHCR	Refugees	£22 million	£15 million for distribution as grants predominantly to non-governmental organisations (NGO) implementing partners, and UNHCR staff capacity support; £6 million additional programme funds; £1 million contingency.	2012–2015
El Niño	Emergency	£60 million	£30 million to WFP. £25.5 million to the OCHA-managed EHF. £1 million for surge personnel. £3.5 million for rapid in-kind items for flood response.	2015–2016

the safety net can realistically support the vulnerable population in the future.

PSNP now caters for nearly 10 million people (approximately eight million ‘chronic’ and 1.7 million ‘transitory’ food insecure households) for up to a year and deploys a cash-first payment principle. There is a provision for food transfers in areas where markets are non-functional or food prices damagingly high. This is in return for participation in public works programmes to benefit the wider community.

1.3 DFID portfolio and partners

The original terms of reference for this evaluation stated that £142 million would be distributed across the three partners during the study period (2014–2017). During this period the MY grants for the World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were completed and both have received additional funding in the form of new MY grants. The original overall funding package was augmented by an additional emergency business case for the 2015 El Niño drought, adding a further £60 million of humanitarian resources, albeit for a single year. Table 1 shows how these break down.

1.4 Methodology

As outlined in the introduction, the purpose of the evaluation was to generate evidence and learning on the use of MYHF in fragile and conflict-affected states. The evaluation aimed to answer three main questions:

1. Are vulnerable individuals and households more resilient to shocks and stresses as a result of DFID-funded (and other) interventions? What lessons can be learned about how to best enhance resilience in protracted crisis? How do investments in resilience contribute to or compromise delivery of humanitarian relief and eventual outcomes for people affected by crisis?
2. Has the availability of contingency funding enabled DFID and its partners to respond more quickly and effectively when conditions deteriorate?
3. To what extent does DFID MY and contingency funding provide better VFM than annual funding for DFID and partners?

To answer these questions the evaluation employed a range of methods, including a qualitative panel survey, a quantitative survey looking at asset loss following the El Niño drought of 2015–2016, and extensive review of DFID partner data accompanied by regular key informant interviews.

The method has combined inductive and deductive approaches. Primarily – to answer the resilience question in particular – the evaluation has been inductive and iterative in nature. This was felt necessary because of the contested and formative nature of resilience theories at the outset of the evaluation, as well as the newness of MYHF. However, there has also been a deductive element, considering VFM aspects. This drew on earlier work around the potential benefits of VFM in MY programming, providing a framework that could be tested.

The evaluation conducted over 800 individual household interviews for the panel survey, which

Table 2: Interviews for the panel survey by location and round

Location	R1	R2	R3	Total
Somali	81	67	54	202
West Hararghe	104	97		201
Dolo Ado Refugees*	220	184		404
TOTAL				807

* MelkaDida and Bokolomayo camps, with a limited comparator sample in Kobe.

comprised 400 households (roughly 100 in each place, and 200 in the refugee camps) interviewed a number of times. The refugee caseload was far easier to access and the evaluation went for higher numbers because of an assumed higher drop-out rate (this turned out not to be the case).

The geographical areas selected for the MY panel research cover a range of altitude,⁷ climate and livelihood zones. These covered selected woredas and kebeles in Sitti, Korahe and Shabelle Zones in Somali National Regional State (SNRS) and West Hararghe Zone in Oromia region.

The third round of interviews in West Hararghe was disrupted due to political protests in Oromia, making it impossible to deploy research teams. In Somali region, the third round of interviews was partially interrupted by flooding affecting both the population and the survey team. The floods prompted significant distress migration rendering it inappropriate to attempt to track down and interview households. The second round of interviews was also affected by the drought, as people had already started moving in search of pasture or job opportunities. A third round of interviews in the refugee camps was judged to be of marginal gain in view of limited available resources.

As already noted, when the scale of the drought became clear, the evaluation used quantitative enquiry to enhance knowledge of the impact on assets and income. This was complemented by focus group discussions (FGDs) to provide a rounded picture of resilience, given the factors relating to its definition outlined above (this study was published separately, see Levine et al., 2019). Household questionnaires were undertaken in some of the same villages and

Table 3: Gender and age breakdown of interviewees in the study

Variables	West Hararghe	Somali	Dolo Ado
No. of men	52%	68%	39%
No. of women	48%	32%	61%
Age range			
17–24	13%	1%	16%
25–34	51%	16%	27%
35–44	28%	21%	27%
45–54	19%	32%	17%
55–64	16%	15%	11%
64+	6%	16%	3%
Household size			
1–3	16%	5%	9%
4–5	18%	11%	18%
6–7	28%	25%	21%
8–9	26%	20%	32%
10 +	12%	38%	21%

Table 4: Focus groups and survey numbers in study on coping with drought

	Sitti	West Hararghe	Total
FGDs	16	16	32
Survey households	480	480	960

households as the panel, but targeting Shinille and Hadigalla, the most severely affected districts in Sitti Zone, and Tulo and Anchar districts in West Hararghe. Table 4 below shows the number of household questionnaires and focus groups by zone.

The following section summarises the evidence gathered on MYHF and the three research questions on resilience, contingency and VFM. The conclusion examines the interaction between the two and seeks to determine whether MYHF can enhance these areas.

7 Dega (highland, above 2,000m) Woina Dega (middle highland around 1,700m) and Kola (1,500m and below).

2 Research question one: resilience

Are vulnerable individuals and households more resilient to shocks and stresses as a result of DFID-funded (and other) interventions? What lessons can be learned about how to best enhance resilience in protracted crisis? How do investments in resilience contribute to or compromise delivery of humanitarian relief and eventual outcomes for people affected by crisis?

The evaluation gathered large amounts of data on income, assets and livelihoods, and, through the panel, tracked changes in people's fortunes over time. While it is beyond the scope of this report to give a detailed description of livelihoods in the study areas, it instead focuses on the economic outcomes and resilience produced by the livelihood patterns described in those studies.

The obvious starting place for a livelihood analysis of West Hararghe is the depth and prevalence of extreme poverty. People have few options other than crop farming and livestock keeping, both of which are severely limited, and land holdings across the Zone are very small. It is useful to put these figures into a livelihood perspective in two ways: to understand current income and poverty levels and to assess the likelihood of development initiatives and policy enabling people to escape poverty. The second question is dealt with below, after a presentation of the current economic situation of households.

2.1 Current income and poverty levels

Interviewees were consistent about their level of income, whatever activities different households engaged in. In West Hararghe, most households needed 1,000–1,500 Ethiopian birr (ETB)/month to feel that they were coping. (In SNRS, the level was

higher, at about 2,500–3,000, partly reflecting the higher cost of living, with food staples approximately double the price. See further, below.) Daily labour paid around 35 ETB/day; income from petty trade in *khat* or from a day's firewood collecting would fetch something similar. The value of the food that people produce for their own consumption (rarely worth more than 200 ETB/month) must be added to this cash income. To reach the 1,500 ETB/month figure – and not all households managed this – income from the PSNP was essential. Over the year, households typically received around 400 ETB/month from PSNP: most households relied, even in non-drought years, on social protection for around a third to a quarter of their necessary monthly income.⁸

The theoretical maximum income for a West Hararghe farmer can be estimated, if all such measures were achieved, and if the climate were to be permanently favourable. Assuming that farmers have two good harvests in a year, and that all grain yields are two metric tonnes (MT)/ha (i.e. significantly above the national average yields), then the median household would harvest between 800kg and 1.6MT in a year in Tulo and Anchar woredas respectively. If the entire harvest were to be sold at the season of *high* prices (e.g. 5 ETB/kg, a typical *retail*, not farm-gate, price), this would result in a total household revenue from crops (excluding drug production) of around 300–600 ETB/month, *without* deducting the costs of production. This equates to income of around \$0.20–\$0.40 per person per day (at purchasing power parity (PPP)).⁹ On the unrealistic assumption of two very good yields in a year, crop farming would contribute only 20% of the income required to reach the international poverty line for the median household in Anchar (where the expectation of optimal yields is even less realistic) and just 10% in Tulo.

Farmers are unable to meet their basic needs from the land available to them. The term 'subsistence farmers',

⁸ 17% of respondents to the research in West Hararghe and about 82% in Sitti Zone received the transfer (Levine et al., 2019).

⁹ The purchasing power parity exchange rate was between 8 and 9 ETB = \$1 during 2016–2017. Source: www.quandl.com/data/ODA/ETH_PPPEX-Ethiopia-Implied-PPP-Conversion-Rate-LCU-per-USD

often used to describe poor farming households whose holdings are too small to generate surpluses for the market, and who live off their own production, fails to apply in West Hararghe as many farmers are too poor to grow food on their land.

I rarely harvest any [sorghum] grain, I harvest it almost always as fodder [i.e. before the grain matures]. Only rich people can wait for the crop to mature. If you grow grain rather than cutting it as fodder, you have to pay for someone to guard the crop day and night against wild animals, and you have to pay to irrigate for another couple of months. And anyway, it's very difficult for poor families to wait more than two months when they need immediate cash to live off
(Male farmer, West Hararghe).

Most people supplemented their income from crops with sales of livestock (although most owned only a few sheep or goats (1–9)¹⁰ and a few head of cattle (2–5), with an average holding of 3.2 tropical livestock unit (TLU)).¹¹ On average, a household could expect to sell one head of cattle or around six sheep/goats and animal sales could bring in around 500 ETB/month. The maximum average annual income from livestock sales, assuming perfect animal health, and ignoring any costs of production or costs of sale, is around 5,000 ETB/year. The combination of crops (excluding drugs) and livestock, assuming constantly good prices, consistently high productivity and no shocks, and ignoring production costs, reaches around 25% of the income required to rise above the international poverty line.¹²

Options for people to diversify were minimal: even the daily labour available was predominantly agricultural. Due to the clamp-down on tree-cutting, many people (in Tulo district, for example) have been forced to leave the charcoal-making business, which had been a significant source of income for many and a main coping strategy when crops fail. In Me'isso district, conflict with the Issa over forest lands between Oromia and Somali regions has had the same impact. Youth unemployment in West Hararghe is high, and the uptake of employment generation schemes such as quarrying is limited.

This lack of diversification and the limited economic linkages with urban areas should be surprising, given the high pressure to adapt after several years of poor rains and dwindling land holdings. However, aside from the main tarmac route, the all-weather road to Gelemso and the under-construction road to Anchar, rural road infrastructure is still poor, although improving.

It is unsurprising, then, that farmers are increasingly turning to drug production, as *khat* is the only crop that offers an income with which they can meet their minimum needs. Farmers across West Hararghe have found a new, higher-yielding and drought-resistant variety of *khat*, which they are obtaining and planting at their own initiative and expense.¹³ Over 20% of farmers, across all wealth groups, had already invested their own resources to introduce its production, and private investment in irrigation is increasingly being geared towards *khat* production. This was the only economic success story uncovered by the research in West Hararghe.

In SNRS, people had a very different asset base and more diversified opportunities. Although most did not own land, their herds had considerable cash value. The poorest had herds valued at around \$800–1,000, while the herds of the top quartile of the population were worth over \$15,000. Although excess sales of livestock is considered a sign of crisis, regular sales over the year are a main source of income, allowing prospective migrants to raise a small amount of investment capital to take with them if they liquidate their herd. This option is not as readily available in West Hararghe, where, for many, the value of livestock owned would not exceed \$200. Perhaps for this reason, the growth of small urban centres has been much more noticeable in SNRS than in West Hararghe.

There is no doubt that the people of SNRS, in particular the northern woredas, enjoy a more open economy, with greater links to people, markets and opportunities beyond their immediate community. This is presumably related to a historic culture of mobility, bringing with it both shared ownership of resources (creating a strong clan organisation) and a long tradition of trade. The role played by clan and family ties across several economic areas (villages,

10 The range represents the holdings of the middle two quartiles of the population.

11 Again, other sources support the plausibility of our survey findings. Tufa et al (op cit) found an average holding of 3.7 TLU in Gemechis, similar to our finding of 3.5 TLU in Anchar District (Tufa et al., 2014).

12 The reconciliation of the logic of such calculations with figures showing poverty rates in Ethiopia below 30% (e.g. www.worldbank.org, www.indexmundi.com) was beyond the scope of this study.

13 Changing the *khat* variety involves a period without production until the new stock is ready for its first harvest.

small town, urban centre, Djibouti or Somaliland) is discussed further below.

The panel interviews in Somali were forced to focus disproportionately on peri-urban *kebeles* and *kebeles* within the sphere of influence of urban economies.¹⁴ A far greater range of activities was seen here.

Many people had started small businesses with a little capital, which would typically generate around 50–100 ETB/day, for example tea shops, petty trade, or owning a solar charger to charge people's mobile phones. Livestock sales in Sitti in a non-drought year were three times greater than in West Hararghe at around 2–2.5 TLU (equivalent to 20–25 sheep/goats or three head of cattle), which could bring in 1,500 ETB/month.

The importance of urban centres for growth in the rural economy has long been understood (for example Dercon and Hoddinott, 2005). Two examples can be given of the impact of urbanisation on rural–urban economic ties. Many urban residents owned livestock, using a twin-production strategy. Some animals were kept in the home for fattening for market, with a short business turn-over, while other animals (which might be considered their real herd) were looked after by relatives in extensive grazing systems.

Milk markets have grown up around towns, with many livestock-owning families engaged in informal mini-cooperatives. To make it worthwhile to transport small quantities to market (less than 10 litres/day), people would typically form small groups of three–four people with similar levels of milk production and take it in turns to take the combined production to market in larger towns. In this way, a household can earn around 1,000 ETB/month if production is good, on top of the milk that they drink themselves.

New social arrangements to take advantage of economic opportunities are built on long-standing practices of sharing and mutual support. Formal employment was less common, and rarely long-term – several people had jobs as guards while the railway was being built, for example, or for foreign companies or INGOs. If they could earn 1,500 ETB per month,

this was a sizeable contribution to the 2,500–3,000 ETB per month that households consistently felt was needed to cope. If they could save a little capital, they could move on to open a small business.

Very few people were able to progress beyond 3,000 ETB/month income resulting from livestock rearing and the proceeds of small business. Cases of incremental savings, increased investment in the business and business growth were rare (see Box 3 for an example).

Financial services were extremely limited across the study areas. In West Hararghe, several agencies had promoted village savings cooperatives, but while they were important for small savings and investments, people did not accumulate significant sums, and their terms and conditions did not make them favourable for serious investment. Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists had even less formal financial arrangements, but their savings were embodied in their herds. Borrowing thus played a normal role in people's economic lives, as seen by people's sources of credit in non-crisis times. In Sitti, most borrowing takes the form of buying on credit from traders, with just 30% from family and clan, and much less again from any form of microfinance institution (MFI).¹⁵ In West Hararghe, over half of borrowing was from friends and family, and borrowing from Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) was also common (except for 'better-off' households). Normal (i.e. pre-crisis) levels of borrowing were \$135/\$90 (average/median) in Sitti Zone and \$90/\$45 in West Hararghe.¹⁶

2.2 Shocks

It is now common in resilience analysis to distinguish between *covariate* shocks that affect large populations and *idiosyncratic* difficulties or shocks which affect individuals or families. Although the two types of shock present different challenges for governments or aid agencies trying to look after citizens, this study found that the difference between them was less important when discussing resilience than had been expected. This is for two reasons.

14 Insecurity in the region was prevalent at the time of the first round of interviews, leading to the selection of near-road communities.

15 Interviewees spoke of their reluctance to engage with MFIs, because their terms are not seen as favourable.

16 One of the more popular investments in West Hararghe was in pumps for irrigation, which the government had provided to some on credit, repayable over three years.

Box 1: Interconnecting shocks and their different impacts

Across the areas studied, people reported the same range of shocks. Floods and economic problems caused by changing laws (or bye-laws) or their enforcement were confined to specific geographical areas. These included:

- Drought
- Floods
- Closure of borders to trade (SNRS)
- Closure of forests to charcoal production (West Hararghe)
- Insecurity
- Death of a household member
- Ill-health
- Divorce/separation
- Invasion of prosopis
- Market problems (price rise of necessities, price fall for produce)
- Crop pests and wild animals
- Striga (parasitic plant affecting sorghum).

Each of these could have a series of effects, not always obvious. For example, the problems caused by drought or rain failure included:

- Loss of rain-fed crop harvest
- Insufficient irrigation

- Lack of pasture and water for livestock (also causing epidemics where livestock were concentrated)
- Lack of potable water
- Increase in predators (as other prey dwindles)
- Increase in crop pests in irrigated areas (as other vegetation dries)
- Decrease in demand/price for *khat*
- Loss of revenue for small businesses in pastoral areas (migration of clients)
- Excessive sales on credit, causing businesses to close
- Fall in price of firewood, charcoal, etc.

Other shocks had multiple impacts. For example, prosopis invasions variously caused: the loss of agricultural land; the loss of irrigated land (a more particular problem, given the investment and infrastructure); restrictions on the movement of people and livestock; livestock death; and personal injury. Divorce or separation mainly affected women, variously causing: loss of assets, home, etc.; (usually) the responsibility to bring up children alone and with no financial support; fear of losing children to fathers later in life; an economic burden on the family of the mother, often taking responsibility for their grandchildren.

First, people respond to the impacts of shocks, rather than to the shocks themselves, which are often inevitable and unpreventable.¹⁷ Different kinds of shock had similar impacts (e.g. people may have lost their harvest because of drought, or because of illness), and people's ability to cope may have little to do with the cause of the problem. Second, people were not responding to shocks in isolation. Problems overlapped, both in time and in symptom, and, while trying to cope, people do not have time to quantify how far, for example, their hunger could be attributed to the rains and how far to their husbands having abandoned them to look for work. Most shocks affected people in several ways through different causal pathways, and, inevitably, not everyone was affected to the same degree.

This study is based largely on real-time testimonies about the difficulties people encountered and how they coped. The main shock suffered in the communities being researched was drought, which was most severe in the belt of east Oromia and the very north of SNRS, both in our study areas.

West Hararghe suffered poor rains from 2012–2016. In 2014–2016, Sitti Zone suffered one of the worst droughts in Ethiopia in the past three decades. Eastern SNRS (Korahey and Shabelle) suffered less, but rains were still poor in 2015. The duration and intensity of the drought exposed almost every aspect of people's vulnerability, and indeed the vulnerability of every institution responsible for preventing crises at every level.

Those heavily dependent on livestock suffered the most, followed by those predominantly dependent on subsistence agriculture. The least affected were those with the most urban livelihoods, involved in trading or in full-time employment.

Our big problem in the last eight months ... has been the drought. We've lost many of our animals. It also hit our fields, and we harvested nothing. We were really short of food, and we are getting emergency food aid
(West Hararghe, Me'isso R2 Octobre 2016).

¹⁷ Droughts are the most obvious example of this. Flood prevention is also impossible at household or even community level without a degree of investment and leadership, including the ability to coerce cooperation, far beyond the capability of most communities.

We had 10 cattle before the recent rain. But now, five have been taken by the recent flood. We had 70 small animals [i.e. sheep or goats], but most of them died because there was no pasture. Then, when the rains finally came, the last 11 died because of the rain. They were weak and skinny and couldn't take the cold. I had one camel, but it died since we last talked [in R2] because it was overworked. Because of the drought, I had to share the animal with my son's family, and we all needed to use it to take firewood to town to sell every day. The poor animal couldn't take it. I used to be able to earn 100 Birr every two days, but now I can't sell firewood anymore. All I have left is one donkey (Man, Sitti, R3 May 2016).

The impact of the drought was felt differently in the cropping areas of West Hararghe and in the pastoral areas of SNRS (see Levine et al., 2019). In West Hararghe, the drought brought huge losses of cash and food income, because harvests failed. However, little else changed, presumably because people had few options. Malnutrition was already high because of the deep, chronic poverty described above. There was some excess mortality from measles and cholera, and generally from starvation, but on the whole, this was avoided by aid, chiefly PSNP rations. Livestock mortality was limited because, unlike for many in SNRS, they were able to maintain their smaller numbers of livestock on crop residues and through fodder purchases. Households sold about twice as many livestock as usual to compensate for lost harvests. As a result, post-crisis herds were less than half their pre-drought size (Levine et al., 2019). If this picture were to be replicated across the rural population in the Zone, this would represent a decapitalisation of the West Hararghe economy of over \$200 million.¹⁸ Future agricultural production

was largely protected as most families were able to maintain their ploughing oxen.

In pastoral areas of Sitti Zone, asset losses were much greater because the main asset, livestock, was so vulnerable to a drought of such intensity.¹⁹ Because livestock prices fell rapidly, herders delayed selling their animals in the hope that the next rains would come, and that their animals would recover. Formal forecasts of likely failed rains were not shared with herders, while traditional forecasters did not interpret the signs of an impending crisis. As a consequence, the 'sudden drought' mentioned in the panel interviews took people by surprise due to its rapid onset. By the time herders realised that the drought was intensifying, their animals were already too weak to survive a long trip to market, with no possibility of finding or buying feed on the way.

People with smaller herds, for example those who kept just a few animals for fattening for urban markets, were better able to keep their animals alive, using purchased feed if necessary. Those with the largest herds, who are often thought to fare better in droughts, were forced to migrate further afield, with many going to Somaliland. However, the resulting huge concentration of weak livestock quickly finished any remaining pasture and epidemics swept through the herds. Many returned home with nothing.

Levine et al. (2009) quantified asset losses for each wealth group, based on extremely conservative assumptions (see Table 5).

Losses for Sitti Zone as a whole were (conservatively) estimated at over \$275 million. Future income will also be depressed for several years to come because of lost herd reproduction and milk production. Average lost income is estimated at 2,000 ETB/month per

Table 5: Asset losses in Sitti Zone due to livestock deaths resulting from drought, 2014–2016

Wealth group	% of sample	Pre-crisis value of herd (\$)	% loss (reported)	% losses (best scenario)	Financial loss per household (best case)
Very poor	18%	800	64%	40%	\$320
Poor	36%	2,500	74%	40%	\$1,000
Middle	23%	5,500	82%	60%	\$3,300
Better-off	23%	14,000	85%	60%	\$8,400

¹⁸ Based on the 2007 census, the population of the Zone is estimated at around 2.3 million, of whom 90% are rural. The calculation assumes the price of a goat at \$35.

¹⁹ Losses in Eastern SNRS were much lower as the drought was much less intense and began only in 2015.

Box 2: O–’s story. Changes in the herd are not only about drought

Herd sizes for many went up and down quickly and drought was not the only reason for this. O– had escaped the drought unscathed, but his herd size was only partly dependent on natural reproduction (and mortality). It went up because initially he had other income sources, and then up again – and quickly back down – for non-economic reasons.

In round one of the panel interviews he said:

*When I first came here [in 2009], from Gode Town to ** village, I planted half a hectare of sorghum near the valley. I harvested fodder, not grain. I got 23 cartloads of fodder, which I sold for 300–600 birr [then \$25–50] per cart in Gode Town. With that money, I was able to buy 17 goats. Those 17 animals became 70, because I could get by without selling any animals – I was also selling firewood*

*in my cart, and I had a few months’ work with *** [INGO].*

In round two he told us:

I had 80 animals, but now the herd is down to only 29 heads. I didn’t lose any animals because of the drought. It’s because first my eldest son got married, and I had to pay 40 heads as bride price. Then my wife died, and I spent 20 animals for her funeral and mourning.

By round three the situation had changed again:

Last time we spoke I only had 29 animals, I remember, but now I have 60 goats. It’s because my son got divorced, and so I got back 30 goats from the daughter-in-law’s family.

household, or over \$1,200 p.a. – a drop in economic production of \$80 million a year for the Zone.

Although pastoralists suffered most from the drought, the peri-urban economy was also badly hit.

I had to close our shop, because the total credit I had to give customers passed 15,000 ETB, and I’m still owed this money. Meanwhile, I have had to borrow 7,000 ETB that I can’t repay. This is how our lives are right now (Shop owner, Sitti).

This is a typical story, affecting almost every kind of small business. *Khat* prices and trading volumes fell; markets for tea shops and other petty trade dried up or could only be kept going by offering unsustainable levels of credit.

One unusual feature of the long drought was that food prices were not as high as might have been expected. Most interviewees complained of rising food prices, but they rose only by around 10% in West Hararghe and 15–25% in SNRS. This creates a serious economic difficulty for people already struggling to survive but is relatively modest in terms of drought prices. Secondary data of wholesale grain prices show very little movement.

2.3 Coping

When shocks are repeated over time, or stress causes long-term change in the economic context, people have to find a ‘new normal’ rather than occasional ways of coping. As discussed above, adaptation to decreasing land holdings in West Hararghe was limited to the move into *khat* production.²⁰ In SNRS, adaptation tended to take the form of urban drift, also discussed above.

The period over which the panel interviews took place (March 2015–February 2017) was very difficult for all households in the study areas. Overall, people survived the drought by ‘getting by’ despite suffering asset loss. People also had to cope with their own shocks such as ill-health, divorce, theft and violence, and unexpected demands for payment (from people smugglers, for clan blood money, to return bride price, etc.). Although they survived, it would not have happened without considerable aid (see below).

The most common forms of coping in West Hararghe and Sitti Zones are:

1. *Seeking to maximise non-agricultural income.*
Apart from their own meagre assets, people’s only alternative was the natural resources to which

²⁰ How far this should be considered adaptation or maladaptation depends on whether one takes a purely economic view of household production or looks at the wider impacts of the sector as whole. The social consequences of this explosion of drug availability are evident in the small towns in this area.

they had access for exploitation. While charcoal production and firewood sales are routine for many in Sitti, more people looked to these as the drought intensified, causing prices to drop. In West Hararghe, charcoal production possibilities have been almost exhausted due to either complete deforestation or increasing government prohibition. Some farmers, typically women, took up very small scale *khat* trading. With minimal reported profits (around 10 ETB/day) this was an act of some desperation. Various other very small-scale economic activities fell into this category offering similarly small returns, including water fetching, home baking, various forms of day labour and gathering wild bush products.

2. *Livestock migration.* This is normal practice for pastoral populations with larger herds, though the migration patterns in 2015 were somewhat abnormal, and less successful (see above).
3. *Livestock sales.* This took place everywhere, both to increase household income and to liquidate assets such as animals that could not be kept alive. Prices received for weak animals in poor condition were less than half their normal value.
4. *Borrowing and debt.* This increased during the crisis from normal levels (as described above). There is some discussion as to whether debt should be seen as an indicator of suffering from drought, or if it is best understood as a positive sign of coping, representing people's ability to control their situation. Certainly, those who borrowed more were better able to maintain food consumption for their families. Very few interviewees expressed a fear that they would be unable to repay loans: 87% of respondents in West Hararghe asserted that they would repay the amount within one year; and 75% of respondents in Sitti said they would repay within two years. For refugees, debt played a different role. It was much more common for refugees to buy food on credit every month to survive from one food aid ration to the next.
5. *Migration for work* was much less common in West Hararghe than might have been expected, presumably because of the lack of opportunities available in that area and its economic marginalisation. Many more people migrated temporarily from SNRS, to both near and distant locations, including Djibouti, for work as well as the protection of the extended family, reflecting much stronger economic and kinship ties outside their communities.

6. *Remittances.* More people received remittances from relatives outside their community during the drought than in normal years. Those reporting having received remittances rose from 18% to 27% in Sitti and from 10% to 13% in West Hararghe. In many cases the amounts received also rose, but this was impossible to quantify.²¹ Remittances to SNRS originated mainly in Djibouti and Dire Dawa, although the wider Somali diaspora, including in the Netherlands, Canada and the UK, played its part. Requesting assistance from relatives should be regarded as a coping strategy for those with relatives able to help. However, drought remittances were almost entirely limited to those who were in regular receipt of remittances – only an additional 3% of the population in West Hararghe received remittances because of the drought.

Having exhausted their coping mechanisms, people resorted to more desperate measures, including:

1. *Reduced daily food consumption or diversity.* Many interviewees reported reducing meals and quantities eaten because of a lack of food during the drought.
2. *Distress migration.* Unlike migration for work, which involved one (or occasionally two) household members moving to find work, distress migration to receive aid affected whole families and involved large parts of peripheral villages of a *kebele*. This was usually because of a lack of nearby potable water, although food aid may then have attracted more people.

There were fears (e.g. UNICEF, 2016) that many children would be forced to abandon school because of the drought. The study found that there were relatively few withdrawals from school (4% in Sitti and 17% in West Hararghe),²² with the majority related to school closures rather than individual choice. Confusingly, withdrawal from school occurred mainly among wealthier groups, making any link to economic stress tenuous; however, low drop-out rates may have been partly due to school feeding interventions.

There was no school dropout in our kebele because of the drought. We were receiving relief food every month and there was no severe shortage of food. The government was also providing hot meals to school children once

21 There was little reason to believe that any reported amounts received would be reliable, and so little reason to ask the question.

22 Many of these returned to school subsequently.

every day. It is provided in the school days only. Without the government assistance, it could have been impossible to keep the students at the school (Shinille Baraaq 04 R3).

We did not expect to see any households making a clear transition from vulnerability to resilience over the period of the study. However, we did find many that had been doing reasonably well, and which might have even been considered resilient before the drought, which now had more precarious livelihoods. The implications for an understanding of resilience are explored below.

2.4 Assistance

People received five main kinds of livelihood assistance during the study period. These were:

1. Household transfers for consumption, mainly in-kind food aid.
2. School feeding programmes.
3. Emergency water interventions (in a few areas).
4. Some (limited) livestock protection, mainly fodder distribution and (some) veterinary care.
5. Development or resilience investments.

Aid came from four main sources:

1. Social protection (PSNP), i.e. regular and predictable transfers through state institutions.
2. Targeted emergency relief through the formal aid system (the government, NGOs (including the Joint Emergency Operation Programme (JEOP)) or UN organisations).
3. Community support, often mutual support from within the village, but notably including significant food distributions by the Issa business community and civil servants to their clan kin in Sitti Zone in early 2015.
4. From family members, in the form of remittances and housing of temporary migrants from rural areas to urban or peri-urban relatives.

By far the largest source of assistance was the PSNP, received by most households. Our study confirmed that the PSNP has become a budgeted household item. Because it is programmed on a MY basis, it arrived when people were under stress or even in crisis, and long before relief aid began to appear. Family

assistance came mainly from those close at hand and within local communities.

A variety of NGO projects were recorded in interviews, most often involving some kind of loan arrangement. A number of water projects were mentioned, such as borehole drilling, digging *burkas* or irrigation canals, as well as projects related to nutrition and emergency relief (for example, the Red Cross gave people shelter materials in Me'isso after they had been displaced as a result of clan fighting).

The results of irrigation investments were mixed:

Last year I got a very small harvest. The water was diverted by [INGO] to the irrigable land ... but the water was too strong and it soon destroyed the walls of the channel (Agro-pastoralist Gode).

After that [NGO] gave a generator for 10 households with fuel and they helped prepare the irrigation canals. We benefited from this programme for some time, but then it all stopped (Agro-pastoralist Gode).

I planted maize with irrigation, but I didn't get any yield, because the interval between the times I was allocated water were so long (Agro-pastoralist Baraaq).

All channels of the irrigation were supported by [NGO], [NGO], [NGO] and [NGO], and all are most useful (Agro-pastoralist Baraaq).

Irrigation therefore offers limited hope. The small minority who have irrigated land rarely have more than 0.125 ha. Over two seasons in the year, even those who owned such land and who had a market for horticultural produce would only earn an additional 400 ETB/month (\$0.20 per person per day), without considering the opportunity cost of the labour involved. Given the income from livestock, our research suggests that a farming household would need to farm almost 1 ha of irrigated horticulture to reach the poverty line – which, even if infrastructure were paid for and could be maintained, and sufficient water were to be available, would still be unfeasible from a labour point of view.

2.5 Development initiatives and policy aimed at helping people to escape poverty and build resilience

It is useful to put landholdings into a livelihood perspective in order to analyse the policies or investments needed to help subsistence farmers to escape from crushing poverty. Currently, the dominant model for rural development rests on improved agricultural productivity through soil and water conservation packages (often through a compulsory labour requirement); increased fertiliser use (also often compulsory, with automatic deductions from social protection transfers, see below); extension packages offering improved seeds; and, with more limited coverage, investment in irrigation.

In an economic environment of limited options and livelihoods opportunities, a few factors stood out strongly from our interviews and analysis that either could, or did, make a difference to how people coped and thus enhanced their resilience. These patterns emerged either as the subjects most frequently discussed by those interviewed, such as education, or the factors that seemed to differentiate people who were barely coping and those who were doing somewhat better. These were:

- The meso-economy.
- Social capital and community resilience.
- Adaptive capacity (especially at individual level).
- Education (particularly for future resilience).
- Secure access to land.

We discuss each of these in turn below.

2.5.1 The meso-economy

The evidence for this set of findings derives largely from the set of codes in MaxQDA12 relating to income, assets, credit, investments and spending. Interviews show clearly how the restricted opportunities of the local or regional economy shape people's options. Even when people take the initiative, their ability to market produce or secure additional opportunities depends on infrastructure and policy.

One of the most important and far-reaching findings of the study was the extent to which resilience was

shaped by the *meso-economy* or the economy with which people can, and do, engage.

The most significant changes in the economic lives of households are often directly related to changes occurring in the meso-economy. In the same way, differences between the resilience of different households depend not only on the assets and skills of individual household members, but also on the opportunities offered by the local economy. By this token, urban incomes may be unreliable, and small businesses are not immune to the impacts of drought.²³ Nonetheless, urban households proved far more resilient in coping with drought than rural households.

Mention has already been made of the support many urban households give to their relatives in rural areas, either by sending them food or cash, or by taking in one or two relatives to reduce the number of mouths that needed feeding back in the village. Urban relatives are also enormously important in helping their kin to access education, especially secondary school.

Since households living closer to towns are able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the urban and peri-urban economy, and given that households closer to towns suffered markedly less in the drought, attitudes towards urban drift should perhaps be questioned. People who move to urban areas are seen by many (including themselves) to be failed pastoralists ('dropouts'), a label that is often highly misleading (see the following quotation) and may be very detrimental to analysis of the resilience challenge in the arid areas.

They are a drop-out household who migrated from Gode town 2 years after her husband died. ... He was a well-known carpenter and skilled mason in Gode town
(Notes from interviewer, about a successful urban-born family).

Coping by moving to town to sell labour has been called 'negative diversification' (see discussion of the term by Catley, 2017).²⁴ This attitude must be treated with care. Many aid agencies insist that the best response for a person who migrated to town because their herd perished due to drought is to replenish the herd and send them back to the rural areas, and resilience programmes are developed that explicitly aim to reduce migration from rural areas. Perhaps

23 See above, pastoral customers were either absent in 2015 because they had migrated far with their animals or had too little money to spend in town.

24 Catley writes about pastoralist livelihoods in general.

because urban poverty is more visible than rural poverty, there is an ease with which insecure urban livelihoods can be described negatively, while even less secure rural livelihoods are not. It is true that there are dangers of low-wage economies and potential labour exploitation due to an imbalance between the supply of unskilled labour and job availability. However, given that urban households coped much better with the drought and the inter-dependence of urban and rural economies, policies that try to discourage urban migration risk distracting from the need for much greater investment in urban areas and in quality education, if pastoral areas as a whole are to escape marginalisation. Negative perceptions of urban migration are fundamentally opposed to the aspirations of young people in pastoral and in many farming areas. More attention is given to ‘restocking’ than to helping people make a success of urban migration, even though evidence suggests that the latter is far more likely to be viable.

It has long been argued that supporting migration to urban areas does not stand in opposition to agriculture or pastoralism, but is in fact essential for its resilience and even survival, with holding sizes reducing and rangelands decreasing. This study was not able to interview young people,²⁵ but we found that many parents wanted an urban future for their children and previous work with young people in pastoral areas has already highlighted how many look forward to urban futures (Gitonga et al 2014). Greater attention to, and investment in, urban livelihoods is needed to support the increasingly precarious rural household economies.

The overall problem in the two zones was similar: a large percentage of the population have fundamentally unviable livelihoods; they survive only at a level of deep poverty (seen in persistent high rates of malnutrition in West Hararghe, for example); and they get by thanks, in large measure, to a significant contribution of aid (including social protection). Vulnerability, though, takes different forms.

The economy in West Hararghe offered people few opportunities to diversify, and very limited alternatives for coping when their main livelihood sources, crops and livestock, were hit by drought. But the shock was very different from that of the pastoral and agro-pastoral populations who suffered far greater losses of their productive assets. The weak meso-economy in West Hararghe constrained diversification and progress at household level. The poorly-developed pastoral infrastructure was no less important in

shaping vulnerability in the lowlands (although it is easier to ascribe this suffering and economic loss to the impact of drought, treating this as a natural hazard-induced disaster).

When the pasture dried up in 2015–2016 and animals lost condition, it was not inevitable that they should die. Livestock owners would have wanted to sell off many of their animals, but because they delayed making the decision to sell, were often unable to because animals were too weak to get to market. However, the economic infrastructure played a role both in the delay, and their inability to take them to market. The price of livestock fell sharply and quickly, discouraging sales, particularly because livestock owners were not confident that they would be able to buy back animals after the drought. It is clear that in a well-functioning meso-economy, where market, price and weather information is easily accessible, the price of livestock would not have fallen as sharply as it did and animals would have made it to market long before they were too weak to walk.

This research project cannot identify the economic investments needed in pastoral areas to avoid repetition of such losses. The following suggestions should be seen as examples of how greater pastoral infrastructure investment in general could make pastoral livelihoods more resilient.

If the pastoral household economy (perceived by many as exploiting natural processes) is thought of as a rational economic productive system in the same way as settled agriculture, then the need for an economic infrastructure to support the system is apparent. In times of drought and lack of grazing, pastoralists need (but currently do not have) the following:

- a functioning fodder market (hay, concentrate) for a small number of breeding animals kept at home;
- financial services to provide investment capital for buying fodder and for income smoothing to buy food;
- a competitive market, which buys their animals in poor condition at their true economic value at a cost well below the value of the animals that would otherwise die (this itself may necessitate feeding stations where livestock can eat and drink while on their way to the market);
- veterinary services, particularly in areas where livestock congregate;
- reliable seasonal weather forecasts, predicting the failure and return of rain, and provision of preventive services to avoid further high livestock

25 On ethical grounds, a team of researchers trained in interviewing children would have been needed.

mortality from the cold or flooding when rain returns after the drought; and

- a reliable livestock purchase market to restock herds after drought.

Drought would still present economic hardship for pastoralists and livestock mortality would not be eliminated if all of these measures were put in place. But households and the local economy would not be at as much risk.

This economic infrastructure is needed to build resilience to drought, but more is required to make the sector more productive (e.g. animal health services, breeding programmes, information systems for mobility, and, most importantly, the control of prosopis), which is beyond this study's focus.

2.5.2 Social capital and community resilience

Some models of resilience portray influences as a series of concentric circles, starting with the individual and their capacities and building outwards to their immediate family, the wider community and a wider socio-economic context. Although simplistic, this highlights the relative importance of different levels in shaping resilience (this study has already identified the importance of the meso-economy).

Identifying the level that most contributes to a person's resilience is not straightforward, because different levels always interact. For example, a person's gender determines many of their future capacities (including access to education, their aspirations, resources they will be able to claim and control), but the way in which this happens depends on many characteristics of the society they live in, at different levels, including its religion, culture and laws.

It is easy to forget that individuals in crisis depend on the same institutions as people from across the world for their resilience: access to justice and judicial systems whose judgements are fair, respected and enforced. When such institutions fail, this is felt more, not less, severely by people suffering from acute poverty and the shock of drought.

It is instructive to see where and to whom people turn when they need to progress or cope with difficulties. Evidence from this study suggests that Somalis make more claims on their wider family and kinship network, whereas those in West Hararghe rely most on the support of the household (the state is less important, except for the provision of PSNP).

One illustration of this was the emergency assistance offered by the (Issa) clan business community to their kinfolk in the hardest hit parts of SNRS (in Sitti Zone) in the early 2015 drought – a significant distribution of food aid several months before any national emergency appeal.

Such clan assistance was seen widely as the El Niño crisis deepened, with many stories of people in less-affected areas sending assistance to, or taking in relatives from, harder-hit areas. More people from the study areas in SNRS migrated to find work during the drought, because they were able to make claims on relatives to host them or to find them work. Without a similar network, people in West Hararghe remained at home, with very limited migration. Even without a crisis, kinship ties in Somali society provided access to education (see above), employment and remittances.

Although many resilience programmes set out to build resilient *communities* (rather than individuals or families), this study found that people's resilience was not simply a function of their communities. There were reports in SNRS, in both the panel research and Levine et al. (2019), that some intra-community mechanisms of support (e.g. for redistributing animals to those who had lost them) were weakening because impoverishment in the community had constrained people's ability to help others. Nonetheless, mutual dependency seemed to be higher in SNRS than in West Hararghe with strong reciprocal relations even between the better-off and poorer members of a village.²⁶ This suggests that a model that asks how social capital shapes individual resilience, and how people can make claims on each other, is more useful than a community model.

This view is supported when looking at community-level institutions that govern access to resources, for example irrigation. In several villages, interviewees reported that, even with irrigation schemes, their harvests had failed during the drought. Bigger areas had been put under irrigation without a corresponding increase in the capacity of the irrigation system to deliver water, resulting in fields being watered only once in three or more weeks. It is not clear at which level incentives arose leading to this behaviour. However, the problem may not be the lack of resilience of community institutions, but rather the opposite: they were resilient enough not to have to listen to voices of individuals affected by their behaviour.

²⁶ One symptom of this is the community redistribution of aid that has been a source of frustration for many aid workers over many years, because it undermines their targeting objectives.

Three ways of looking at social capital can be instructive here. Social capital is seen by some as a private good (i.e. a capacity of an individual) and by others as a public good (the characteristic of a community, which gives the community as a whole resilience). When considered as a way in which people relied on each other, social capital was indeed a public good, a common source of strength and resilience. However, this cannot ignore how different obligations and entitlements are between men with those between men and women, and even between a wife and her husband. The case of divorce and separation is an example of social capital as a private good, which the community deprives women of to a large extent:

I decided to get a divorce. The court ordered him to make a monthly payment of 500 birr to support his children, but he's never given me anything up to now
(Me'isso West Hararghe).

Many single parents were struggling: it seems inappropriate to describe the source of their problem as a weakness in their individual social capital, rather than seeing it as an outcome of the way in which social capital as a *community characteristic* treats women and men differently. A 'public good', in other words, does not mean something that is good for everyone. It is either not necessarily open to all, or can be a community characteristic with malign impacts on some of the community's members.

Others have analysed social capital differently, distinguishing three types:

1. *bonding social capital* (between people who are 'similar');
2. *bridging social capital* (between people who are different, e.g. in age or socio-economic status); and
3. *linking social capital*: relationships between people who have different levels of power (see, for example, Gitell and Vidal (1998) or Hawkins and Maurer (2010)).

It is perhaps unsurprising that almost all interviewees had very weak *linking social capital*, for example the inability of farmers to effectively demand water from their irrigation schemes, of single mothers to obtain a just financial settlement, or PSNP recipients to prevent deductions from their transfers.

For PSNP, we were supposed to get 900 ETB then they said they were cutting 230 birr for fertiliser, and 50 or 100 birr for savings. But now, where is our fertiliser? Where is our

saving? ... I don't know who ate our money'
(Man, Anchar District).

700 birr was deducted from the PSNP money – they said 500 was for fertiliser and 200 for saving and cooperative membership. So, they tell us we are members of Oromia Credit and Saving Coop, but they didn't give us any membership documents, or any receipts for our savings, and we don't know how much money we have in any account
(Other man, same village, Anchar District).

In the panels, the relative resilience of people in SNRS compared to those in West Hararghe relied on a dimension of social capital less easily captured in the bonding/bridging division, in terms of peer groups or similarity. This can be better understood using the series of concentric circles model, as described above (see also Maxwell et al. (2015) in relation to coping in Somalia). Within a person's immediate circle, survival was guaranteed for as long as other members of that immediate circle were in a position to help. The problem in rural areas, with very few opportunities to diversify livelihoods and thus to diversify risk, is that almost everyone is vulnerable to the same shocks, but to different degrees.

Resilience rested in part on having a geographically wider circle of people on whom to make claims. In the case of people from SNRS, these were typically relatives living in places with different opportunities, and which were less vulnerable to the same threats. This was seen, for example, when people living in remote parts of Sitti Zone made claims on those living in more peri-urban areas (e.g. Baraq), when people sent children to stay with relatives in Djibouti, and when people were able to request and receive remittances from relatives further afield.

Apart from migration to extended family e.g. in Djibouti, more distant migration (to Europe and South Africa) is a recognised coping strategy. This was a collective family enterprise, even when the decision to migrate was taken by a young man on his own without the knowledge of his parents. When such people fell into the hands of people smugglers, they made claims on several relatives who had to join together to pay large sums to ensure they reached Europe safely; these relatives often had to sell livestock and incur significant debts.

This echoes the findings in relation to the famine in Somalia in 2011 of Majid and Maxwell (2016), who showed that those least able to survive were precisely

those who, for reasons of their clan identity, lacked people in more distant circles on whom they could make claims. This suggests that urban migration and rural or pastoral ‘drop-out’ may potentially play a much greater role than is recognised in building the resilience of drop-outs’ rural relatives and the communities they leave.

2.5.3 Adaptive capacity

The evidence for adaptive capacity derives largely from interviews over time and the way in which a few individuals got ahead, while the majority did not.

Adaptive capacity has usually been included as one of the constituents of resilience and various conceptual frameworks have been proposed for understanding it (e.g. WRI, 2009; Jones et al., 2010). Recently, the emphasis has shifted, with adaptation (rather than adaptive capacity) being taken as one of the components of resilience (e.g. Béné et al., 2012; Bahadur et al., 2015). Adaptive capacity has come to be used for whatever is believed to help a community or household stay one step ahead of a potential crisis. This now includes assets, diversification of income sources and the uptake of technologies believed, by those propagating them, to be superior and better adapted to future shocks (e.g. Bahadur et al., 2015).

We will not enter the debate as to how adaptive capacity should best be characterised, except in one respect. The opportunities for people to adapt to changed circumstances do indeed depend on assets, technologies, market assets or state services, as these models indicate (although we argue that the local economy is probably the most important factor). However, the ability, or the entrepreneurial drive and willingness, to take risks to profit from opportunities, to spot and avoid looming trouble surely also depends on a particular *personal quality*. It is this personal quality, relatively neglected in resilience literature, that we address as adaptive capacity here. Levine et al. (2011) stress the importance of individuals’ ability to innovate for adaptation and resilience but found that external development actors paid it little attention, including specifically in Ethiopia. Although a personal characteristic, adaptive capacity is not predetermined. It is shaped by culture (e.g. whether a society encourages innovation and is supportive of failure, or whether it demands conformity to norms), confidence and access to ideas, all of which can be better understood and potentially affected by external interventions.

The story of A– (Box 3) demonstrates this quality perfectly. Over a couple of decades he changed his

investment from cattle to a gun, back to cattle, to cereal farming, to trading in food, to sewing machines, to a mill, to *khat* production, to another mill, to transport, all the while engaging in one-off opportunistic trading opportunities, and making limited investments in exotic grade cattle and crop farming. This level of innovation, experimentation and ambition was very much the exception in the study areas in Ethiopia.

Supporting adaptation

If agencies (including governments) wish to support people’s resilience, then we have to better understand how people’s adaptive capacity (in this sense) is shaped, and thus how it could be strengthened. It is clearly a *composite* characteristic, combining: elements of individual psychology; upbringing and education; the individual’s internalising of their culture and the imposed cultural norms of their society; and a reflection of their experiences and horizons.

The Somali people’s strong kinship ties across geographical distances has made it easier for them to communicate with a wider circle and to explore more distant horizons, in the process becoming exposed to different ideas. It is impossible to say how far their apparently greater openness to economic diversification is due to wider communication and travel; how far it is created by cultural differences; whether the local economy offers more opportunities; or if this is driven by necessity. It is likely a combination of all these factors.

Ludi et al. (2011), albeit in other parts of Ethiopia, noted how individual innovation and experimentation was constrained by social norms within villages that enforced conformity. Exposure to new ideas should raise aspirations and thus increase innovation and investment. This was quantified in other parts of Ethiopia by Bernard et al. (2014), who showed that simply screening a film about people in neighbouring areas who, with no external assistance, had succeeded in some agricultural or business venture, raised the aspirations and investment levels of those watching the film.

Development interventions in the study areas, including those aimed at building resilience, rarely paid much attention to individuals’ adaptive capacity or worked in ways that would increase their initiative and experimentation. Ludi et al. (2012) also found that interventions do not recognise the importance of adaptive capacity and offered a list of conditions that promote it:

1. An awareness that the current situation needs to change.
2. A sense of being in a position to change that situation (having agency).
3. Access to appropriate information about the different options that could be used – individually or in combination – to solve particular problems.
4. Access to resources to test new things and a safety net to fall back on in case of failure.
5. An enabling environment which encourages and promotes innovation.

Our study suggests that while the first condition is certainly in place, the others are insufficiently so; this lack is a significant component of many people's vulnerability.

2.5.4 Education

The evidence for the importance of education derives directly from panel interviews.

People's access to basic services and the quality of those services are widely included in resilience analyses. Interviewees spoke most about education.²⁷

Attendance at early primary level was high. In many villages in West Hararghe, interviewees reported that it was compulsory to send children to (early primary) school, with punishments for those who did not. Most families sent at least some of their children to school at that age, feeling that only through education would their children enjoy a better life.

In very many cases, the importance of education was explicitly linked to the aspiration that children should enjoy an urban life, where education is seen to be needed to succeed. Gitonga et al. (2014) had similar findings, recording that children in pastoral areas in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia increasingly wanted professional, urban futures.

I encourage all my children to be students, rather than to herd livestock. I want education for them so that their lives – and mine – can change. I'd rather move to town, and if my children are educated, that will make it easier for us to move in town in a few years' time (Man, Kebridahar).

Schooling clearly represented an intergenerational shift in priorities, as most parents interviewed were illiterate. Many used the comparison with their own lives to illustrate why they wanted their children to be schooled.

I want to educate my daughters, so they can live a better life than me. If I had been to school, I would have lived a better life than the one I am leading now. At least my daughters will be able to look after themselves, even if they don't support me (Woman, Gode).

Secondary data shows the magnitude and speed of this change in education, a product of the government's increased investment especially in what it calls 'emerging' regional states (Afar, Somali, BeniShangul Gumuz and Gambella). Table 6 shows how far Somali region was lagging behind the country as a whole for primary school enrolment in 2000. This gap was largely closed by 2013/14²⁸ with a dramatic closing of the gender gap (the Regional average for Oromia is very unlikely to reflect the situation in marginalised zones such as West Hararghe).

However, although most children now begin primary school, only 20% of those who start primary school in Ethiopia complete eight years; even fewer attend secondary school (see Table 7).

The main reason for dropping out of school is economic. Although education is free, there is still a cost to sending a child to school, including the opportunity cost of children's lost labour, particularly needed for looking after small animals and for protecting crops in the field. This makes education a significant family investment. The cost of uniforms and materials for primary school was typically around ETB 400–500 (\$15–20) a year for each child in Somali region, and a little less in West Hararghe. For three children, this would consume almost an entire month's household income each year, which many households would struggle to find.²⁹

My daughter dropped out from grade one in 2015/2016 and she is now looking after the goats. I was imprisoned for a day. I was released

²⁷ Health and healthcare were a much more prominent feature of interviews in the three other countries of this research project and will be discussed in those reports.

²⁸ Gross enrolment rates over 100% are caused by the catch up of children who are attending primary school above the normal age range.

²⁹ More people spoke of these problems in West Hararghe than in either of the study zones of SNRS, possibly because of greater levels of chronic poverty.

Table 6: Change in gross primary school enrolment rates 2000/2001–2013/2014

	2000/1				2013/14			
	M	F	Total	Schools	M	F	Total	Schools
Oromia	73.5	42.1	57.9	2,418	96.1	86.3	91.2	12,866
Somali	13.4	7.2	10.6	107	141.8	126.5	134.9	849
Ethiopia	67	47	57.4	6,958	104.8	97.8	101.3	32,048

Source: Tesema and Braeken (2018)

Table 7: National levels of drop-out from primary education, by grade, 2012/13

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Completers
Number enter	1,000	752	651	585	507	410	363	307	
% dropout	25%	13%	10%	13%	19%	12%	15%	32%	208
Number leave	248	101	66	78	97	47	56	99	

Source: Tesema and Braeken (2018). No breakdown by region is available.

because I promised that she will keep on with her studies, but I haven't kept my promise.
(Man, Me'isso).

Many households who cannot afford to send all their children must choose which one(s) to educate. Boys are far more likely to be chosen than girls for as they will be economically responsible for their parents later in life, while girls, on marriage, join their future husband's family. However, in most cases, this was expressed as an economic choice rather than a rejection of education for girls, and boys too could suffer in the same way.

My eldest son is 12 years old, he has dropped out of school. It's because I am divorced now, and I have no one to help me on the farm. So, I had to go to the chairperson of the kebele and beg him to get permission for the boy, because it's compulsory in our kebele to send children to school. I know the benefit of education, it will help my son and even me get on in life, but what can I do as a single mother?
(Woman, West Hararghe).

I am living with my nine children, six boys and three girls. Only one of the boys is studying, in grade two. Another boy left school and went to the Koranic school. I just can't afford to buy the uniforms and other things they need for them both. So I let him join madrassa instead, as that is free in our village. I have other two children who should be at school at their age, but they

can't start as I have no money to buy their school materials. I've a daughter of 12 who lives with my sister in another village, so she is in grade four
(Woman, West Hararghe).

However, while most parents clearly value schooling for their daughters, few girls complete primary school. Early marriage is common in all areas studied, often shortly after puberty, at around 13–14 years old. Since education ends on marriage, or even in anticipation of marriage, many girls only complete four years of primary school. We found very few cases among the informant households of girls attending secondary school.³⁰

A child's prospects for secondary education were much more limited by economic considerations. Many secondary schools are beyond walking distance, particularly in Somali region and, to a lesser degree, in West Hararghe. Those who attend often have to stay in town with relatives, with most parents contributing to their upkeep (usually ETB 300–500 per month per child). Those without relatives have to spend more to rent somewhere for their children to stay. Sending only one child to secondary school would consume up to 20% of the typical household budget, even in SNRS where income levels are higher.

The local school only goes up to grade eight. Children have to go to Shinille for higher education. I can't afford to send my children to Shinille, and many other families are in the

³⁰ According to Tesema and Braeken (2018), SNRS has the second lowest gender parity in the country in overall school attendance. In 2015, only three girls were at secondary school for every 10 boys, well below all other regions except Gambella.

same position. Only the well-off or those who have close relatives in Shinille town can send their children to Shinille for secondary school.

Another problem is that the quality of education is very poor at the local school, so students who go to Shinille can't compete with the other students there. They get discouraged by always being at the bottom of the class, and then they give up school
(Man, Gaad, Sitti Zone).

Education: a rational investment in resilience?

The value of education was raised in the very first interviews undertaken for the project. Putting aside any non-economic value of education, the research explored how far investment in education was a rational economic choice. There is no doubt that the aspiration of education for at least one child is highly rational; having one member of the family with a reasonable income and living in a town is a huge benefit to the whole family and can make, on its own, a critical contribution to a family's resilience.

A small minority of interviewees were more sceptical about the value of education. Some saw little reason to educate daughters who would leave the family on marriage. Others also pointed to high school or university graduates that they knew who were back in the village, unemployed.

Two of my children quit school this year and started growing khat on land I gave them. They wanted to farm more than study because they saw their elder brother growing khat, and he has started to save money in the bank. And then they look at the neighbour's boy, who completed grade 12 and has no job
(Better-off man, West Hararghe).

Given the potential economic risks of investing in education, could it be compared to maladaptive behaviour, making the wrong investment decision by choosing a form of adaptation (i.e. hoped-for urban employment) that ultimately proves a dead-end? There are enough unemployed high school leavers – and even graduates – in the study areas to make the answer to this question uncertain.

The future value of education will depend on two questions:

1. How much does the level of education that people receive contribute to opening up economic opportunities for them, or to making them

better able to identify, and take advantage of, opportunities?

2. Will the economies of local towns develop in a way that generates sufficient employment and self-employment opportunities for the newly-educated?

Secondary education is only beginning to spread beyond a very small population in the study areas. It is far too early to answer these questions, and the study methodology does not permit a conclusion on how common it is for high school graduates to return home and remain jobless.

The future economic development of urban centres across the country is likely to be the most important determinant of future resilience for much of the rural population. Further consideration must be given to calibrating the link between years of schooling and:

- potential income;
- the potential for successful urban migration; and
- potential reinforced resilience.

These links are unlikely to be linear. This question is as important in considering policy formulation and decisions around the relative importance of investment in primary, secondary or tertiary education as it is for any measurement of resilience.

2.5.5 Secure access to sufficient productive land

The evidence for secure access to sufficient land derives from the MAXQDA12 codes relating to agriculture, livestock and land, and to data gathered in Levine et al. (2019). The evaluation was also able to calculate average land holdings and their relative productivity from detailed feedback in interviews.

Land was seen as a constraint for all rural populations in the study. Crop farmers have farms that are too small to be viable and they survive thanks to external assistance. The size of average holdings is declining with each generation because of increasing demographic pressure. The size of family farms can only be maintained if population growth is addressed and urban migration supported, an issue recognised in the government's Growth and Transformation Plan II (National Planning Commission, 2016) and in DFID's development funding strategy. But of course, the success of these initiatives will be dependent upon successful community awareness-raising and challenging deep-rooted cultural barriers.

Our family is so large – we are 11 – and we need so much food to eat, that our maize harvest didn't last us more than two

months. It would have been better if I'd used family planning, and had fewer children, but unfortunately, we didn't know about contraception and how to use it when I was giving birth to my nine children. It is only after I had my last child that contraception is starting to be used more widely, with the help of the health extension workers
(Woman, 35, Anchar).

Despite the increasing acceptance of family planning, though, it seems from the following informant that some social stigma remains.

My wife takes the injection for birth control. We agreed together about it, and we've only had three children in our 14 years of marriage. ... However, the neighbours don't know, it's a secret between me and my wife
(Man, West Hararghe).

Another issue that came up in relation to having secure access to land was that pastoralists lack security in their access to constantly shrinking rangelands, with the most important areas, those most likely to remain green in a drought, being privatised and expropriated. Threats to land took a number of forms.

The mesquite bush (*Prosopis juliflora*), introduced by an aid organisation in the 1980s, has spread out of control, with terrible consequences. It produces a thick, thorny impenetrable barrier that is dangerous to livestock and is frequented by wild animals. Rangeland is made inaccessible and farmland becomes unusable on a huge scale.

Our only fear is the expansion of gawawa [prosopis]. ... Initially we welcomed it, not knowing the consequence, but now we are really feeling it. It has taken over our land. It's preventing us from expanding agriculture, and our grazing area is shrinking as it spreads. It has become the sanctuary of hyenas, which are killing our animals. We just don't know how to fight it. It is also making the goats and donkeys sick and die, and makes cattle lose weight
(Man, Waruf kebele, Hadighala District).

In areas now colonised by prosopis, almost all farmers reported it occupying their land, with over 50% losing access to more than half of their land. Considering that this plant is potentially reducing half the economic output of large areas, the attention it is receiving is

minimal. Some projects, including PSNP, have offered cash or food for digging up the prosopis, but this represents a scattered and very temporary removal of plants on a tiny scale, successful only if considered as an occupation for receiving payment rather than for any sustainable impact on land productivity.

Losing rights to access land was another issue. For pastoralists this was due to rangeland being increasingly privatised by individuals and businesses, both from within and outside pastoral communities.³¹ Few aid efforts were attempting to tackle this problem or other restrictions to pastoralists' freedom of movement – indeed, aid was often seen as a vehicle for advancing these processes. The removal of pastoralists from the range and their concentration in urban or settled areas has been incentivised by the use of aid, even though settled farmers have often been shown to be more vulnerable to drought than mobile pastoralists, even where irrigation schemes exist. Land rights for women are far less secure than for men, with women reported losing all rights to their land on separation or divorce.

2.6 Irrigation

There is a constant draw to technological solutions that promise to dramatically transform the productivity of land, effectively giving farmers the equivalent of far greater land holdings. There has been some investment in the study areas in moving people away from rain-fed agriculture, which is both less productive and highly vulnerable to climate shocks, to irrigated agriculture. This has been supported in the study areas through gifts of water pumps and the fuel to run them, government loans to purchase pumps, repair of irrigation schemes, and the construction of new irrigation systems (including the drilling of artesian wells), often linked to settlement programmes. Schemes to move families away from pastoralism to settled crop farming are highly sensitive and were not a specific focus of this study. However, a few general remarks about the role of aid in promoting resilience through irrigation can be made.

Successful irrigation schemes can have clear economic benefits for some.

Water for irrigation was not much affected by the drought, but ... it is impossible to have a good harvest with irrigation alone. You also need the rains. The sorghum harvest failed

31 A pastoralist interviewed in Gode Zone for Sida et al (2012) remarked that he would willingly settle if he and his family (clan) were given access to the fertile lands bordering the Shabelle River, which were at the time open for commercial tender.

because of shortage of rain and we had to cut it green as animal feed. ... However, there was a big difference between households who have irrigated land and those who don't. The ones who were able to withstand the first drought year [2014] were those with irrigated land. They were at least able to cultivate some vegetables and earn some money selling them (Baraq kebele, Shinille District, Sitti Zone).

There are limitations, however. These should not be taken as an argument against irrigation in general, but should constitute a warning that investment in irrigation does not automatically mean improved resilience.

- Irrigated land is highly vulnerable to invasion by prosopis, which continues to colonise new areas in both SNRS and the lowland areas of West Hararghe.
- Not all irrigation schemes were resilient to drought. Schemes failed because of reduced water flow (in Baraq, for example, due to poor maintenance of the channels) and problems in the systems, often because pumps did not have a supply of diesel fuel or electricity (which was cut off because hydro-electric power generation was also hit by the drought). Only one in six people with irrigated land in West Hararghe and one in three in Sitti were able to irrigate their crops as normal during the drought.
- Many of those able to irrigate their crops still had very poor yields. Their irrigated fields were an oasis of vegetation during the height of the drought, attracting every possible pest.
- The design of some schemes appears to have been problematic.³² In recently formed settlements in particular, many complained that pressure to expand the irrigation area, to increase the number of people with irrigated land, was not matched with an increase in the supply of water from the scheme. As a result, some were only allocated water once every three weeks. In other cases, the systems were not working due to general disrepair or because they were destroyed by floods.
- Some investments were not sustainable, particularly those involving free distribution of fuel. Their impact was thus equivalent to a one-off transfer, rather than an investment in resilience.

We were given free fuel just once for one harvest, but I continued for another year paying for my own fuel, but after that, I couldn't

continue, because fuel is very expensive (Man, settlement programme, Shabelle Zone).³³

I had to get help to pay for fuel for the irrigation of one hectare. First I got help from WFP [of \$120], but by the time I irrigated twice, that was finished. Then I borrowed 40 litres of fuel, and I thought I'd pay it back after harvest, it didn't work out. The money from the harvest was only 1500 birr (c. \$70), that's even less than the money I got from WFP, and I still had to repay the loan. So then I sent a request to my son, who sent me two male sheep and three male goats, and with that I was able to repay the loan and buy some food. But after losing money like that, I'm never irrigating again! (Man, Shabelle).

There are two much larger questions regarding the longer-term sustainability and wider impacts of irrigation schemes specifically in semi-arid or arid areas. The first relates to the scale at which irrigation has longer-term viability, given the availability of water and the possible effects of ongoing climate change. There were anecdotal reports that the water table had already fallen considerably in parts of Hadhigala District as a result of the mass drilling of artesian wells for irrigation, causing some streams to dry up for the first time.

The second question relates to how irrigation schemes impact the resilience of the pastoral economy when the greenest areas in the rangeland, on which many may rely in times of drought, are enclosed and removed from the pastoral system as a whole. If the overall productivity of the rangeland is taken over, a full drought cycle is badly impaired, and productivity gains from irrigated crop farming may be outweighed many times over by losses to the pastoral economy. It was beyond the scope of this study to examine this further, but if this is the case, impact could be felt by tens of thousands of people and the national economy.

We are very worried about the future of our grazing areas. Local government changes the rights on the use of land if there are agricultural investments. The new basin development programme is one of the driving factors behind changing land use. For example, there is a plan to settle about 8,000 households on 4,000 hectares of land Gebi in Hadigala

32 Note that this relies entirely on the reports of the users. No independent technical assessment of irrigation schemes was undertaken.

33 This interviewee now earns a living through firewood sales, and cultivates if the rains are sufficient.

district, and a similar programme is planned in Shinile districts. But these are our traditional grazing areas
(Man, Gaad, Sitti Zone).

2.7 Have DFID-funded (and other) interventions made vulnerable individuals and households more resilient?

There were few, if any, targeted DFID resilience investments observed over the course of this evaluation. DFID MYHF went primarily to traditional humanitarian relief operations. WFP delivered emergency and PSNP food; UNHCR served refugees in camps and the EHF funded short-term emergency interventions in the areas of nutrition, WASH and other non-food needs.

None of these interventions were targeted at resilience building. Nor were wider interventions by either DFID or other major donors, at least in the areas studied for this evaluation, at a scale or level of strategic coherence to build resilience in any meaningful way. There were some interventions *during* the El Niño drought response in SNRS aimed at preserving livestock (fodder and veterinary services), but they were too small in scale and came mostly after the peak of livestock mortality. This evaluation has already discussed the importance of PSNP, and how it served to keep people alive, but again this is not resilience in its wider sense, of people being able to ride out a shock based on their own resources.

The evaluation has seen some promising results from the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME)-funded programmes that focus on some of the areas outlined above, such as markets and information. Similarly, DFID continues to make major investments in areas such as education, highlighted here as important to people's resilience. However, the few NGO projects that aimed to give people skills or invest in improved crop yields seemed scattered and disjointed. The evaluation was not charged

with measuring their impact, but no interviewees mentioned how people had coped better as a result of such interventions.

This study tries to avoid abstract discussions regarding definitions, frameworks or measurement of resilience, preferring to focus instead on the empirical evidence of what helped people to cope better in times of difficulty. One theoretical issue, though, does seem to be of some importance. Practitioners speak of people becoming more or less resilient (i.e. considering resilience to be a scalar quality that can increase incrementally). Some also talk of *graduation*, when households reach a threshold above which they are resilient, and below which they are not. This gives resilience the same yes/no quality as when commercial banks pass or fail a stress (resilience) test, or buildings meet, or fail to meet, standards of resistance (resilience) to earthquakes of a certain magnitude. Both the scalar and the pass/fail applications make sense in their own contexts.

Most resilience programming ignores the sense in which resilience is a threshold that has to be crossed, regarding any incremental improvement in people's lives as progress along a resilience path. But programming should also consider how much progress is needed for someone to be able to cope with predictable difficulties without resorting to distress strategies that land them in (greater) poverty or food insecurity.³⁴ Although this paper argues against the idea that resilience can be seen from a line on a graph, it does make sense to ask in relation to specific constraints to agency (including household income) what degree of progress needs to be achieved in order to bring about sustainable and transformative change. Specifically in relation to income levels, this neglected question is critical to designing and costing the strategies for achieving meaningful progress.

This study can offer some insights into this question. As discussed earlier, households interviewed in SNRS needed 2,500–3,000 ETB per month to keep their heads above water and in West Hararghe this figure was 1,500 ETB per month.

The international poverty line equates to around ETB 3,000 per month³⁵ for a household of six in Ethiopia (although this uses a PPP comparison based on national prices, which are lower than in Somali

34 When people cannot cope, they have to meet their needs by using distress strategies, i.e. measures with potential longer-term negative consequences. Although they are usually evidence of a failure to cope, they are sometimes known by the oxymoron, 'negative coping'.

35 \$1.90 per person per day, using the PPP exchange rate of \$1 = ETB 8.60 (source: www.quandl.com/data/ODA/ETH_PPPEX-Ethiopia-Implied-PPP-Conversion-Rate-LCU-per-USD).

region, for example). Up-to-date HEA profiles³⁶ for Somali region put annual household income, including the value of produce for own consumption, at around 3,000 ETB per month. Only around 20% of households earn more. In other words, the vast majority of families, including those who feel they are coping, still live considerably below the poverty line: many could even double their household income and remain below it.

However, *resilience* is not just about being above the poverty line at given point in time. It has been estimated that even when poverty rates remain stable (see studies by the Chronic Poverty Centre), around half of poor households are in chronic poverty, and half have recently fallen in to poverty. Moving in and out of poverty, is clearly not a resilient existence. Households have to be much above the poverty line to reduce the likelihood of falling back into poverty.³⁷

Four things stand out in this story:

1. Success demanded a high degree of business skill, a certain ruthlessness in taking advantage of opportunities, a willingness to take investment risks, finding people to work for you and, crucially, the ability to move quickly from one investment to another.
2. A–’s family is resilient because they have a diversified portfolio of investments in food crops, livestock, cash crops, transport and milling. This is not only about spreading risk: the income from one venture opens up investment in another, as the grain from the mill feeds the exotic cattle.
3. The scale of investment needed to become ‘resilient’ is high. The mill cost almost \$8,000, but did not make A– resilient on its own. The vehicle cost over \$20,000, and there has been more

investment in exotic livestock and farming. To A– and his two wives (i.e. two households), this diverse portfolio comes from an overall investment per household (six people) of over \$15,000.

(This is of similar value to the herds of the upper quartile of the population in Sitti Zone, the only group to have viable livelihoods from their herds.)

Despite this, A–’s income is good, but relatively modest in international terms, probably around \$15,000 p.a. for his two households (12 people), equating to around \$3.50 per person per day, or, at PPP, around \$11 per person per day.

4. Finally, his path to resilience would probably have been impossible without the important first, reliable source of cash: *khat* production. The story of drug production offering the only route towards resilience is a familiar one in several countries. The implications of this are more rarely discussed in Ethiopia than in most other countries.

Among the households in the panel study, A–’s family was the only one that had clearly achieved resilience and appeared safe from falling back into the Churn Zone. This journey had taken them over 20 years. They remain hit by shocks and stresses – income from their cash crop was down by 80% because of the drought and one of their main businesses has seen prices falling because of increased competition – but there is reasonable certainty that they will continue to prosper in the face of predictable difficulties.

A–’s story puts a (very rough) estimate of an income threshold of around \$6–8 per person per day (at PPP) in West Hararghe to achieve resilience (which is lower than their probable current income), and an investment price of around \$15,000 per household (at real exchange rates) to achieve this.

36 The national updating of HEA profiles commenced in 2015, and was part-complete by late 2017.

37 The Chronic Poverty Network used panel data on income to assess what income level was needed to reduce the chance of falling back into poverty to under 10%. If we use this as a resilience threshold, they estimated it in Uganda to be at least five times the poverty line, equivalent to around ETB 15,000 per month in Ethiopia. In South Africa it is much higher at 20 times the poverty line.

Box 3: What does a resilient livelihood look like? The story of A--

One interviewee stood out as truly economically resilient. A--, a man of little formal education, though literate, had modest beginnings. His story is worth recounting in some detail, because it illustrates how resilience can be achieved; what it can look like; and what a distant dream it remains for most people.

At the fall of the Derg regime [in 1991], robbers killed my brother and burned my house. All I had left was a pair of oxen and a cow, so we sold an ox and bought a gun so I could defend my family, and we decided to move to the lowland area of Anchar where I had relatives and where it was peaceful.

After two years, we returned home with cattle, and started farming sorghum. Each year I saved a little from sorghum sales, and after saving for eight years, we bought two sewing machines at 1,500 ETB (\$200) each. I didn't know how to use them, but we rented them out at 30 ETB (\$4) per month. When I had the income from the sewing machines, I could save some of the grain from my harvest, and sell it when the price was high. I also used some of the income to buy more grain when the price was cheap, and sell it later. A few years ago, I sold it at three times the price I bought it for!

Then, after using one ox during the ploughing season, I agreed to slaughter it to share the meat among the villagers. I sold them the ox on credit for 1,500 ETB, but they had to repay in grain at the next harvest, and the price of grain was fixed when the meat was shared. When they repaid me, I was able to sell that grain for 10,000birr. This is how I do business. After hiring out the sewing machines for a

year, we talked over how much money we were making, and decided to sell them for 2,700 ETB.

Then we were able to buy a Chinese grain mill at 30,000 ETB, but after working for a year, it broke, and we were spending so much money repairing the damaged part so often that we decided to sell it after another year struggling to keep it going.

We were growing cereals by the edge of the forest, because that was the only land available, but because of wild animals damaging the crops, and because the land was really too swampy for cultivating grain, we moved into khat cultivation, especially on the land exposed to wild animals. With the income from that, we were able to drain the swampy fields.

In 2002/3, we bought an Indian grain mill at 65,000 ETB, which worked much better than the previous one. After running the mill for 12 years, we had saved enough to buy a 24-seater minibus for 450,000 ETB. We hired a driver and two conductors. I also pay three neighbours to work on our farm land, and I have someone who looks after my livestock. I want to buy another minibus, and move to town.

Now, as well as my mill and my minibus, and land for growing food, I have 0.5 hectares of khat that can bring in up to 80,000 birr twice a year. I have three Boran cattle kept with me for milking, and another two head of cattle and a few small animals being looked after by others. The cows feed on grass from grazing land I bought for 1,000 ETB in the swampy area, supplemented with grain left over from the mill.

3 Research question two: contingency

Has the availability of contingency funding enabled DFID and its partners to respond more quickly and effectively when conditions deteriorate?

To answer this, the evaluation has considered first the availability of contingency funding, in all its forms, and second whether DFID partners were able to respond quickly and effectively when conditions deteriorated. For the purpose of this summative report, contingency funding is defined as *additional early funding triggered in response to the crisis through existing pipelines*.

The definition of a quick and effective response is less straightforward, and clearly must be referenced to a particular event, or crisis. Potentially, a two-step logic can be applied to this question: was the response quick and effective? If it was, then was it more so than responses financed through other modalities?

There are multiple forms of contingency funding in use by DFID and its partners in Ethiopia. These exist on a number of levels: with the partners, with DFID Ethiopia, and with DFID centrally (see Table 1).

There were two separate crises during the lifetime of this evaluation that merited the use of contingency funds. In 2014 and 2015 there was a sudden influx of South Sudanese refugees fleeing that country's civil conflict. UNHCR requested and was granted use of their £1 million contingency to respond and both WFP and OCHA responded. It is not clear from partner reports if the discretionary contingency was used, given that it was unplanned. The evaluation has assumed this was the case.

The second crisis, much analysed and discussed in this report already, was the El Niño crisis of 2015 (which was in fact a prolonged drought in some places from 2014–2016). WFP and OCHA used the balance of their discretionary funds for this response. In addition, a significant extra tranche of funding was sourced from DFID central funds.

The contingency funds held with the partners meet the definition set out above and so can be analysed against these two crises. As the £33.5 million for quick disbursement approved in 2015 for the El Niño crisis went through the existing MY 'wrapper', the evaluation also considers this to be contingency funding (as does DFID at the central level), although later funds that necessitated a separate business case are not considered as purely contingency.³⁸

The evaluation did not conduct its own primary research with regard to the refugee response in 2014. However, UNHCR commissioned an evaluation of its response both in Uganda and Ethiopia, finding that 'In spite of the limited usefulness of the contingency plans and the limited preparedness, the UNHCR-coordinated response on a whole was timely and effective in saving lives and met the Regional Response Plans broad objectives' (Ambroso et al., 2016). The evaluation goes on to say that:

The UNHCR-coordinated response and the Ethiopian Government's strict adherence to the principle of non-refoulement enabled life-saving activities to be implemented, rapidly decreasing the high levels of malnutrition and along with it the associated mortality; however, the collection of mortality data needs to be strengthened.

However, the evaluation notes many less effective components of the response, including shelters built in the flood zone (transitional, so higher cost, that subsequently flooded and were ruined); long delays in the transit centre that was over-crowded and poorly served, and protection concerns.

Did contingency funding from DFID make the response *more* effective and timely than it might otherwise have been? The limited access to the UNHCR teams and the rapid turnover of staff has limited this evaluation's ability to make this judgement. Clearly, it was not the availability of DFID funding alone that allowed UNHCR

38 This is not as simple a distinction as it first appears. In fact the 'new' business case was in part necessary because the multi-year 'wrappers' ended in 2015 and so a bridging mechanism of sorts was needed before new multi-year funding came on stream. So it could be argued that the entire £60 million was contingency but as the purpose was the same as the £30 million this distinction is academic.

to respond; the UNHCR budget does not work this way. In fact, the global UNHCR budget allows for this type of unexpected response without having to first engage in fundraising. This is something the organisation is (rightly) very proud of, and as such it is unlikely that the availability of DFID contingency funding would have swayed decision-making much.

The logic chain regarding the 2015–2016 drought is more complex, and therefore the answer, too, is complicated. First, the timeliness and effectiveness of the response. It is clear from primary data gathered for this evaluation that the ‘formal’ response, i.e. that related to the contingency funding (especially central funds) came after the crisis began.

Figure 3 below shows that nearly two-thirds of people³⁹ in Sitti reported being in crisis at the beginning of 2015, and in West Hararghe by the middle of 2015. Only 20% reported having received aid at that point.

Only six EHF projects totalling roughly \$3 million were approved before May 2015. This was approximately 10% of the overall spend,⁴⁰ meaning the bulk of funds were not committed until nearly the middle of the year. WFP is linked to the government system, and did not significantly increase the numbers in need of food aid until after the middle of the year (i.e. at the time of the Humanitarian Requirement Document (HRD) revision in August), meaning people would not have started receiving that food until the third or even fourth quarters of 2015). Therefore,

it is safe to say that neither WFP nor OCHA/EHF invested major additional emergency response funds until roughly the middle of 2015. This suggests that discretionary contingency funds were not used ‘early’ on the timescale of actual felt need.

As can be seen from Table 8, DFID’s first centrally-released contingency funds were only approved in the middle of 2015, with the bulk of funds coming in the final quarter of that year.

Therefore, it is safe to say that funds (whether contingency or otherwise) did not come ‘early’ for those caught up in the crisis, and much of DFID’s contingency funding came long after the crisis could be classified as severe for many.

However, there are several nuances to consider. First, DFID contingency funding came earlier than other forms of funding that could have been deployed i.e. ‘regular’ funds. It is less clear whether larger volumes of funds might have come faster (the International Development Act, 1997, gives the Secretary of State discretion to approve funds as he or she sees fit, allowing rapid disbursement in an emergency).⁴¹ Seen from the perspective of the government’s declaration of emergency and the revision of various key strategy and fundraising instruments, DFID funds arrived quickly and in line with the trajectory of the response. Also, the government declared the failure of the *belg* rains in June 2015, and the increased numbers in need in August, and DFID released its first emergency funding for food in July.

Table 8: Approval dates for the release of DFID Ethiopia programme or central funds

Recipient	Sector	July 2015	October 2015	November 2015	December 2015
UNICEF	Nutrition – severe acute malnutrition		£11,540,000		
UNICEF	Nutrition – community-based management of acute malnutrition	£5,000,000		£5,000,000	
WFP	Food	£15,000,000			
HRF	Multi-sector		£20,000,000	£3,000,000	£6,333,000
UNICEF	WASH				£13,000,000

³⁹ The population of Sitti based on the 2007 census is approximately 550,000 people.

⁴⁰ The EHF allocated \$28.3 million to 58 projects in 2015. Source: 2015 EHF Annual Report.

⁴¹ In fact, central funds are not technically held in a ‘pot’ as a contingency (as used to be the case); rather, the Treasury holds such funds ‘virtually’, effectively guaranteeing that funds can be found from the current account as and when needed.

Second, many of those interviewed – especially in Sitti where the crisis was arguably most acute and severe – reported relying on relief food to survive. How can this be if the relief operation did not begin until nearly a year after two-thirds of people were in crisis, and perhaps a few months after the peak?⁴² The explanation almost certainly lies in the regular pipeline of PSNP and relief food that is delivered every year and often experiences lengthy time lags from central distribution points to the doorstep. The evaluation was unable to identify exactly what food people received at any one time to aid their survival, other than that it was from the government and WFP.⁴³ In any event, the ongoing provision of relief food and safety net food substituted for emergency aid. Or it could be viewed as further form of emergency aid: in a system of the size and complexity of that in Ethiopia, having ongoing distributions is more effective than trying to create a parallel response system.

Third, for many the crisis lasted a long time. In a situation of aid rationing, or prioritisation, it is important to think about the effects of stopping aid early if it is started early. This is a complex area and needs further research. Cabot Venton (2016) identified positive market effects from early aid. Prices can be stabilised by timely interventions, meaning that household resources go further. We certainly observed localised price increases of basic commodities in this study (although these were not observed at a regional and national level), and so there could have been economic benefits from early aid other than the most immediate and obvious. How much this can head off the need for aid at a later stage is beyond the scope of this study. It is only worth noting that the drought went on for a long time and people were reliant on aid for much of that period.

The same was found to be true for livestock feed – giving fodder early would have preserved animals, but withdrawing it before the end of the drought (two years later) would have meant that they died. The volume of fodder needed to sustain livestock for two years was found by this evaluation to be around one million tonnes, which is clearly unachievable. Once again, early introduction of aid may have had positive market effects, and certainly there would have been benefits to a functioning fodder market in Sitti, potentially avoiding many livestock losses and, at the very least, providing another option for those affected.

Contingency and early funding might make a difference to costs. When an emergency response is triggered, it is common for basic commodity and transport prices to rise. Surprisingly, grain prices did not rise significantly in the East Africa region as a whole during 2015, but there were severe transport blockages at the port of Djibouti when multiple aid shipments started to arrive, with ships awaiting offloading for days and sometimes weeks.

A VFM analysis for this evaluation found that early funding resulted in an 18% saving compared to what it might have cost purchasing food later (Cabot Venton, 2016). This same report models a number of possible scenarios and outlines the types of saving that are possible with some forethought and planning (Cabot Venton, 2016). This makes a strong argument for types of funding modality that can support such advanced thinking, into which contingency and MY approaches potentially fall.

The functioning of contingency funds used by DFID depended partly on their modality:

- Contingency parked with agencies will probably be used early – there is no reason to do otherwise as it is not possible to predict the future. There might not be another emergency in the grant period, so it makes sense to use (at least part) of the contingency for the first emergency that comes along.
- The contingency that can be parked with agencies is not of the scale needed for a national level emergency. In the event DFID needed three times the amount of contingency it had ‘parked’ with agencies for the El Niño crisis (for those same agencies), this in addition to all the other available resources.
- Money from the centre can come very quickly. DFID no longer technically has a central emergency reserve, but there tends to be enough resources in the system for emergency money to be deployed quickly.

On the basis of the Ethiopia evidence, a crude conclusion could easily be drawn that contingency funds ‘parked’ with agencies serves smaller scale crises and will probably be spent as soon as the first one comes around. For larger-scale crises, there will always be a need to dip into central funds.

⁴² Funds approved never translate neatly into aid on the ground – a treatment of exact timeframes would be unnecessarily lengthy for this report, but two months is considered fast.

⁴³ Households interviewed did not always know the origin of the aid; WFP were not able to share detailed enough data for the evaluation to make this judgement.

This (very) tentative conclusion is partly backed up by the findings on the use of ‘crisis modifiers’ in the El Niño crisis. This evaluation found that crisis modifiers were generally not of a scale needed for that response but could serve as seed funding to initiate a response.

Contingency funds are a great tool for mobilising a response once it is clear that one is needed, and may

well save money. Small contingency pots and crisis modifiers pre-approved with agencies are appropriate for smaller-scale emergencies. But only central funds delivered at scale can hope to address national emergencies. ‘Getting ahead’ of crises requires a level of analysis and an intimate knowledge of communities and their hazards and risks that is beyond simple financing mechanisms.

4 Research question three: value for money

To what extent does DFID MY and contingency funding provide better VFM than annual funding for DFID and its partners?

The theory of change underpinning the overall VFM analysis is that MY and contingency funding lead to early (or earlier) response and that early response leads to lower costs; better programming; and thus improved impact. This study therefore set out to test this theory by assessing:

- How far MYHF funds operated as MY funding primarily within the recipient organisation's own structures, and, where appropriate, that of implementing partners.
- Whether costs were lower as a result of MYHF/contingency funding.
- Whether programmes were more effective as a result of MYHF/contingency funding.

The analysis also considered whether the gains presented here could be achieved by more efficient use of early warning data to trigger responses with predictable, and/or the rapid release of, annual funding.

4.1 How far have MYHF funds actually operated as MY funding?

Although some findings have already been touched upon, they are usefully repeated here.

1. Funded partners do not necessarily pass on the benefits of MY financing to implementing agencies or beneficiaries.
2. It was generally agreed that the predictability of funds is more important for attaining improved outcomes than the compatibility of the systems for distributing those funds. For example:
 - a. The ERF offers predictability to OCHA, but, since its grants are strictly time-limited, this predictability does not extend to EHF-funded partners.

- b. UNHCR benefits from the predictability of MY financing. Its global governance structure, however, prevents the awarding of grants of more than 12 months to implementing partners.

The funded partners' systems can incorporate MYHF, and DFID's systems can work with these. However, benefits of MY funding can be cancelled out when the release of funding tranches depends upon timely reporting by both the recipient agency and their implementing partners. The problem has been managed thus:

1. UNHCR signs an annual tripartite Project Partnership Agreement with the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) and each implementing sub-contractor. This can be a lengthy process. Since 2014, a Letter of Mutual Intent signed with implementing partners has allowed HCR to release a first tranche once budgets are agreed. This allows projects to commence or continue before finalisation of the annual agreement.
2. WFP arranges corporate loans with their head office in Rome, allowing agreements to be made with farmers for the purchase of stocks from its Purchase for Progress programme prior to the settlement of seasonal contracts, and when market prices are lowest.

Despite their systems still operating on an annual basis, partners felt that, with predictable MY funding, they were able to innovate and plan over a longer period, leading to improved outcomes. Evidence for this, however, is thin.

4.2 Are costs lower as a result of MY/contingency funding?

4.2.1 Administrative costs

MY funding allows longer staff contracts (i.e. hiring or retaining experienced staff) and reduced overall

staffing costs.⁴⁴ WFP estimated that 27 days per year were saved for the four different staff levels required to draft, review and clear programme documents. This equated to a reduction in staff costs of approximately \$12,000 per year.

4.2.2 Leveraging funds

For the most part, agencies claimed that they were able to leverage additional funds as a result of MYHF. However, few examples could be given, and at one point OCHA claimed that as a result of guaranteed DFID funding, they received less from other donors (until the extent of the El Niño crisis became clear).

4.2.3 Operational costs

Funded partners all argued that MY funding brings lower operational costs particularly through early (and thus often cheaper) and bulk procurement and pre-positioning of stocks.⁴⁵

Predictability and flexibility are seen as two of the greatest benefits of MYHF, and this applies to DFID as much as it does to their funded partners. *Predictability* of funding allows partners to plan in advance. The *flexibility* of contingency funding allows partners to re-prioritise their activities depending on where the needs are greatest. By wrapping the £30 million approved in December 2015 into the interim Business Case for 2016/17 of £60 million, DFID was able to make savings on the time and cost of approval and disbursement.

MY agreements, if designed properly, can permit the rapid pivoting of funds to changing needs, without having to go through a lengthy approval process for new funds. UNHCR documented cost savings for both shelter and water in the refugee camps where MYHF allowed them to invest in better capacity and better programming. Box 5 quantifies those savings, although it is unclear whether the estimates for the water savings were actual or anticipated.

4.3 Are programmes more effective?

MY funds can support MY planning, which in turn can improve the design of programming. We include below a summary of feedback from global and country consultations on the potential impact of

Box 4: WFP maize purchases in Ethiopia

Direct local purchase of maize in April 2015 local prices (\$260/MT average) compared favourably with import parity prices of \$466/MT. This would represent a saving of about \$4.1 million, or an additional 15,000 MT of maize through direct local procurement. Most of the food purchased with DFID funds was procured locally, with just 4% purchased internationally.

In 2014, the average annual price paid for maize was \$316 per MT, while the average import parity price was \$443 per MT, constituting a saving of \$127 per MT, about 29% of the average international maize price.

Source: WFP Food Relief Support Project Completion Review 2016

Box 5: Cost savings from longer-term shelter

While transitional shelter is more expensive per unit than tents, the lifespan of a transitional shelter, costing \$690, is four years, whereas, in the semi-desert Dolo Ado refugee camps, tents need replacing every four months, at a cost of \$1,350 per year. The use of transitional shelter represented a saving of over \$5 million per year over the period.

Source: UNHCR (2015) . Annual Review review 2014, medium term assistance to refugees in Ethiopia

MYHF on improved programming, accompanied by a discussion of the value chain and potential for impact for several key sectors under MYHF.

4.3.1 Qualitative feedback

1. Partners felt that MYHF had the potential to encourage better designed programmes, that can learn, evolve and adapt over time, thus maximising gains in efficiency and effectiveness. They highlighted the *quality gains* that MY funding could promote, but evidence to substantiate these changes was thin. In examples from other countries, MY funding allows:

44 OCHA feels that MY funding also encourages better monitoring and evaluation (and thus quality) of projects. The evidence, however, was anecdotal.

45 As noted earlier, WFP has used its guaranteed multi-year funding as collateral on corporate loans, allowing early procurement of P4P stocks. Although MY funding is not a pre-requisite, it has allowed significant cost savings.

- better analysis: partners have more time to study the context more carefully and use this in programming;
- longer-term relationships with the same population groups, leading to more participatory approaches; and
- learning, meaning that programmes can and evolve or adapt over time, permitting more effective strategies.

In theory, some of these benefits could be realised with predictable annual funding: learning from year one can be incorporated in the project design for year two and beyond.

2. The assurance of MY funding could also mean:
 - a greater commitment to, and from, partners;
 - less emphasis on implementation alone, without compromising on that mission; and
 - a greater commitment to participatory approaches and rigorous evaluation.

Again, partner agencies were unable to offer concrete examples of how this worked in practice.

3. MYHF allows agencies to better pre-plan and pre-position goods. This meant earlier response through less days required to release funding and move aid. Again, while intuitively correct, there is little, if any, evidence to support this, and, because early is ill-defined, this may not hold true.

A report from WFP Ethiopia claimed that one of the many advantages of predictable, MY resources is that it facilitates the coordination of relief assistance among various actors. With DFID's resources, WFP knew which rounds, and how many people, it could cover. Based on this, other food providers (government and NGOs) could also plan the coverage of the remaining areas for a particular round. It allowed the prepositioning of stocks, and therefore more timely delivery, and it helped to avoid pipeline breaks.⁴⁶

Although MYHF may not be necessary for such gains, this example demonstrates how it allows agencies to think differently, here improving processes across the programme.

4.3.2 Multi-year humanitarian financing and long-term outlooks

This evaluation has found that the introduction of MYHF made little immediate difference to operations for two principal reasons:

1. The receiving agencies are not well adapted to, or configured for, the use of MY humanitarian financing; and
2. The system has evolved to work over multiple years regardless of funding arrangements.

These findings will be familiar to those who know the system in Ethiopia and in the humanitarian system more widely.

The first reason stems from the nature of the global humanitarian system and how the main UN agencies, funds and programmes largely operate on an annual basis. Taking the three DFID partners in turn:

- **WFP** operates on a medium-term basis – the PRRO to which over half the funding was allocated is a three-year operation – but the Ethiopian government food security system works on an annual basis. Twice-yearly needs assessments form the basis for the appeal documents, and donors – and the WFP itself – then commit funds based on the needs outlined in the appeal. The WFP has developed a variety of internal mechanisms that allow them to bank on a reasonable certainty of donor funding to circumvent the unpredictability of annual humanitarian funding. This minimises the risk of food pipeline breaks, due to the late arrival of funds, but does not extend the planning horizon.
- **The EHF**, managed by UN OCHA is explicitly short-term, making grants of a maximum 12-month duration. This is currently practice both in Ethiopia and globally. Although UN OCHA gets funding on a MY basis, the NGOs and UN agencies that spend the money do not. This means that no net difference is observed at either the implementing partner or the beneficiary level. (Paradoxically, UN OCHA in Ethiopia have at times found that a MY commitment was a hindrance, as other donors were less likely to reserve funding for the EHF, in the knowledge that it is already funded.
- **UNHCR** has a constitutional budget limit of one year. In practice, UNHCR almost always

⁴⁶ The DFID Annual Review of its support to WFP Ethiopia 2012–2015 states that the efficiency and effectiveness of WFP's relief operation improved in 2014. On average, the time from prioritization to allocation to delivery to FDPs by the Government of Ethiopia and WFP fell from 16 to 11 days. The time between delivery and distribution fell from 9 to 5 days. These gains were attributable to a framework contract for transport initiated under the DFID MYHF.

plans for the longer term, as most refugee crises are protracted (for example, the Dolo Ado camps were established in 2009). MY funding allows UNHCR to make explicit medium-term investments (such as water systems instead of trucking, or transitional shelter instead of tents), but their internal processes impede trickle-down of the benefits of MYHF to partners and their projects. This short-term outlook is further compounded in Ethiopia by the relationship with the government, under whose auspices UNHCR works. The agreement with the government refugee agency, ARRA, that defines how the two work together (including financing) often has to be negotiated on an annual basis.

Despite the annual planning cycle, the system thinks in MY terms. All of the entities mentioned above have been working in Ethiopia for decades (WFP since 1965, UNHCR since the late 1970s). They have huge operations, many offices, and long-term staff, assets and strategic planning processes. These agencies (or other major humanitarian donors such as USAID or the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)) do not work on the basis that they might be leaving Ethiopia at the end of the year (or even in the next decade).

This is also true of the major NGOs. One leading nutrition NGO told the evaluation they had been working in Ethiopia for 12 years with exclusively short-term funding.⁴⁷ This is because emergency response is more or less an annual event, and almost all organisations working in Ethiopia look for other sources of funding to ‘smooth’ the funding cycle.

In Ethiopia, complex food security system has evolved. The same is true of nutrition, where the government operates many thousands of small, village-level clinics that can treat moderate and even uncomplicated severe malnutrition. A sophisticated supply system, which includes factories manufacturing nutritional supplements domestically, is in operation to ensure people are served in time. This system has taken years to build up, due to a combination of organic evolution and robust planning. It is increasingly inter-twined with the PSNP, which effectively runs off the same food pipeline, storage and distribution system. This provides further buffering against funding or supply shortfalls, and further integrates one-off emergency responses into a larger pattern of almost constant relief-type supply. However, much of the system is dependent on the political decision-making process to work effectively.

The same is largely true of non-food responses such as water, health and relief items.

Therefore, although emergency funding tends to be for six months or less, the planning cycle and various systems work over a longer timeframe. In addition, the majority of agencies that are part of the emergency response system also have development programmes, or hybrid emergency-development programmes (now labelled resilience). Most have private or discretionary funds that can be used to pay for standing capacity, so they retain emergency capacity over the long term, in anticipation of short-term grants that either overlap, or can be supplemented by, other sources of funding. The product of these arrangements is a system that largely remains in place, expanding and contracting depending on the severity of each year’s crisis. The PSNP and the various government health and nutrition programmes make this system increasingly predictable for those accessing services and support; they also provide government with a multi-layered system that can flex as needed.

The arrangements described above ensure – in a rather chaotic way – that there is standing capacity for emergency response. The analogy often used is that of a fire brigade that relies on a number of bilateral relationships between government and its largest development partners, and a network of agencies that have to display a degree of entrepreneurship, to make sure they are ready to respond. But it is not a system that seeks to address the root causes of emergencies or to help people cope ahead of time.

The PSNP addresses the root causes of emergencies to a degree. It works quite well, and is reasonably well integrated with the ‘fire brigade’ arrangements. For example, as already noted, it became clear that when drought struck in Sitti Zone in 2014/2015 it was the food from PSNP, relief food from previous responses and local fundraising efforts in the public and private sectors that kept people going, rather than ‘new’ emergency response resources.

This adds another layer of complexity to the system. Even with standing capacity, response at scale typically requires over three months for aid to reach those who need it. Capacity must have a medium- or long-term perspective; however, the system does not deal with the long-term causes of problems, and cannot be expected to do so. In this sense, thinking about relief structures is still short-term in nature; it fixes immediate problems, rather than working in anticipation or prevention of a crisis. The existing approach is not designed to build resilience

47 Another NGO leader in 2014 commented that they expect to be in the country in 40 years’ time!

and the introduction of MY funding (at this point in time) will not necessarily generate change. However, predictable funding does allow standing capacity to be retained a little more securely, although in Ethiopia this was already largely achieved by other means.

4.3.3 What MYHF means for DFID Ethiopia

While the introduction of MYHF has not revolutionised the way humanitarian work is undertaken in Ethiopia, it has offered some gains for DFID. First, it has cut the bureaucracy associated with securing funding internally on an annual basis. This frees up more intellectual resources to engage with partners and other teams within DFID, and to oversee the programmes. Second, and more importantly, it has allowed DFID itself to think differently. While the first MYHF business case followed the same patterns as before, but over a longer timeframe, the second is quite different. The Building Resilience in Ethiopia (BRE) business case is oriented much more toward strengthening government and building a

more sustainable, longer-term, predictable emergency response system.

This is an important aspect of MYHF: it allows for, and should prompt, a longer-term perspective, which forces the realisation of longer-term working. If emergency response is systemic, then MY funding can encourage reflection and action on how to do it better. This medium-term perspective should also allow for greater risk-taking and the testing of different approaches. This allows for an approach like BRE – funding traditional partners, while also bringing in new capacity in the hope that this will offer more at the end of the funding period.

Finally, MYHF offers DFID the flexibility to meet unforeseen emergencies (by reallocating funds quickly across partners or years). Additional funds can be added if emergencies are bigger than anticipated (as seen for DFID during the El Niño emergency) and such flexibility could allow for earlier response.

5 Conclusions

This evaluation has found that five elements contributed to resilience in the areas studied and exposed primarily to a long drought. These were:

1. The meso-economy.
2. Social capital and community resilience.
3. Adaptive capacity.
4. Education (particularly for future resilience).
5. Secure access to land.

While the long drought (2014–2016) in some of the study areas was the primary shock experienced during the evaluation, there were many other small and longer-term shocks. These included floods and crop pests as well as individual health shocks and other family setbacks. Stresses and the lack of opportunity from underdevelopment were an even greater challenge. The impacts from these various shocks often merge, meaning that coping strategies tend to be similar.

Resilience is rooted in the options available to a person, household or community, and their ability to adapt in the face of stress, or a sudden or slow-onset idiosyncratic or covariate shock. In non-drought years, highland agriculturalists had few options to diversify and little opportunity to expand production due to lack of land, limited markets and, often, cultural barriers. Lowland populations had opportunities, in general, to increase production and income in the short term; they had access to wider markets and, through family and clan ties, more options to spread costs and risks. However, they were highly vulnerable to drought, suffering dramatic losses of their main asset (livestock), although they also recover faster in the right conditions.

The national economy is often largely irrelevant in marginalised areas – economic and institutional policy interventions and investments at the *meso-level* are likely to have the greatest impact for households, communities and local populations. But small towns and cities offer many opportunities for additional work and income in times of distress. Functioning fodder markets (hay, concentrate), financial services, competitive markets for animals in poor condition, veterinary services and reliable seasonal weather forecasts are just a few examples of the localised and contextualised measures that can dramatically enhance resilience.

In some societies, including some of those studied in Ethiopia, *extended family members or the clan* are more likely than the community to boost a family or individual's resilience. During the El Niño drought in Sitti Zone, clan networks were vital (even if ultimately unsuccessful) for finding emergency pasture. Family networks enabled additional income opportunities. In West Hararghe too, the most immediate help was in the form of small loans from family or friends, but their lack of kinship networks over a wider geographical area meant limited opportunities for migration and other forms of income or work.

Adaptive capacity has been widely associated with resilience in academic literature. However, this should be seen as distinct from the assets, technologies, markets and public services with which it has been equated in some recent models. This would ignore the role of the individual's willingness, aspiration and ability to experiment and adapt and the entrepreneurial skill, drive and willingness to take risks and grasp opportunities. These are both individual qualities and are shaped by social norms.

For many, *education* was seen as the route out of poverty, particularly for their children, often linked to aspirations for urban livelihood opportunities.

Finally, *secure access to land* was a huge factor in whether people could achieve some form of resilience. Tiny landholdings condemned many to inherently unviable livelihoods. Assistance such as the PSNP kept them alive, but at a level so far below the poverty line that talk of their 'livelihood' is misleading. In the current situation, attaining the poverty line will remain an unrealistic dream for many, and the ability to ride out shocks (resilience) even more so.

5.1 Aid programming and resilience

DFID's willingness to experiment with new aid models is to be congratulated. The realisation that short-term approaches in Ethiopia are only one part of a complex policy mix has promoted much-needed

debate and reflection on where humanitarian action best fits. MY humanitarian approaches in protracted or recurrent crises have been widely adopted since this study began, demonstrating how influential DFID can be.

However, this study has found that in its first iteration, MYHF has not dramatically altered the way DFID's partners work. Resources have mainly been spent as before, both because the annual planning inherent in agencies' systems meant MYHF was not translated into MY planning or thinking; and because agencies had already developed bureaucratic systems for maintaining a continuous operating presence even with annual funding. There have been some small cost savings, and contingency funding enabled agencies to respond faster and in a smoother way than they might have otherwise done. But the full promise of MY approaches is yet to become reality; this is of course expected given that this was the first time it had been implemented.

This evaluation has found that MYHF is well suited to the Ethiopia context, where recurrent shocks and chronic poverty combine to expose many millions to destitution or worse. Predictable humanitarian funding enables a standing system to save lives when acute shocks happen. Furthermore, social protection programmes such as the PSNP offer a safety net, which this evaluation found was critical during the 2014–2016 drought in preventing further loss of life.

For MYHF to build resilience however, there are further challenges, at least in the Ethiopia context. Resilience-building has to be done *at scale*. Current projects are of insufficient geographical spread and ambition to have a discernible economic impact and this requires new thinking. Most resilience approaches are reworking past efforts, albeit with some welcome new innovations.

The challenge both for the next iteration of MYHF, and for development efforts generally in marginal and poverty-stricken areas of Ethiopia, will be finding the right mix of genuinely new approaches. Setting much longer timeframes for 'multi-year', perhaps by having long-term strategies and rolling, medium-term financing envelopes may be part of this new solution.

The evidence in this study demonstrates that predictable medium-term humanitarian financing is beneficial for life-saving efforts and provides better value. But it does not – at least on its own – build resilience if we understand this as the ability to significantly reduce the impact of shocks. That requires a much bigger effort and a more strategic blend of policy and financing instruments. Neither will a handful of projects branded 'resilience' reduce the humanitarian caseload. Chronic poverty, destitution farming and marginalised peripheral economies are the underlying factors of humanitarian need in Ethiopia, and this too requires a scale greater than humanitarian action alone can bring to bear.

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