

Destitution in Dinki, Amhara Region, Ethiopia: Conceptions, Characterisations, Comparisons and Shocks

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Introduction

Qualitatively rich studies of poverty and destitution in Ethiopia are rare (Aspen 2003, Yared 2002, 2003). Quantitative studies tend to focus on objective data from macro or panel surveys (Tassew and Daniel 2002, Dercon 2004). There are few attempts to combine quantitative and qualitative data (Bevan and Bereket 1996, Sharp *et al.* 2003), or to compare objective measures with subjective self evaluations (Dercon and Hoddinott 2007). This paper² seeks to contribute by considering cultural constructions and social realities of destitution, comparing and contrasting the destitute, very poor with the rest, considering cases of poverty dynamics to understand processes, perceptions, and impacts of social shocks among extremely poor household heads in Dinki, Amhara Region,³ studied by the Wellbeing in Developing Countries Project (WeD).⁴

The first part discusses the terms used to describe extreme poverty and considers how the destitute are characterised by others and by themselves. The second part compares the destitute, very poor and the rest in terms of various resources: material, human, economic, social and cultural using data from the WeD 2004 Resources and Needs Survey (RANS). The third part considers poverty dynamics, objective changes and subjective perceptions, and processes between 1994 and 2004 based on cases selected from the Ethiopian Rural Household Survey (ERHS) for 1994 and 2004 and the WeD 2004 RANS and interviewed in mid 2005, using a module that included open-ended questions, timelines and graphs. Ten cases are presented including ones whose objective and subjective wealth status had declined between 1994 and 2004, cases of very poor in 1994 and in 2004 and a poor but happy case. The fourth part considers the impact of shocks based on the RANS data on shocks. Studies of shocks have tended to focus largely on agricultural/natural shocks which are more frequent (Dercon *et al.* 2007) with less attention to social and political shocks (with the exception of health, e.g. Dekker 2006). This section presents follow up interviews in 2005 with 10

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³ The site is situated in Ankober *wereda* in north-eastern Shewa.

⁴ The WeD project based at the University of Bath has been carried out in Bangladesh, Thailand Peru and Ethiopia from 2003 to 2006. In Ethiopia four rural and two urban sites were studied, the four rural sites being ones that have been surveyed by the ERHS.

households who reported different kinds of social shocks, including death, accidents, disputes, divorce, and discrimination (conscription and resettlement). The final part seeks to draw out empirical and methodological conclusions.

1. Cultural views and social characterisations of destitution

This section is based on the Elites and Destitutions mini pilot module carried out in October 2004 in the six WeD sites; the following discussion deals only with data from Dinki. Male and female researchers were first to talk to knowledgeable informant(s) with whom they had developed trust on questions relating to who the destitute are, how they can be distinguished, whether the condition can be changed and inherited, what the survival strategies of the destitute were, their relations with others and involvement in institutions. The two researchers each then held discussions with three to five persons who were identified as destitute. The following summary is therefore based on discussions with four knowledgeable non-destitute informants, three female and one male, and seven destitutes, three male and four females.

1.1. Terms used to refer to the destitute

Five terms were used to refer to destitute persons. Three of these use adjectives qualifying the basis term for poor (*däha*). One of these expressions *bät'am däha* or 'very poor' simply emphasizes extreme poverty. The second *yämäč'äräša däha* or 'the last of the poor', i.e. the poorest of the poor, is relational in distinguishing the poorest from the poor. The third qualifying adjective *miskin*, deriving from the Arabic (Cowan 1976: 909), has a connotation of misery and wretchedness (Leslau 1976:24, Kane 1990:219) with the implication that others should feel sorry for them. The remaining two terms emphasise their material indigence: *yat'a* literally 'lacking' refers to their not having possessions and *minim yäléläw*, 'one who has nothing' also highlights penury. None of the terms suggest that the destitute are conceived of as a category apart or that they are socially ostracised or marginalised and the Amharic usage of the term *miskin* does not seem to have the Arabic connotation of submissiveness and servility but rather the connotation of deserving pity and hence assistance.

In discussing the situation in Wällo the *Destitutions Study in the North-Eastern Highlands* study found five terms that qualify the term *däha*, including two of those mentioned above: *yämäč'äräša däha*, and also *menem yäléläw*. The authors include other terms such as *čegertäña* 'those with problems', *s'om adari* 'those who spend the night fasting', i.e. go to bed hungry, and *weha anfari* 'those who cook water'. However, the terms *miskin*, and *yat'a* were not among the eleven terms considered. The authors suggested that three elements: inability to meet basic needs, lack of assets and dependence on others recur frequently, that some terms imply being on the last or the bottom level of society and others suggest reaching the end of one's resources and habitual hunger. They also conclude that the destitute were seen as extremely poor rather than categorically different, and that there may be seen as being on the bottom of a sliding scale of poverty into which anyone may fall at some time⁵ (Sharp *et al.* 2003:11-2).

⁵ This may be behind the way in which beggars are sometimes referred to as *yäné bit'é* literally 'someone like me' (Kane 1990:945).

1.2. Characterisations of the destitute by others

In describing what characterised the destitute both the male and female respondents described them firstly in terms of what they lacked, notably having no livestock ('not even a hen'), no land or very little which was sometimes referred to as *yādekuman mārét*, literally 'land of the tired' i.e. weak or feeble (Kane 1990:1816), no money, and especially insufficient food, lacking *yäelät qurs*, literally 'daily breakfast', or basic food so that they faced uncertainty of daily subsistence and often went hungry, had less meals, or sometimes made do with *qolo* 'roasted cereals'. They were said all to have a house but that it was small, shabby, in poor condition. They were also said to lack even basic assets.

What distinguished the poor from the destitute was that the former had at least some assets, land, animals and were assured of daily food whereas the destitute were not. One woman, Gét'é, suggested that the poor produce the food they eat from their own land whereas the destitute do not.

However in addition to material lackings respondents mentioned poor health, long term illness, and old age as common attributes of the destitute. These attributes were also noted in the NorthEastern Highlands Destitutions Study. In relational terms they were characterised as 'lacking helpers', often single or with just a spouse, although Gét'é, mentioned that they could also be with [too] many children. They also could not afford to join *edder* 'burial associations' though local traditions of charity provide them with burial services. Regarding how they became destitute, one of the men Ahmäd suggested that it could be through ill health, laziness but that it could also happen despite hard work and efforts.

In terms of what they did to survive the destitute were said often to be *muyatäña* 'daily labourers' working for the wealthy rather than on their own account, they sold firewood to earn money, the men were involved in weaving and the women in spinning as sources of income generation. During times of severe drought farmers who are not destitute and do not engage in weaving at other times may turn to weaving as a survival strategy as happened in 1984-5. The destitute rely heavily on others. Ahmäd suggested that they borrow grain, money and other necessities from neighbours and relatives. Gét'é mentioned that they had to pay high interest on borrowed money, and relied on help from relatives or the wealthy. Mulatwa emphasised that they could work for the wealthy only if they were healthy. Ayäläč stressed that since they had little land they could not work and produce efficiently and therefore could not have a good quality of life. However, they were not perceived as socially set apart or marginalised.

In terms of their attitudes to life they were said to experience hopelessness and not believe that they could escape poverty. Asked whether destitution was inherited, Ahmäd suggested that this was not always the case as a labourer's children may manage to improve their lives, and some people were able to escape poverty through remittances sent by children working abroad. Likewise, Gét'é suggested that they could improve their conditions but only if they were not very sick or too old. However, Ayäläč said that destitution was often inherited.

1.3. Self characterisations of the destitute

Among the three men and four women who were approached as being among the destitute all recognised that they were among the poorest or some even described themselves as the poorest, and they believed they were known as such. 'Every body knows I am the poorest' as Siti put it. All three men and one of the women were elderly, in their sixties in the case of the men and the woman in her seventies. One man and one woman were living entirely on their

own, two men were living only with their wife, one woman was living with her husband only, another only with her children and the third with her father, brother and small child.

All of the destitute had a house, though these were small. Most did not have much land beyond the house plot. Mahmud had a little plot of land that a relative gave him and Aba Muga lived with a wife he married recently living on her land. Mulunäš worked on her father's land and lived with him. None of the destitute had livestock, 'not even a hen' as several of them put it.

All the destitute said they faced food shortages. Zahara mentioned sometimes not having food all day, Fatuma said she usually ate twice a day (unlike other people eating three times). Mulunäš said did not eat everyday and sometimes had to survive on some roasted grain.⁶ Fatuma mentioned that she lacked money to go to the health centre when feeling ill, and worried who would take care of her when she became very sick. Mulunäš pointed out that her clothes were very old.

In terms of the survival strategies weaving, daily labour and firewood collection and sale were important. Ababu depended on weaving as his health is not good enough for agricultural work and Aba Muga also weaved. Mahmud worked as a daily labourer, exchanged his labour to get oxen service and also collected firewood for sale. Ababu mentioned that he was exempted from community work. Among the women Zahara only worked in the house and relied on her husband who worked for others. She did the domestic work, fetching water, and sometimes went to market. Fatuma used to spin cotton to earn money but is now too old and her eyesight is not good enough to do so. Mulunäš worked on her father land.

The destitute men had all been relatively well off previously and all three have suffered from ill health. Ababu's mother was a landlord with a lot of land. After the revolution most of the land was taken but he was left with a small amount. However, even that was taken since he and his mother were too ill to cultivate it and pay the tax. Mahmud was involved in trade, living in Metahara but when he fell ill came to live in Dinki where a relative gave him a plot and has since been living there in poverty. Aba Muga had land during the Derg and a good family life. Things went wrong for him when his best friend ran off with his wife taking much of his property too. He has been very unhappy and said he still feels the pain of humiliation though he has remarried recently.

The destitute did not express a sense of being deliberately excluded, ostracised and isolated. They are too poor to join *edder*, but would receive burial services. The two Christian women belonged to a Mariam *māhabār*, and the two Muslim women drank coffee on the first of the month with neighbours. They borrowed tools and food from neighbours, socialised with them and some obtained support when needed from relatives. Siti said: 'Everybody feels sorry for me and supports me'. Fatuma mentioned neighbours giving her cereals in the harvest season. Mahmud borrows grain from friends and lenders, entering agreements to repay in kind after the harvest, but double the amount borrowed.

Regarding their aspirations among the women Zahara said she hoped to get land and enough food to survive. Mulunäš likewise aspired to get her own land to improve her life. Siti said she prayed to Allah to give her a better life, and give her family good health. Likewise Fatuma prayed to Allah for daily food and health to work hard. Among the men Ababu said he had no aspirations to change his life, and expressed a sense of hopelessness. Mahmud aspired to gain more land through *māgazo* share-cropping arrangements, if Allah keeps him in good health, and Aba Muga said he prayed to Allah to help him get money hoping his life might change.

⁶ Reducing meals amounts and frequency is common in times of food shortage (Pankhurst and Bevan 2004).

2. Comparing the destitute, very poor with the rest

The following section considers the resource (material, human, economic, social and cultural), of the destitute and very poor in comparison with the rest of the sample, which consisted of all the 169 households. Since the number of the very poor (19) and the destitute (10) is small the significance of the comparison should be considered indicative and subject to confirmation after considering the other WeD sites.

2.1. Material resources

2.1.1. Land and livestock

In discussing destitution lack of livestock and land was seen as defining the destitute ('not having even a hen') and very few livestock as characterising the very poor. In the wealth boxing of the households surveyed in the RANS, the destitute were defined as those with no land and no livestock and comprised 10 households. The very poor were defined as those with no livestock and less than 1 hectare of land (6 households) and those with no land and less than 1 Tropical Livestock Unit (4 households) and those with up to half a hectare of land and up to half a TLU (9 households).

Table 1: Land and Livestock Averages

Resource	entire sample (n 169)	very poor (n 19)	destitute (n 10)
land holding mean	1.17	0.33	0
with irrigated land	44 (26%)	0	0
livestock TLU mean	2.18	0.19	0
oxen mean	0.75	0	0
cow mean	0.68	0	0
goat mean	1.87	0.11	0
chicken mean	3.36	2.05	0

None of the destitute had livestock or land. Among the very poor with livestock three only had chickens (7, 4 and 1) and one had a cow. None of those with land had irrigated land and the maximum holding of 10 households with land was 0.5 hectares.

2.1.2. Food adequacy and shortage

In discussing destitution respondents noted that the destitute and very poor faced food shortage and reduced meals.

Table 2: Food adequacy and proportion of shortages by type of food

	food adequacy				shortage staple		shortage proteins		shortage vegetable		shortage meat	
	no	%	just	%	yes	%	yes	%	yes	%	yes	%
all sample	72	43	97	57	111	66	133	79	116	67	111	66
very poor	13	68	6	32	16	84	14	74	15	79	16	84
destitute	9	90	1	10	10	100	8	80	10	100	10	100

The RANS data shows that in the overall sample more than half the households said that their food was 'just adequate' but 43% said it was inadequate. However, among the very poor more than two thirds said their food was inadequate and all the destitute except one said it was inadequate. Shortage of meat, vegetables and staples were also higher among the very poor, and among the destitute all 10 households mentioned shortage of meat, vegetables and staples.

2.1.3. Assets

In the views expressed about the destitute and very poor lack or shortage of assets was mentioned.

Table 3: Main assets and number and proportion of households owning them

assets	entire sample	%	very poor	%	destitute	%
Axe	141	83.4	12	63.2	1	10
Bed	124	73.4	12	63.2	4	40
Sickle	122	72.2	7	36.8	0	0
Lamp	122	72.2	12	63.2	4	40
Plough	110	65.1	5	26.3	0	0
Pots	107	63.7	14	73.7	1	10
Jerry can	105	62.1	13	68.4	4	40
Hoe	95	56.2	6	31.6	0	0

The above table from the RANS of assets which more than half the sample had confirms that the very poor are significantly worse off than the overall sample and that the destitute are considerably worse off than the very poor. Only a quarter of the very poor had a plough, as compared to almost two thirds of the entire sample. None of the destitute had a plough, a hoe or a sickle, which may be related in part to them being female headed.

Table 4: Asset quintiles and means

Asset quintile	1 (lowest)	2	3	4	5 (highest)	mean
Entire sample	20 %	20 %	20 %	20 %	20 %	2.57
very poor	26 %	37 %	16 %	10 %	10 %	- 0.28
destitute	50 %	30 %	20%	0	0	- 1.11

The asset index data based on the RANS produced by Marleen Dekker also show that most of the very poor were in the lower asset quintiles; half the destitute in the lowest quintile and the

rest in the second and third from the bottom. Comparing the asset means, the average for the site was 2.57, whereas for the very poor it was -0.28 and for the destitute -1.11.

2.1.4. Housing

Regarding housing the cultural view of the destitute suggested that they had small poor houses. The RANS data provides evidence on view of housing adequacy, whether the household owns the dwelling, and whether there is a livestock yard, kitchen and food store.

Table 5: housing adequacy, ownership, livestock yard, food store and kitchen

housing	housing adequacy			own dwelling	livestock yard	food store	kitchen
	no	just	more	yes	yes	yes	yes
all sample	57 33.7%	111 65.7%	1 0.6%	125 73.9%	43 25.4%	123 72.7%	106 62.7%
very poor	8 42%	11 58%	0	19 100%	3 16%	3 16%	3 16%
destitute	6 60%	4 40%	0	8 80%	1 10%	1 10%	0

Of the total sample 1/3 considered their housing inadequate and almost two third felt it was adequate. Among the very poor the majority (58%) though it was just adequate but 42% thought it was inadequate; among the destitute 60% thought it was inadequate. Interestingly all the very poor and 80% of the destitute own their dwelling as compared to 74% of the sample, showing that as was mentioned in the module on destitution the poor and very poor are not generally homeless. However, in terms of additional components of the house, almost three quarters of the sample have a livestock yards, where as only three of the very poor and one of the destitute do, and likewise the majority of households (63%) have a food store, whereas only three of the very poor and none of the destitute do, and 43% of the sample own a kitchen but only three of the very poor and one of the destitute do.

2.1.5. Clothing

The destitute and very poor were said to have poor clothing. Being able to buy new clothing especially for annual festivals was considered an important cultural goal.

Table 6: Clothing adequacy

clothing	clothing adequacy		
	no	just	more
all sample	83 49.1%	83 49.1%	3 0.17%
very poor	14 73.6%	5 26.3%	0
destitute	10 100%	0	0

The RANS satisfaction with clothing data shows that almost half the sample consider that their household's clothing was just adequate and the same proportion that it was inadequate. Only a quarter of the very poor consider their clothing as just adequate and none of the destitute do so.

2.2. Human resources

2.2.1. Demographic data: sex, age, number of children of head and household size

The destitute and very poor were characterised as often being aged and lacking in support.

Table 7: Sex, age and number of children of household head and average household size

	sex of household head				mean age household head	mean household size	mean no of children of household head
	male	%	female	%			
Sex entire sample	131	77.5	4.08	3.96	47.15	4.08	3.96
very poor	8	42.1	3.11	3.20	46.37	3.11	3.20
destitute	0	0	1.70	2.0	55.50	1.70	2.0

All ten of the destitute households were female headed. The 19 households that were very poor included eleven female headed and eight male-headed households. This suggests a strong association between extreme poverty and female headed households who only represent 22.5% of the total sample.

Among the destitute households four household heads were in their 60s and two in 70s age categories, and among the very poor four were in their 60s and two in their 70, suggesting that old age is one pathway to destitution.

The average household size for the entire sample is 4.08, and the size decreases to 3.11 for the very poor and to 1.7 for the destitute, suggesting that the very poor and especially the destitute have much smaller households. Among the very poor the women had had between one and seven children (three had had seven children) whereas the men had between none and four children with three each having had no children or only one, suggesting that not having children or few may be a factor for men.

Among the destitute women five were elderly living on their own, two others were elderly living with children or grandchildren. Among the very poor two of the men and one of the women were elderly living on their own. This suggests that a number of elderly live on their own with little support. Four of the elderly women were living with grandchildren.

2.2.2. Marital status

Table 8: Marital status

sex	status		entire sample		very poor		destitute	
	male	%	female	%	male	female	female	
married	110	83.9	3	7.9	6	1	0	
divorced	7	5.3	13	34.2	0	3	6	
widowed	5	3.8	22	57.9	0	7	4	
single	9	6.8	0	0	2	0	0	
total	131	100	38	100	8	11	10	

In terms of marital status there is a significant gender imbalance with the vast majority of the men married (84%) and only a small minority of women married (8%). Most of the women are widowed (58%) or divorced (34%). Among the very poor women seven were widows, three divorced and only one married, whereas among the men six were married and two single (one never married), and none were divorced or widowed, suggesting clear gender dimensions to widow and divorcee statuses.

Six of the destitute women were divorced and the remaining four were widows (all elderly).

2.2.3. Activities

The pattern of activities in which household heads were involved was asked in terms of the primary and secondary activities in the past month (and also for the past year).

Table 9: Men's primary and secondary activities in the last month

men's activities	entire sample		Very poor	
	prim.	second.	prim.	second.
farming	114	2	7	
unable to work old age	9			
weaver	5	10		1
trader	1			
disabled/sick	1		1	
agricultural labourer	1	5		1
manual workers		8		1
health work traditional		1		1
herding		5		
fetching wood/water		4		
smith		2		
leatherworker		1		
tree nursery manager		1		
total	131	39	8	4

Farming was the primary activity for 87 % of the men. Almost 7% said they were unable to work due to old age. Weaving was important as not just as a primary activity of 4%, but also as a quarter of the secondary activities mentioned. Other activities were very limited, and included 1 tracer, and for secondary activities 8 men involved in manual work, five as agricultural labourers, five herding. There were two men involved as part-time smiths and one

as a leatherworker. Among the very poor all mentioned farming as the primary activity except for one man who was disabled/sick. As secondary activities there was an agricultural labourer, a manual worker, and a traditional health worker.

Table 10: Women's primary and secondary activities in the last month

women's activities	entire sample		very poor		destitute	
	<i>prim.</i>	<i>second</i>	<i>prim</i>	<i>second</i>	<i>prim.</i>	<i>second</i>
housewife	11	8	4	2		3
Spinning	11	6	4	2	5	
unable to work old age	5		1		4	
fetching wood/water	1	3		1		1
processing home food	1	5		2		1
cooking	1	3			1	
farming	3					
agricultural labourer	1					
make <i>areqe/tella</i>	1		1			
weaver		1				
teacher		1				
studying	1		1			
other	2	3		2		
total	38	30	11	9	10	5

Domestic work was the primary activity of 37% (mainly 29% as housewives, one each mentioned cooking, fetching wood/water, processing food for home consumption). Spinning was mentioned by 11 women (29%). Other activities were limited. Farming was mentioned by three women, and five women said they were unable to work due to old age. One woman mentioned being an agricultural labourer, and one making *areqe/tella* and one studying. Secondary activities were mainly domestic mentioned 19 women (63%), one woman mentioned teaching (Qoranic education), and another weaving. Among the very poor seven women mentioned spinning two as a primary and five as a secondary activity, and one was unable to work due to old age. Among the destitute five women mentioned spinning as their primary activity and four were unable to work due to old age. One mentioned cooking as her primary activity, and for secondary activities three said they were housewives, one processing food and another fetching wood/water.

In terms of activities among the destitute for their primary activity in the past month five mentioned spinning, four said they were unable to work through old age, and three mentioned being a housewife/homemaker as their secondary activity, one fetching wood and water, and one processing food for household consumption.

Among the very poor seven of the men replied that their primary activity in the past month was farming and one was disabled/sick, whereas five of the women mentioned spinning, four housework, and one unable to work due to old age. For their secondary activity among the men one was an agricultural labourer, a manual worker, a weaver and a traditional health worker. Among the women four mentioned spinning, two housework, two processing food for household consumption, and one fetching wood/water. The occupational data suggests that spinning is particularly important for destitute and very poor women and that working as agricultural or manual labourers, weaving and disability may be relevant for men.

2.3. Economic resources

Economic resources considered below include borrowing, working outside the household, purchase of foodstuffs and sale of main produce.

2.3.1. Borrowing

Table 11: Number and proportion borrowing money by source

borrow	entire sample	very poor	destitute
yes	111	11	2
no	47	7	7
friend/neighbour relative	52 46	7 3	2
money lender shop-keeper microcredit	4 3 2	1	

The data are limited but suggest that most of the sample household heads borrow money, mainly from friends, neighbours and relatives. Unexpectedly borrowing seems less among the very poor and especially the destitute, none of whom borrow from money lenders or micro-credit organisations, possibly since they may not be considered credit worthy.

2.3.2. Working outside the household

Table 12: Number and proportion working and wanting to work outside the household

work	entire sample	%	very poor	%	destitute	%
yes	53	33	6	32	1	11
no	109	67	13	78	8	89
want to not want to	68 94	42 58	8 11	42 58	1 8	11 89

The data suggest that the about a third of households have members working outside the household. This is also the case for the very poor but only one of the destitutes did so. There was a slightly higher expression of a wish to work outside the household 42 percent, also reflected among the very poor but not the destitute, possibly since they are female headed households.

2.3.3. Purchase of foodstuffs

Table 13: Proportion of foodstuffs purchased

PURCHASE	Staple	vegetable	meat	beans	oil	flavour
NONE						
sample	41	44	54	5	10	1
very poor	4	4	5	1	3	0
destitute	1	3	6	1	2	1
SOME						
sample	121	118	107	157	152	161
very poor	15	15	12	18	16	19
destitute	8	6	3	8	7	8
SMALL PROPORTION						
sample	73	51	69	8	3	1
very poor	6	5	4	1	0	0
destitute	0	0	0	0	0	0
AROUND HALF						
sample	36	15	13	9	1	1
very poor	6	0	4	0	0	0
destitute	2	2	1	1	1	1
A LARGE PROPORTION						
sample	4	13	1	10	2	4
very poor	2	2	0	1	0	0
destitute	2	1	0	1	0	0
ALL						
sample	8	39	24	130	146	155
very poor	1	8	4	16	16	19
destitute	4	3	2	6	6	7

The table shows that three quarters of households purchase staples. Over 90% of households purchase flavour (99%), beans (97%), oil (94%). Almost three quarters purchase vegetables and two-thirds purchase meat. A slightly higher proportion of the very poor purchase foodstuffs (79% staples). Among the destitute 8 out of 10 purchase staples, beans and flavour; only meat is purchase by three of the destitute, presumably since it is a luxury the destitute cannot generally afford. Only a very small proportion purchase all their staple (5%), though the vast majority purchase all their flavouring (96%), oil (90%) and beans (80%).

2.3.4. Sale of main produce

Table 14: Proportion of main produce sold

SALE	sample	very poor	destitute
none	25	9	4
some	107	5	0
small proportion	10	0	0
around half	91	4	0
a large proportion	2	0	0
all	4	1	0

The table shows that 81% of the sample sell some produce. However, among the very poor only 36% sell produce and none of the destitute do so. Most of the sample who sell their

produce said they sell around half. Likewise four out of five of the very poor said they sold about half.

2.4. Social resources

2.4.1. Kin networks

Table 15: Extent of contacts with blood, fictive and affinal kin

no. kin	entire sample			very poor			destitute		
	<i>blood</i>	<i>fictive</i>	<i>affinal</i>	<i>blood</i>	<i>fictive</i>	<i>affinal</i>	<i>blood</i>	<i>fictive</i>	<i>affinal</i>
none	21	23	34	4	4	1	1	2	1
< 5	28	17	15	2	2	1	1		1
6-9		8	1						
10-20	2	1	1						
> 20	1	2							
total	52	51	51	6	6	2	2	2	2

In the RANS question about spending time with close relatives, although the question was not filled in for most respondents, the data suggest that contact with kin is more limited among the destitute and very poor. There seems to be more contact with blood relatives, followed by fictive and least with affinal relatives. Only three households have contact with more than 5 blood relatives, 11 with more than five fictive relatives and two with more than five affinal relatives. The number of households saying they had no contact with relatives was high 41% for blood relatives; 45% for fictive and 66% for affinal. Four out six of the very poor said they had no contact with blood or fictive kin, and one of two of the destitute had no contact with blood or affinal and both households had no contact with fictive kin.

2.4.2. Membership in community organisation

Table 16: Membership in community organisations by type

type	entire sample	very poor	destitute
<i>iddir</i> - burial	26	1	0
<i>iqub</i> - credit	1	1	0
<i>mehaber</i> - religious	1		0
<i>milisha</i> - military	1	1	0
<i>mengistawi budin</i> - governmental team	1	0	0
Total	30	3	0

Although the data are limited and may not have been asked or answered carefully, they suggest that none involvement in community organisations is rare 18% and is mainly in *iddir* burial associations. None of the destitute and only three households among the very poor are members of community organisations, one of these being the only militiaman and the other the only member of a credit association (who is a woman who brews *areqe*).

2.4.3. Holding of government position

Table 17: Government position held by type

government position	entire sample	very poor	destitute
formal village	34	1	0
informal village	4	1	0
formal district	1		0
formal nation	1		0
total	40	2	0

The data suggest that less than a quarter of households (24%) have held positions and that most of these are formal positions within the village. None of the destitute mentioned holding any positions and only two of the very poor had done so.

2.4.4. Visits outside the community

Table 18: Number of visits outside the community

no visits	entire sample	very poor	destitute
1	51	3	1
2	17	2	1
3	10	1	0
4 +	15	1	0
total	93	7	2

The data suggest that visits are fairly frequent with more than half household heads leaving the village at least once in the past year. On the basis of the additional questions it also appears that the destitute and very poor leave the site less, and that these visits are closer and more for social purposes notably funerals and weddings. Among the destitute the visits were to an urban area within the district and to another rural area; one case went to visit a friend and the other a relative, and the main purposes were a funeral and a social visit. Among the very poor the locations included 3 in rural areas within the area, one to a rural area within the district, one to an urban area within the district and two to a non-neighbouring area. The visits included five to a relative of the head and two to a relative of the spouse and the main purposes included four for ordinary social visits, two for marriages and one for a funeral. Among the entire sample 31 visits were within the close rural area, 14 to rural areas within the district, 12 to rural area within the region, 11 to another non neighbouring country, 10 to another rural areas 7 to urban areas within the district, 6 to an urban area within the region, one to the capital city, and one to another urban area. The range of people visited was greater with 25 to a relative of the spouse, 5 to a relative of the household, 5 to a friend, 2 for health care, and one for a business partner. The main purposes included 36 social visits, 28 for funerals, 18 for weddings, 2 for health care, and one each for harvesting, seeking work, seeking assistance, and other business.

2.5. Cultural resources

2.5.1. Ethnicity and religion

Table 19: Ethnicity and religion

Status	entire sample	%	very poor	%	destitute
Argobba	108	63.9	14	73.7	10
Amhara	61	36.1	5	26.3	0
total	169	100	19	100	10
Muslim	116	68.6	16	84.2	10
Christian	53	31.4	3	15.8	0
total	169	100	19	100	10

Regarding their cultural identities, all the destitute households were headed by Argoba Muslim women. Among the very poor fourteen were Argoba (nine of whom were women) and five were Amhara (three of whom were men). In religious terms sixteen were Muslim (fourteen of whom were Argoba) and three were Christians. Of the two Muslim Amhara one had married an Argoba woman and the other was an immigrant Sheikh. This suggests that there is a strong association between Argoba Muslim identities and extreme poverty. It should, however, be noted that there were also Argobba among the very rich and rich.

3. Poverty dynamics: objective and subjective measures and processes

This section is based on two poverty dynamics modules carried out in June and July 2005. The first module had ten parts: 1) open ended questions on the household's history over the past ten years, 2) members' history, 3) event history and an exploration of 4 key events, 4) a standard of living timeline of the household; 5) extra-household relations and activities, 6) intra household relations. module included 6 sheets 1) a Household Roster, to assess membership and changes, 2) an Events Calendar to record good and bad events over the past ten years, 3) a Standard of Living Timeline (SLT) on which to record changes since the household was formed, 4) a Standard of Living Graph (SLG), on which to place the household on the scale of 7 categories from the richest to the poorest used in the RANS and to plot changes from the imperial and Derg periods and especially the last ten years, 5) a Contentment Timeline (CT) on which to place changes in the household's contentment due to events, and 6) a Contentment Graph (CG) on which to plot changes in the household's contentment over the past ten years on a scale of 1 to 10. The second module was based on the first adding a focus on assets seeking to understand the impact of having or lacking assets among the wealthiest and poorest. The researchers were to check the assets listed in the RANS for the households selected according to very high or very low asset scores and rankings and consider changes.

The first module was based on 20 households selected from five types of households: 1) those whose objective and subjective wealth status was known to have changed between 1994 and 2004, 2) those who were known to be at the wealth extremes in 1994, 3) those whose perceived RANS wealth category in 2004 differs markedly from their current perception of their status five years earlier, 4) those whose perceived wealth category in the RANS is the same as their perceived status five years earlier, and 5) Those whose perceived RANS wealth category seems at odds with their perception of their happiness. The second

module considered six households three from the wealthiest and three from the poorest. The following discussion considers only ten cases among the poor.

3.1. Households that moved into poverty between 1994-2004

Two households among six identified as having moved down significantly⁷ between the 1994 and 2004 ERHS in terms of three measures: consumption,⁸ livestock⁹ and self perception were interviewed.¹⁰ One of these can be considered among the very poor (071) and the other (025) among the poor. The former identified herself as 'the poorest' and the latter as 'a little poorer than most'. Compared with five years ago the former claimed to be 'much worse', and the latter 'a little worse', and compared with one year ago, the former suggested she was 'much worse' and the latter 'the same'. The man viewed himself as poorer than his father whereas the woman did not answer the comparison.

Case 1: Elderly widow: Household 071 is composed of a single elderly widow aged 72. She married her first husband 50 years ago and had one son but divorced after three years. She lived with her second husband for more than 30 years and they were happy despite not having children. Her household was among the richest in the imperial period and rich during the Derg, but has declined since the death of her second husband, when their land was taken. Her house burnt down in the late Derg period, and she lost all her assets. She married a third husband who died after eight years. Her only son died two years ago and his children do not help her. She has no land or livestock. The SLG notes the decline over the three regimes, dropping to the poorest in the EPRDF period and declining within that category over the past ten years. Her CG has also declined drastically from 6 to 1 out of 10.

The household is clearly among the poorest without land and livestock and low on the asset index. All the measures are consistent in expressing a decline in standard of living. The woman suggested that the decline was due to the death of her husband, loss of assets and ageing. The SLG does not suggest a drastic drop in living standards in the past ten years, but the CG shows declining contentment from just under average to just above rock bottom which is consistent with the description, and is in line with the objective indicators. The GHS score of '2' or fairly happy is surprising and out of tune with the subjective indicators of decline in the RANS, and the clear sense of dissatisfaction expressed in the CG. However, the woman mentioned that her unhappiness had increased in the past year with ageing.

⁷ For consumption and livestock a decrease of 15 percent or more was considered; for self perception a household was described as moving into poverty if it reported being better off 10 years ago, but now report being poor. i.e., you perceived yourself to be, ten years ago, very rich, rich, comfortable and now you see yourself as never quite having enough, being poor or destitute.

⁸ The definition of Stefan Dercon and John Hoddinott is as follows: "Consumption is defined as the sum of values of all food items, including purchased meals and non-investment non-food items. The latter are interpreted in a limited way, so that contributions for durables and non-durables, as well as health and education expenditures are excluded. Although there are good conceptual reasons for including use values for durables or housing, we do not do so here; the heterogeneity in terms of age and quality of durables owned by our respondents, together with the near complete absence of a rental market for housing would make the calculation of use values highly arbitrary. Because comparisons of productive and consumer durable holdings between 1994 and 2004 show rising holdings of these durables and comparisons of school enrollment data show significant increases in enrollment, *ceteris paribus*, our consumption estimates may understate the actual increases in household welfare."

⁹ Livestock were measured in terms of household self reports of the value of all animals owned by the household.

¹⁰ John Hoddinott worked out lists of households that have moved into and out of poverty between the two ERHS surveys, and used the improved comparison of consumption data by Stefan Dercon in the selection.

The second household is in the poorer category, notably in terms of livestock and assets. The head's view of the household as 'a little poorer than most' seems accurate. In terms of change, the ERHS data shows a decline on all three counts, and the RANS likewise suggests that the household is 'a little worse' than five years ago, though 'the same as' a year ago. The head also sees himself as poorer than his father. The SLG also suggests a decline although it shows very little change within the 'a little poorer than most' category, and a slightly greater decline within that category in the past three years, reaching the lower category 'among the poorest'. The CG remaining constantly well above average till 2001, and declined sharply to well below average reaching 3 out of 10 in the past two years. The contrast between the SLG which shows only a minor drop and the CG which shows a dramatic drop illustrates the depressing effect of ageing with consequent disability.

Case 2: Elderly male head: Household 025 comprises three members whose male head is 80, his wife aged 50 and a grandson aged 6. The household was formed 30 years ago and they only had one daughter. The household has 1.5 hectare of land, none irrigated, and they have only a cow and calf. The SLG suggests that the household was poorer than most during the Derg, with a slight decrease in the EPRDF period, until the last three years when there was a further decline to 'a little poorer than most' ending at the top of the 'among the poorest' category in 2005. The elderly household head has not been healthy, and was a religious teacher giving out his land to sharecroppers. He lost his hearing 15 years ago and his sight 5 years ago. The CG has also declined no doubt reflecting the effects of ageing and disability.

If we consider the above two cases what accounts for the decline noted in both objective and subjective data? The two cases both suggest that ageing of the household head with consequent inability to work and compounding disabilities of loss of eyesight and hearing in the case of the man were major factors in their decline. In the case of the woman the death of her husband led to land confiscation, and her house burning to loss of assets, suggesting that she suffered from a series of compounding misfortunes. The lack of children to support them, with the male head's only daughter leaving bringing a her six year old son to live with his grandparents, and the female head's only son dying are also important factors. The Standard of Living and Contentment Graphs present a more accurate picture and suggest one should be wary of such a general question which may be misleading and not capture poverty dynamics.

3.2. Poorest households in 1994: what happened to them?

The two households interviewed were selected for being among the poorest in 1994 ERHS in order to consider what had happened to them by 2004. Both may considered to be in the very poor category, and both are female headed. In terms of self perceptions 084 which was selected as among the poorest in 1994 in terms of livestock and land saw herself as 'a little poorer than most' in 2004, and 069 selected as among the poorest in 1994 in terms of livestock and land and self perception placed herself 'among the poorest' in 2004, and 'poorer than her father'.

Case 3: Divorced woman: Household 084 comprises 3 members; the head is a woman aged 50, living with her niece and granddaughter. She came to Dinki with poor parents when she was three, was married at 15 and got divorced after six years having had a son. She lived alone for two years then married her second husband who was a soldier who went away. She waited for him for five years, heard he had died, but found out he had remarried elsewhere. She lived with her third husband for four years before divorcing him and has lived on her own for the past eight years. She has been engaged in daily labour and as a forest guard. Her niece came to live with her to work as a labourer but then married away, and her granddaughter came to live with her from 2001. She has 0.63 hectare of land which she has to give to sharecroppers and a shared cow and goat and has slightly improved her life from planting onions. Her son is not supportive and she feels lives carelessly but she has good relations with her neighbour who became her son's godfather.

The household is clearly poor in terms of land, livestock and assets. The self perception in the RANS does not place it as 'the poorest' or 'among the poorest' but as 'a little poorer the most'. The ERHS data shows an improvement in terms of consumption and perception but not livestock. The household does own part of a cow and goat which might explain the livestock increase. The SLG suggests a slight improvement from 'among the poorest' during the Derg to 'a little poorer than most', remaining at the same level during the past ten years. The RANS response also suggests no change in the past five and one years. This is at odds with the ERHS evidence of improvement. The CG is very high and constant at 7, though the GHS is average at 'fairly happy'. The sense one gets is of a woman who despite being very poor feels she has managed to improve her life a little and is fairly content. The ERHS and the SLG seem to concur on an improvement, though the later suggests an improvement earlier, whereas the RANS subjective score suggests no change.

Case 4: Elderly woman: Household 069 comprises 3 members headed by a woman aged 80, living with two grandsons. She comes from a middle wealthy household; her father was a religious leader who married her off to one of his disciples. When her husband died she did not remarry. She relies on a son who has his own household. She has only 0.5 hectare of land, given out to sharecroppers and only 6 chickens. She saw herself as 'among the poorest', the same as last year but much worse than five years ago and poorer than her father. Given her very old age it may be that there has been a recent decline.

The household is clearly poor, with little land, only chickens, and a low asset rank. The head also categorized the household as 'among the poorest' which seems a fair portrayal. In terms of change, the ERHS found a marked decline in terms of consumption and perception, but not livestock. This might be because the household did not have much livestock anyway. The RANS comparison with five years ago was 'much worse', though it was 'the same' as a year ago. The SLG decline from 'about average' in imperial and Derg times to 'among the poorest' in the EPRDF period fits with the objective data. The contentment decline from average to very low (5 to 1) three years ago remaining constant since suggests that the ageing process has affected the household recently. The GHS of 3 also suggest that the very old head is suffering from ageing, loss of hearing and sight. The objective and subjective data concur and the standard of living and contentment show similar trends.

The two households discussed above are both headed by women and both very poor. However, whereas one *improved* in the EHRS comparison in terms of consumption and

perception but not livestock, the other *declined* in terms of consumption and perception but not livestock. The woman whose household seems to have improved did obtain good income from onions on sharecropped land but she does not suggest an improvement in the RANS. The woman whose household declined is extremely old and has lost her sight and hearing; she also has given out her little land to sharecroppers. She sees herself as much worse off than five years ago and the same as one year ago. A major difference between the two therefore seems to be ageing and disability. The younger woman is able to work for wage labour and had good relations with her neighbours. Although she did not acknowledge improvement she placed herself as 'a little poorer than most' rather than 'among the poorest'.

3.3. Poor households in 2004 whose status changed significantly

The two households interviewed were ones that noted in the 2004 RANS that their status had changed significantly, in one case improving and in the other decreasing since five years ago. In the RANS both ranked themselves as 'the poorest'. Household 042 claimed to be 'much better' than five years ago and 'the same' as one year ago. Household 074 claimed to be 'much worse' than five years ago and than one year ago. However, 042 was found to have moved *into* poverty in the ERHS comparison whereas 074 was not considered. Both consider themselves to be 'poorer than their father'.

Case 5: Poor young man: Household 042 consists of a single young man aged 21 whose father died eight years ago and whose mother left with his siblings to live with her brother. One sister who married away came back to live with him. He has 0.75 hectare of land, some irrigated. He has only 3 goats and a chicken. The household was found to be 'much better' than five years ago, which was why it was selected, and 'the same' as a year ago. Despite a subjective improvement in the RANS, in the ERHS comparison it was found to have moved *into* poverty in terms of perception and consumption but not livestock. The head works for wage labour and to get oxen.

This is an interesting case of household disintegration after the death of the head. The household is very poor in terms of livestock and its asset ranking. The head placed it as 'the poorest'. The head and his sister are involved in wage labour. The disintegration of the household makes it difficult to assess changes. The EHRS suggest moving into poverty in terms of perception and consumption, but not livestock. However, this is based on the household prior to the head's death. The current livestock (only 3 goats and a chicken) make the household very poor. The only contentment measure was the GHS which gave the low score. From the interviews it is clear that the sister is unhappy with her brother, who she sees as lazy, and relations between them do not seem to be good, and both he and she are struggling, working for others to make ends meet. The case illustrates how the death of the head can lead to fragmentation of the household and impoverishment. The difference between the low GHS and ERHS decline on the one hand and the RANS subjective sense of improvement may related to the head sense of becoming independent.

Case 6: Poor elderly woman: Household 074 is composed of a single female head aged 69. Her daughter left to live with her father in 1992. The household was established 30 years ago. She came from a *rest* average land owning family in the imperial period, and was a land owning average household during the Derg. Her land was confiscated by the *Kābālé* in 1996 and she has appealed without success. She also had no livestock. The SLG places her as richer than most in imperial and Derg periods, declining to about average in the early EPRDF period, and gradually moving over the past ten years to 'among the poorest'. She had her cow and calf stolen in 1997. She explained the decline in her fortunes in terms of growing old and lacking any kin to help. Her granddaughter who was living with her left five years ago and her son lives far away.

This elderly woman is clearly among the poorest, without land or livestock and at the bottom of the asset index. She suggests that she is 'much worse' than five year and one year ago, but does not appear in the ERHS comparison between 1994 and 2004, possibly because she was already poor, had no livestock and low consumption. Whereas the SLG shows a gradual decline to the poorest, which agrees with the objective data, the CG shows a sudden break when her granddaughter left, and does not continue declining below 3, suggesting that even the poorest might not have rock bottom contentment. Perhaps unsurprisingly the GHS is '3' or not so happy, which fits with her sense of loneliness. She also said that people were malicious towards her, and that her unsuccessful land litigation had been a drain on her strength and wealth.

Considering the two cases who claimed retrospectively that their status had changed the household of the young man was found to have declined in objective terms in the ERHS after his father's death and the disintegration of the household; his sense of improvement despite being very poor may be related to his having become independent. The old woman lives on her own, without land, livestock or kin. Her land was confiscated, her livestock stolen and her granddaughter left her. She suggests she is 'not so happy', and her contentment declined when her granddaughter left.

3.4. Poor household in 2004 whose status had not changed

The following poor household was selected for having stated in the RANS that there was no change in the household's fortune in five years.

Case 7: Poor elderly man: Household 066 is composed of a single man aged 60. His father had been a rich landlord with tenants. He had land during the Derg but returned most of it when he was unable to pay taxes. He has been ill and was living with his ageing mother until she died in 2001, and became destitute, giving his land to sharecroppers. He has 0.5 hectare of land and no livestock.

The household is clearly among the poorest without livestock and very little land given out to sharecroppers. The RANS self-assessment suggests that the household had remained poor, though the SLT and SLG suggest a drop from the richest in imperial times, to 'about average' in the early Derg period, a further drop to 'poorer than most' in the late Derg period, a further drop to 'among the poorest' in the early EPRDF period and gradual decline over the past ten years to 'the poorest'. His contentment over the past ten years was below average at 4 out of ten dropping to 3 gradually. His GHS score of 3 reflects his unhappiness. His disability, lack of assets, having to look after an ageing blind mother and being alone after her death in 2001, all contribute to his unhappiness.

The household head claimed that there was no recent change. However, over the longer term the Satisfaction with Life Graph seems to suggest he has experienced a slow

decline since imperial times and a further decline to destitution recently. This suggests that a graph may provide a better sense of the dynamics and longer term change than a question about retrospective assessment of change.

3.5 Household among the poorest in 2004 in terms of assets

This case was selected for being among the poorest in the asset index. The household head emphasised that without oxen he cannot prosper, although since he has basic agricultural tools he has been able to engage in wage labour, which may be the first step out of poverty.

Case 8: Poor young man: Household 023 has three members; an 18 year old man, his 18 year old wife and 3 years old daughter. He set up his own household 15 years ago, divorced after two years and returned to his father's household. He remarried but his second wife's illness led to a divorce. He married his current wife six years ago. He had a hectare of land. His livestock included 1 cow and 1 bull but no oxen. His assets included an axe, a sickle, a spade, a plough, a bed, cutlery, crockery, pots, a jerry can and a mat. Without oxen, he cannot plough his land on time. He hopes his young calf will become an ox soon. However, he mentioned some improvement due to good harvests, involvement in daily labour, and the cow his new hard working wife brought, and her income from spinning cotton. His contentment dropped with his divorced and rose sharply with his remarriage.

The household seems to be fairly poor without irrigated land, little livestock, and a very low asset rank. The head ranked the household as 'among the poorest', which may be fairly accurate. The household declined significantly according to the ERHS objective data, but not the self assessment. The head also did not note a decline over 5 years in the RANS. In fact he noted a significant improvement in the last year. The SLG shows fall from average during the Derg to 'the poorest' in the early EPRDF period and a slight improvement to 'a little poorer than most' in 2000, and a further improvement in the last couple of years. The fact that he viewed his household as the same as five years ago but much better than a year ago, and that the SLG shows an improvement in the last two years might suggest that the improvement is recent.

The contentment graph shows big changes, with a decrease to very low at the time of divorce and living alone, with a steady rise to almost the top of the scale. This case clearly illustrates the importance of cohesive spousal relations for happiness and the depressing nature of divorce and living alone. Although this household is still a little poorer than most the happiness has soared. The improvement recently which might not have been registered in the ERHS and the very high contentment might explain why this household did not see itself as moving into poverty in terms of self perception. However, the GHS of '2' or 'fairly happy', does not do justice to the significant improvement noticeable in the contentment graph.

3.6 Asset rich but livestock and land poor household in 2004

The following household was selected as being asset rich, though its limited land and livestock actually place it among the very poor. The household is poor in terms of land and has no livestock, though it seems to be rich in terms of assets. Given the key importance of ploughing this might suggest that an asset index should be weighted, and needs to consider land, access to irrigation and livestock. The head placed himself as 'a little poorer than most' in the RANS. In terms of change the head considers himself 'a lot poorer' than his father, but is unable to judge in comparison with five years ago as he was then a servant. However, he seems himself as better off than a year ago. The SLG shows a decline under the Derg, and a rise to richer

than most over the past ten years till 2004 when it dropped to 'among the poorest' and further to 'the poorest' in 2005. The view of him being in the 'richer than most' category is misleading as this represents his masters' wealth status. The drop from 2004 to 2005 from poor to poorest might relate to his wife being pregnant and delivering so that she was unable to work and he had to borrow oxen and buy grain. The CG was not filled in while he was a servant but is at the top of the scale at 10 in the past two years.

Case 9: Young poor man: Household 190 has 3 members, headed by a man aged 20, with a wife aged 16 and a baby daughter. He was a former domestic labourer in a rich household and set up his own household only in 2004. He has only 0.37 hectare of land and no livestock. In terms of assets in the interview he had 2 axes, 1 hoe, 2 sickles, a bed, cutlery, crockery, a kettle, pots, necklace, a jerry can, and a mat. He noted that he needed the tools to work as a daily labourer; and his wife spins; however he lacked a plough and does not have oxen that he considers the most basic assets and therefore sees himself as asset poor, and lacking means to escape poverty.

This case clearly shows how someone at the bottom of the standard of living scale can be at the top of the contentment scale. He is very happy at having set up his own household and his wife giving birth. The GHS of fairly happy does not pick up on this happiness.

3.7. Poor yet happy in 2004

This case is somewhat exceptional as a poor household with a 'very happy Global Happiness Score. It is noteworthy that none of the very poor nor any of the other poor had this top happiness score.

Case 10: poor young man: Household 056 has five members headed by a man aged 20, with a wife and three sisters. The family were living with his father who was a drunkard and careless and they faced food shortages. His mother divorced him and came to live with her brother bringing the children. When the brother died she inherited the land but she herself died two years ago. The younger sisters went back to live with their father, but three sisters stayed with their brother who got married. The household has 1.5 hectare of land, none irrigated. The livestock include a bull. The household was ranked as poor and ranked itself 'among the poorest' and 'much worse off' than five years ago and 'a little worse off' than a year ago, and poorer than his father. The SLG shows a decline from about average until 2003 and a sharp drop to the poorest in 2004. However, the head noted that things are getting better as they have enough land and some livestock. The CG shows a drop from average to 1 but the GHS is 'very happy'.

This household is fairly poor and considered itself to be 'among the poorest', after the divorce and death of the mother and her conversion to Islam which her son was not happy about. The head expressed a perception of decline with some recent improvement, and a contentment that dropped from average to low, perhaps reflecting grieving over the mother's death, from which the head said the younger children were still suffering. The contrasting high happiness score may reflect the head's contentment with his recent marriage and hopeful outlook.

4. The impact of social shocks

Ten households were selected since they were found to have registered social shocks in the RANS. It should be noted that agricultural shocks were reported by most households at some point and that much of the literature has focused on these. Social shocks are much less common but arguably some might have a more severe impact. These included deaths, accidents, disputes, divorces and socio-political problems.

4.1. Deaths

Three households are considered in terms of the shocks of deaths, two of whom were selected from those that reported deaths of spouses as a shock, one where the husband had died (129) and the other where the wife had died (127), and a third (156) who was selected later due to the death of the household head.

Case 11: Death of husband: Household 129 has 5 members, headed by a widow aged 30 whose husband died in 2004. The household had 4 hectares of land some of which is irrigated. The livestock include 2 oxen, 2 cows, 3 donkeys, and 2 camels and had become wealthy through trade using camels and had built a tin house, and were 31st out of 34 in the asset ranking. And yet the head suggests they are 'about average', a little worse than five years and one year ago. The SLG suggests they had been poorer in imperial, improving during Derg and EPRDF period becoming richer than most until 2004 and then declining to about average. The shock of the husband's death led to unhappiness, with a GHS of 3 or 'not so happy' and a sharply declining CG.

The death has clearly had a marked effect on the household's self perception in terms of its view of itself as 'about average', and the decline in the SLG. The wife mentioned fears about not having male labour and having to keep stop the schooling of her two daughters. However in objective terms the household remains very rich and the death is unlikely to lead to the household become poor let alone destitute.

Case 12: Death of wife: Household 127 comprises 4 members with an elderly male head aged 70, whose wife died in 2003; he also lost an adult daughter in 2001. The household had 3 hectares of land including some irrigated land. The livestock included 2 oxen, 2 cows and a donkey. And yet the household placed itself as 'about average' and 'a little worse' than five years ago. The SLG places the household in the average category in imperial and Derg periods, with a drop to 'a little poorer than most' in the EPRDF period. The GHS is 'not so happy' and the CG drops from 6 to 2. The shocks of the deaths of his daughter and wife were compounded by old age and a disease related to leprosy. The household sold a cow to cover funeral expenses, and the family still seemed in grief and the head has vowed not to remarry. They have also faced production shocks with crop losses in 1999 and cattle losses in 2002. The shocks of death compounded by ageing, disability and production shocks seem to have affected the head's view of the household. In objective terms the household remains fairly rich but the self-perception of the head suggests that it is only average and declining and his view of his happiness has also declined.

This case shows the effects of the mother's death, resulting in drop in the CG, and continuing shock of the younger children. However, there are some signs of improvement given land, though not enough livestock and the head sounds hopeful and is clearly happy in his GHS probably since he has recently married.

Case 13: Death of household head (mother): Household 156 has five members headed by a man aged 20, with his wife and three sisters. The family were living with his father who was a drunkard and careless and they faced food shortages. His mother divorced him and came to live with her brother bringing the children. When the brother died she inherited the land and she herself died two years ago. The younger sisters went back to live with their father, but three sisters stayed with their brother who got married. The household has 1.5 hectare of land, none irrigated. The livestock include a bull. The household was ranked as poor and ranked itself 'among the poorest' and much worse off than five years ago and 'a little worse off' than a year ago. The SLG shows a decline from about average until 2003 and a sharp drop to the poorest in 2004. However, the head noted that things are getting better¹ as they have enough land and some livestock. The CG shows a drop from average to 1 but the GHS is 'very happy'. The CG no doubt reflects the sadness over their mother's death, the younger siblings in particular were said to be still in shock, and the household was split, whereas the high GHS may reflect the head's contentment with his recent marriage.

The first two cases show significant effects of the shocks of death on the head's view of the standard of living which have been downgraded, and also a sharp decline in contentment in the CGs with low GHSs. The widow was much richer and seems to have been affected even more by the loss of male labour (she has sons aged 15 and 1 and daughters aged 10 and 8), with likely consequences on the children's schooling. In the third case the death of the mother who was the head led to a split in the household with the sisters going back to their father whom their mother had divorced whereas the son married and three of his sisters live with him. Although they are poor and view themselves as very poor, there are signs of improvement and the head seems happy in his recent marriage.

4.2. Accident/injury

The case selected as having reported and accident/injury (116) was classified as poor and saw himself as 'a little poorer than most', and 'the same' as five years and one year ago. He had had injured his shoulder in an accident in a bus.

Case 14: Accident bus crash: 116 is a household with 5 members, whose male head is 65. He had 1.75 hectare of land, including irrigated land and two oxen, but considered himself to be 'a little poorer than most'. He was selected due to his mentioned the shock resulting from an injury in a bus crash traveling to Wello in 1998. Although he was in hospital for a fortnight and the injury prevented hard work, it does not seem to have had a strong lasting effect though the pain came back in old age. What seems to have affected him more was the death of his wife in 1999. He remarried in 2000 but is not happy with his current wife whom he considers to be lazy. However, his livelihood has been improving in the last couple of years owing to investment in producing cotton and livestock. Even though he claims that his household has not improved, his SLG shows a decline from 'a little poorer than most' to 'among the poorest' at the time of his wife's death but a rise to 'a little poorer than most' and almost average in the past two years. His CG shows a sharp decline at the time of his wife's death from 8 to 2 and a further decline to 1 over the last five years. However, his GHS was 2 or fairly happy.

Although this case was selected for the injury the head sustained, and he could not work for a month it does not seem to have had very lasting or severe effects. What has more of an impact was the death of his wife in 1999 (though the household head did not record this as a shock).

He noted some improvement in his livelihood owing to investment in cotton and livestock but felt that his life had not improved in five years. Both his SLG and his CG did not register the accident, and declines were linked with his wife's death and in the CG a further decline due to discontent with his current wife whom he views as lazy.

4.3. Disputes

Two cases of disputes were selected one within the family and the other a dispute over sales. The former (001) was ranked as middle wealth and saw himself as 'among the poorest', and the latter (086) was ranked as poor and saw himself as 'a little poorer than most'.

Case 15: Internal dispute within the family between spouses. 001 is a household with 4 members whose male head is 60, and lives with his second wife and children. Due to old age and ill health the head is involved mainly in weaving, and depends on a son who has his own household. It has 1.13 hectare of land, none of which is irrigated. The livestock include 1 ox, 1 cow, and 2 donkeys. But the head sees it as 'among the poorest', a little worse than five years ago and the same as a year ago. The household was found to have moved out of poverty in the ERHS in terms of consumption, though there was a smaller drop in livestock. The SLG suggests a decline from 'among the richest' in imperial and Derg periods, falling to about average in the early EPRDF period and from 1997 till the present 'a little poorer than most' due to poor production, loss of livestock, lack of labour old age and disability of the head and a slight further decline in 2005 within that category. The perception data therefore seems to suggest a decline though the consumption suggests a notable improvement and the livestock a small decline

The household (086) was selected for reporting an internal disputes between the spouses as a shock. The household head has not been on good terms with his second wife whom he married after divorcing his first wife with whom he had lived for 8 years. His second wife divorced him and returned to her parents for a year but was persuaded to return. Her son and his neighbours complained that the head was quarrelsome, and not cooperative. The CG is constant at average, stating only that the household was only content with their son. It is difficult to assess the impact of the dispute. His wife claimed the head's lack of cooperativeness not just with her but also with others has affected their life. There is a perception of decline, and an objective decline in livestock but an increase in consumption. However, the declining SLG and the constantly average CG do not make direct reference to the dispute.

Case 16: External dispute between households over land: 086 has 4 members with a male head aged 80, who lost his sight in 2004 and now stays at home. His household was ranked as poor. He has 1.56 hectares of land, half of which as irrigated. The livestock included a shared cow, a share bull, a shared calf and a donkey. He perceived his household as 'a little poorer than most', the same as five years ago but much better than a year ago. However, the ERHS comparison shows an improvement in consumption and livestock but not perception. The SLG suggested that the household was about average in imperial and Derg times with a sharp decline to 'among the poorest' in the early EPRDF period, a rapid return to 'about average', and a small gradual decline to 'a little poorer than most' over the past 9 years. The GG is high at 8 with a very slight decline to 7 but the GHS was low at 'not so happy'.

The household was selected due to reporting a dispute with a female headed household whose land was confiscated in 1985 when she could not pay tax after the famine and was given to 086. She has contested this at *kebele*, and *wereda* levels and at the time of the land registration. So far 086 has won. However, this has wasted time and money to go to court, and

he feared that the Muslim leaders may favour the woman who is Muslim. It would seem, however, that the dispute has not affected his standard of living or contentment. If anything his winning so far has been a boost. More serious shocks have been his ageing and loss of sight, though he seems far more positive in the CG score that is high has hardly declined, (although the GHS is low) and in not seeing a sharp decline in his standard of living, and in his CT mentioned that the household members were happy and cooperative.

The two cases that were selected for disputes within the family and over land do not seem to have had a serious effect on the households. Both households seem to have had some objective improvement, though a subjective sense of decline mainly related to ageing. The dispute with the spouse may have affected labour relations, whereas the dispute over land took up time and money but since the court case was repeatedly won, may have actually had a positive effect on the living standard.

4.4. Divorce

Two cases were selected to look into the impact of divorce, in one case the divorcing a wife (065) and the other divorcing a husband (101). The former was a middle wealth household the latter a poor one.

Case 17 Divorce of wife: 065 is a household that comprises 3 members, headed by a man aged 33. The household head had married a third wife aged 20, after divorcing his first wife in 1998 and his second with whom he could not have children in 2000. He was not happy with his third wife whom he married in 2000 claiming she was argumentative and she expressed discontent. (subsequent to this research she left him and he brought a fourth wife in 2006). The household has 1.28 hectare of land including irrigated land. The livestock included 1 cow and 1 bull. The household head ranked himself as 'about average', and the same as five years and one year ago. He bought irrigated land in 2005 and got good income from onions and fruit sales. The SLG suggests that his household declined from about average under the Derg to 'a little poorer than most' in the early EPRDF period, and returned to the higher end of about average during the past four years. The CG suggests a drop from below average to 2 in 2000 and a rise back above average to 6 in 2001. The drop coincides with his divorce and the rise with the remarriage, but the fact that the rise was only to just above average may signal the discontent, and his GHS was also average at 'fairly happy'.

Case 18 Divorce of husband: 101 is a household with 4 members headed by a woman of 60. She had two hectares of land, an ox, a cow, a heifer and a calf, although she described herself as 'the poorest'. She married 30 years ago and was rich prior to her divorce 20 years ago, when she left her husband with just the cow and property she had brought with her. However, her husband died and she returned to look after the children. She is looking after an aged sick mother. She was found to have moved out of poverty in the ERHS comparison in terms of consumption and perception but not livestock. She also suggested that she was 'the same' as five years ago and 'much better' off than a year earlier, which may suggest that there has been some recent improvement which had not fully taken effect at the time of the ERHS survey but which influenced or reduced the sense of decline. The SLT suggest that she was better off in imperial and Derg periods, and she had said she was poorer than her father in the RANS. The CG is constantly low at 1 out of 10 and she expressed dissatisfaction with her son as lazy, the loss of her daughter aged 20 who died in 2000, and having to look after her ageing mother, although the GHS is at 'fairly happy'. This case was selected because of divorce and she her husband was wealthy, this happened 20 years ago and after the divorce her husband died and she returned to look after the children. A more recent shock was the death of her daughter and her unhappy social relations (a son who is lazy and looking after her ageing mother) seem to have made her unhappy.

The two divorce cases seem to have had some indirect impacts on the lives of the households. In the case of the man he is on his fourth wife and the divorce of his second wife did coincide with a period when his SLG declined a bit and a drop in happiness. However, his new marriage was not happy (and with hindsight ended in a further divorce). In the case of the woman, the divorce was long ago and her husband's death actually led to her returning to look after the children. The ERHS comparison suggested an improvement in consumption and perception. However she has a negative outlook on life and what is more significant in explaining this were the death of her adult daughter, discontent with her lazy son and having to look after her ageing mother.

4.5. Socio-political shocks

Two cases were selected in terms of social and political shocks, one was related to discrimination (176) when he sought to avoid conscription, and the other to resettlement (125). The former was a middle wealth household that perceived itself as such and the latter was poor female head who saw herself as 'among the poorest'.

Case 19: Discrimination; Household 176 has 4 members, headed by a man aged 29. He was selected for having recorded facing shocks in trying to avoid conscription in 2000. The household was middle wealth with 1 hectare of land, none of which irrigated. The livestock comprise 1 ox and 1 cow. However, he ranked his household as 'richer than most' which is a very rare case of someone seeming to rank themselves higher than their stated land and livestock would suggest. The SLT suggests a decline from the Derg to about average under the EPRDF period and an improvement within that category over the past five years. He also saw himself as a bit better than five years ago though a little worse than a year ago. His CG is high at 7 out of 10 increase to 8 with the birth of his first son, though the GHS is only 'fairly happy'. The shock related to him being selected into the local militia 8 years ago. He refused and the kebele militia tried to arrest him, but he escaped, and hid and left to live with kin in another village for 15 days, keeping a low profile. The officials stopped pursuing him as the recruitment was over, but he regretted that his family was harassed including the threat of land confiscation and that they faced labour shortage during those days. He still has bad feelings against those involved, and the *Kebele* still suspect him of being defiant. However, the incident does not seem to have had a long-term impact on his life, and he seems happy with his young family and slightly improving standard of living.

Case 20: Resettlement: Household 125 consists of a single divorced woman aged 19 and her daughter. Her mother died when she was seven. She was married by force by her father and her husband took her to resettlement. They returned unhappy with that and quarreled. She got divorced and was pregnant. She returned to live with her father but quarreled with step mother and set up her own household next to her father. She had a daughter in 2006. Her household as 0.81 hectare of land, and the livestock include a cow and a bull. She was placed among the middle wealthy but perceives herself as 'among the poorest', and the SLG also placed her among the poorest. The CG places her in the middle and her GHS is 'fairly happy' although the interview and diaries suggest she is very unhappy. The resettlement was clearly an unhappy experience. When they left voluntarily people were surprised as they thought the resettlement area would be even more remote than their village but they went to see; the place was very remote and too hot so they returned. However, she had already been unhappy at being forced to marry the husband who took her to resettlement and divorced him after returning, although pregnant. She also was unhappy in her father's household with her step-mother. The resettlement seems therefore to be one of several unhappy events

Both cases of socio-political shocks were important but were not crucial in explaining the fortunes or contentment in the lives of the cases selected. The man who avoided conscription faced some short-term difficulties having to hide and his family were threatened. However, he is now doing well, his life has improved and he is happily married with small children. The

woman who went to resettlement with her husband returned to Dinki as the resettlement was too hot and remote; however, her major problem was with her husband who she had been forced to marry, and whom she divorced after returning, although pregnant. She does not get on with her step-mother and faces the problem of bringing up her daughter alone.

Conclusions

The discussion of terms suggests that the destitute are seen as merely being extremely poor, rather than different or separate from the rest of society; the term *miskin* suggests that they deserve pity and hence assistance. Characterisations of the destitute by others and by themselves were broadly similar. They were seen as lacking livestock and basis assets, having no land or very little, and not having enough food. They were said all to have a house, which, however, was small and in poor condition. Attributes commonly found among the destitute were said to be poor health, chronic illness and old age. They were said to be often living on their own or only with a spouse, lacking helpers and unable to afford to join *edder* burial associations. However, they were not deliberately excluded from social institutions. Some were said to work as daily labourers, others to collect and sell firewood, men may be involved in weaving and women in spinning to earn income. They rely heavily on neighbours, kin and friends and borrow food and utensils. They were said to experience hopelessness and not believe they could escape poverty, though some respondents believed that they could improve their conditions, as long as they were not too sick or too old.

The destitutes recognised themselves as among the poorest, and concurred with most of characterisations of them by others. They lacked livestock, had a house, but little land beyond the household plot, faced food shortages and reduced meals. Several suffered from severe illnesses and disabilities notably loss of hearing and eyesight with old age. Some were involved in daily labour, others in firewood sale, yet others in weaving and spinning. They did not feel excluded though they were not members of burial associations. The Christian women were part of *māhabār* religious associations and the Muslim women were part of neighbourhood coffee groups. The destitute received support and loans from neighbours and borrowed grain, although one man mentioned having to pay repay double in kind after the harvest. Only one man expressed a sense of hopelessness. Several men and women hoped to get more land and improve their lives, and some said they prayed for food, health to work hard, or money to change their lives. It therefore seems that most of destitute had a more positive outlook about themselves than that of others talking about them.

In comparing the destitute and very poor with the rest of the households it is clear that they are significantly poorer in many ways, and that the destitute are much more so than the very poor. In terms of material resources they had less land, livestock and assets, and considered their housing and clothing as inadequate, although for the most, unlike the urban destitute, they own their small houses. In terms of human resources the preponderance of female headed households among the very poor and their exclusivity among the destitute is striking and explains many of the other variables. The extremely poor were on average older, and with smaller households, and less children. This raises important questions about life-cycles and social protection. The women were widowed or divorced, raising important issues to do with gender and property rights. Activities of men included in addition to farming, weaving, manual and agricultural labour work, and among women spinning and firewood collection. Several were unable to work due to old age. In terms of economic resources the extremely poor relied highly on borrowing particularly from friends, neighbours and relatives, purchased most of their food, and sold little or none of their produce. A third of the very poor worked out of the household but only one of the destitute. In terms of social resources, the

extremely poor had had less contact with relatives, went out of the village less and often for social functions, had very low membership in local organisations or positions in government, and the destitute none, no doubt in part due to being female-headed. In terms of cultural resources there was a clear correlation between ethnicity, religion and extreme poverty, with a higher proportion of Muslim Argobba among the poor and all the destitute being Argobba women.

In considering poverty dynamics processes involved in decline included ageing, disability, notably loss of hearing and eyesight, shocks such as house burning, theft of assets, notably livestock, and for widows having their land confiscated after their husband's death. Loss of support due to children or grandchildren leaving was also noted among the elderly. Many of the destitute are elderly women and the contrast with a younger poor female headed household whose condition was improving highlights the problem of ageing. However, an analysis of factors leading to destitution in isolation can miss combinations of factors, oversimplify complex processes, and overlook the actors' subjective rationalisations.

Death of parents leading to family splitting resulting in decline in living standards was also mentioned. However despite poverty a high contentment was expressed by young newly-established household heads reflecting satisfaction at becoming independent and setting up their own household. Subjective measures of contentment may be more a reflection of social relations notably marriage and divorce, and poor young men who have married and had children seem to express high contentment. Subjective views of contentment though interlinked with material conditions may thus be somewhat independent from subjective standard of living assessments and objective factors.

Among the ten cases selected for social shocks, the death of the husband, wife and mother all had significant effects, resulting in a declining in perceptions of happiness and contentment graphs, and in some the richer case influencing the perception of standard of living negatively. The case selected on the grounds of injury had not had lasting disability and had been more affected in terms of contentment by the death of his wife, and his discontent with his current wife. Likewise the cases selected for mentioning disputes were not affected too seriously by them. The dispute within the family may have affected labour relations, and the land dispute took time and money in litigation, but the household repeatedly won the case so that it may have actually had a positive effect. The divorce cases had indirect effects. In the case of the man it led to some decline in contentment at the time though he remarried and discontent with his new wife was his main concern. In the case of the woman it was a long time ago and the death of her daughter and laziness with her son were here preoccupations. The socio-political shocks of avoiding conscriptions and resettlement had serious effects at the time but were not lasting and in the case of the woman who went to resettlement were overshadowed by her divorce while pregnant and subsequent dispute with her stepmother. To conclude on social shocks the fact that a shock was mentioned in the RANS does not necessarily mean that it had lasting effects, or that it was the main or most important shock for the household. The shock may be overcome, overshadowed by other shocks, or even have a positive outcome as in the land litigation case. However, the most significant shocks seem to be the death of the head or spouse in terms of effects on contentment and perceived standard of living. Divorce seems to be less important for contentment than relations with the subsequent spouses.

In methodological terms the experience of this exploratory study suggests that Standard of Living and Contentment Graphs provide a richer and more dynamic picture than one-off measures such as the Global Happiness Score which only allows for three scores and may reflect mood or the view at the time of the interview. Graphs may also provide a better sense of intermediate change than retrospective questions comparing the household's status with five or ten years ago, or comparing self assessments at intervals. Together with open-

ended discussion they may provide a better sense of the processes involved. The Standard of Living Graph considered changes over three regimes where appropriate, and can provide a sense of longer term change which can complement questions about comparisons with the parental generation. The findings also suggest the need for caution in using unweighted asset indices that do not include land and livestock.

The approach explored in this study could be improved through a more interactive discussion with respondents of a combination of methods involving panel objective and subjective data, along with graphs and timelines. This could provide better insights into their lives and household histories over longer periods of time taking account of household development cycles and shocks to understand the extent to which destitution is inherited, the processes involved and the extent to which and means by which households can be locked into or move out of poverty.

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