Livelihood Strategies of Rural Women with Emphasis on Income Diversification and Demographic Adjustment in Central Ethiopia: The Case of Olonkomoi[1], Oromia Region

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Abstract

This article explores some of the livelihood strategies of rural women with emphasis on an income diversification and demographic adjustment in Olonkomi locality in the context of rapid population growth. The data used in the study came from selected 150 households' socio-economic and demographic survey, group discussions, and interview and other secondary sources. Results indicated that the population of Olonkomi and its locality was growing at a rate of about 2.4 percent per annum, which leads to limited access to the scarce land and other resources. As a result, many rural people in general and women in particular have adopted diversified livelihood strategies that could enable them partly cope with livelihood problems. Therefore, women have involved in casual and unregulated labor of income generating activities such as processing and selling local beverages, selling fire wood, making hand crafts, petty trading etc., although their impact on livelihood improvement was minimal due to poor access to credit from financial institutions, lack of skill and training, and scarce labor supplies in case of female-headed households. Observation of women, especially female-headed households who diversified their household income sources as a survival strategy were more notable. Fertility showed a declining trend though the change was small. The change emanated from the fact that considering adjustment of family size as a strategy to mitigate livelihood tragedy, about 27% of the rural women respondents began to limit the number of children they could bear in their reproductive age span of 15-49. Landless young people, especially females, used to move away from home to look for employment opportunities. However, migration could not bring significant change on the livelihood condition of the

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[1] Non-Oromo language speakers read it as 'Wolonkomi' because in some literatures the name is spelt likewise.

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people. The small amount of remittance that the households received from migrants was an indicator of the situation that it could not make difference in the livelihood situation. Some of the rural households used to send grains to support some of the out-migrants. Despite the observed little improvements in rural livelihood situation, as a survival strategy and means of improving livelihood, the rural communities in general and female-headed households in particular engaged in various non-farm and off-farm activities, migrated to the closest towns and city and made demographic adjustment by limiting the number of new born children. The new strategies (non-farm activities and demographic adjustment) can bear fruits and improve rural livelihood situations provided the local and regional governments in collaboration with local communities and other stake holders manage to improve rural households' access to land, physical and social infrastructure as well as provision of microfinance institutions.

Key words: demographic adjustment, income diversification, livelihood strategies, Olonkomi

Introduction

As in many countries of the Sub-Saharan region, Ethiopia is known for its accelerated environmental degradation and structural food insecurity. Such problems are related to fast population growth rate combined with dependency on traditional and subsistence agricultural production, which is characterized by low productivity and scarcity of land. As noted by Sorensen (2001) the population of Ethiopia has more than quadrupled within the last 50 years; it has increased from 15 million in 1951 to about 63 million in 1999. Based on the current rate of population growth, as reported by UNFNA (2005), the population of Ethiopia increased to 77.4 million in 2005 and now about 83 million (CSA 2012), and it is expected to grow to about 117.5 million in 2025 (CSA 2002). The current population growth rate is estimated at 2.4 percent per annum, which makes it one of the highest in the region.

In rural Ethiopia, women comprise almost half of the population. They are vigorously involved in all aspects of the socio-economic activities and cultural life of the society. They are both producers and procreators and they are also active participants in the social, political and cultural activities of their communities. However, the effects of poverty have been more serious on women than men. Women's family and economic responsibilities allowed them little flexibility and fewer economic opportunities. Typically, their income levels are below the

national average. On top of that they have had poor access to land and other resources, and hence lack ample job opportunities to improve their situations. Therefore, they are hungrier, less healthy and less educated. In many cases, they also lack adequate shelter (INSTRAW 1998) and are more vulnerable to livelihood shocks and undesirable changes in the fabrics of socio-economic and natural environments.

Generally, in Ethiopia the fast population growth has led to limited access to the scarce land resources. Because of this, peasants were forced to use marginal lands and/or migrate to other areas. Furthermore, women in general, and female-headed households in particular, were identified as disadvantaged (Yigremew 2005). This is due to lack of or poor access to resources and education, health opportunities and many other institutional provisions. Due to the existence of many poor rural and female-headed households in general and landless peasants in particular, farming by itself has increasingly become unable to provide sufficient means of survival and created serious problems in their livelihoods. Therefore, many rural people, especially rural women and landless people have started adopting non-farming livelihood strategies that would enable them to cope with livelihood problems.

One of the strategies adopted by rural women has been diversifying household income sources, which were more of an option for rural men than for women (Ellis 2000). However, like rural poor people, women are highly involved in casual and unregulated labor of household income generating on- and non-farm activities.

Demographic adjustment especially based on fertility reduction and out-migration (to the nearby towns) were the other strategies by which livelihood problems could be mitigated. Fertility adjustment is practiced either by increasing the number of children to avail more family labor (for the benefit of supporting the family by generating income) or by decreasing household size using family planning so as to minimize household consumption, and involve in out-migration to get remittance that can add to households income. In general, the household livelihood strategies, which have been adopted by rural female-headed households and other women, have affected the livelihood of Olonkomi rural communities.

However, the assessment of such remarkable participations and contribution of women for attaining sustainable livelihood strategies and local socio-economic development and its consequences have not been given due attention. Almost no studies of its kind except baseline surveys were made so far which focused mainly on rural nutrition and land use mapping (Mesfin 1971, Ephrem 2004) and assessment of the link between population growth and deteriorating environmental conditions (Samuel 2004). Therefore, this research attempts to fill knowledge gaps focusing on the assessment of alternative rural livelihood strategies in general and

female-headed households in particular with emphasis on household income diversification and demographic adjustment in the context of population growth in Olonkomi area. The thesis is that there is an ongoing rural livelihood diversification as well as demographic adjustment, and these have been contributing to improvement of livelihood situation in the area.

Objectives of the Study

The paper assesses the contribution of alternative rural livelihood strategies that involve on- and non-farm activities, demographic adjustments and rural out-migration to the livelihood of rural communities in general and rural women in particular of Olonkomi area in the context of fast population growth and scarce land resources. In line with this, it was specifically intended to identify further the extent of access to and control that rural women have on livelihood resources; explore the various strategies adopted to diversify sources of rural household income; evaluate current level of fertility rate, its trend and impacts on livelihood conditions; and assess participation of women in family planning and migration and their impact on livelihood options.

Materials and Methods

Sources of Data and Methods of Acquisition

Both primary and secondary data were used to address objectives of the study. The primary data were generated through household socio-economic and demographic surveys. Structured questionnaires were distributed to the randomly selected 150 household heads in two purposively identified rural *kebele* peasant administration units. It was designed mainly to generate data on household characteristics, access to land resources, income diversification, current fertility level, migration and livelihood condition of the respondents.

In addition to what is noted above about 30 women in their reproductive age 15-49 were selected from Cheleleka Bobe and Gare Kora *kebele*s and interviewed using unstructured questionnaires. Data on age, life status and education, number of children, and landholding size were acquired using the latter method of data collection. The interviewees were purposively selected to carry on an in-depth interview and gather comprehensive data about women's personal opinions and attitude towards fertility, fertility preferences. The awareness and attitudes of contraceptive use including ever use and current use of birth control methods were also included in the interview. An in-depth interview was made also on migration (who migrated, why, where and how). Some more data on household income

diversification and access to resources were also gathered. Along with interviewed women, two group discussions were made in the two KPAs with 8-10 people in a group. Furthermore, general field observations including life history narratives and story telling were used to supplement household data collection. Data on population size and fertility for the first two census periods (1984 and 1994) were obtained and computed from housing and population census reports. Recent population size was obtained from the *wereda* administration office.

Sampling Technique and Distribution

The sample frame of the study included both female and male-headed households. Olonkomi locality is part of Dendi *Wereda* in Oromia Region, Central Ethiopia. Six KPAUs are found in Olonkomi locality. Among the six two sample KPAUs, Cheleleka Bobe and Gare Kora, were purposively selected based on ecological condition, terrain, accessibility and demographic condition.

About 150 households which accounted for about 15 percent of the total (994 households) were considered for household survey. The target households were stratified (separated) into male and female household heads, which in turn, were subdivided into landholders and landless groups. Then, the 150 target households were selected using systematic random sampling technique. Both qualitative and descriptive statistical methods of data analysis and presentation were employed extensively.

Setting of the Study Data

Olonkomi is found in Dendi *wereda*, West Shewa Zone, Oromya Region. It is located at about 70 kms west of Addis Ababa, along the Addis Ababa - Ambo main road. The study site covers an area of about 112 square km (see Figure 1). The area is dominated by undulating plains in the southern part while it is characterized by rugged hilly topography in the north. The area has an average elevation of about 2500 m.a.s.l. and characterized by slopes ranging from flat and undulating to steep. Most of the Olonkomi locality is situated in the *Awash* River basin but a small section of it lies both in the catchment of *Abay* River in the north and *Gibe* River in the south. Most part of it is bounded by *Kela* River in the East and *Jemjem* River in the West. The climatic condition is generally sub-humid as measured at Addis Alem, which is located about 9 kms east of Olonkomi; it has a mean annual temperature of 16.5^0c ranging from 15.5^0c in November to 18.9^0c in May. The mean annual rainfall was 1100 mm, which was measured at the station of Olonkomi (9^0 02 N and 38^0 02 E, at an altitude of 2300, Samuel (2004).

Before the second census of Ethiopia was conducted in 1994, Dendi *Wereda* had 109 KPAUs and two towns, namely Ginchi and Olonkomi. Now after restructuring, the number of KPAUs was reduced to 69 but the number of urban settlements increased to three including Ihud Gebya. In the Olonkomi locality, there are six KPAUs; namely, Dega Egu, Gare Kora, Jimjem Legebatue, Cheleleka Bobe, Kellan Imburtue and Finch Godita (see Map 1.).

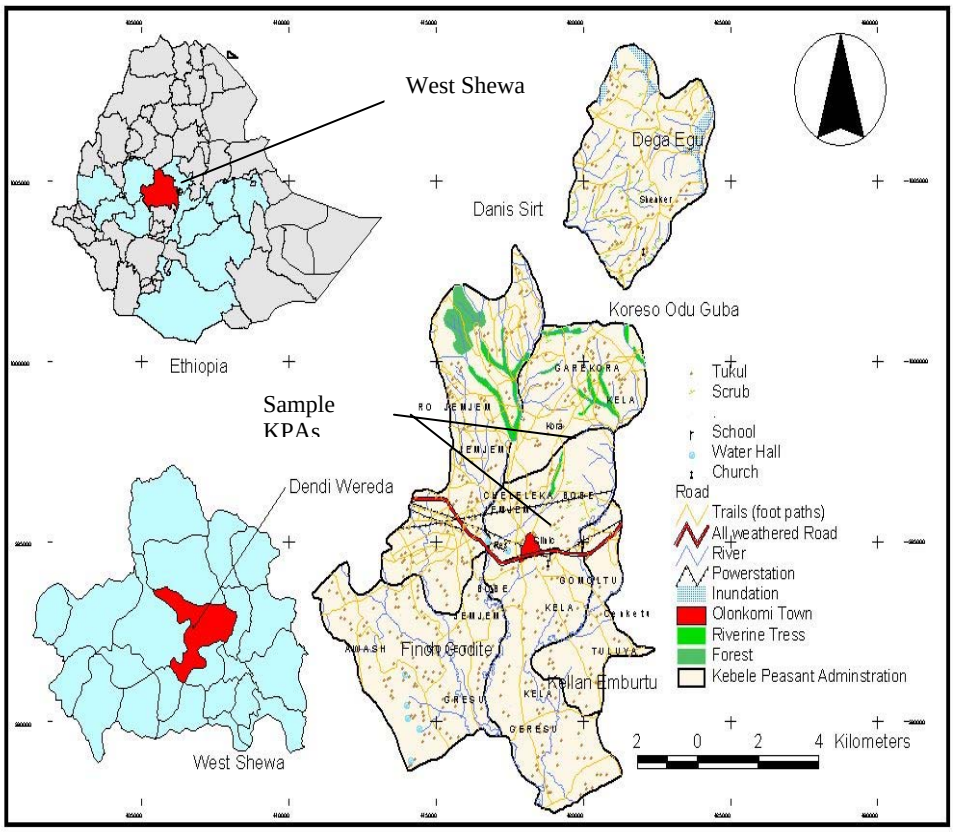

Figure 1. Location of Olonkomi Area
Source: Drawn by the author

The total population of Olonkomi town and its locality was estimated at 30,134 in 2005. Out of this about 51% lived in the six rural KPAs while about 49 % inhabited the town of Olonkomi. Both Oromos and Amharas inhabit the rural Olonkomi localities, including the town. However, the Oromos constitute the largest proportion of the population of the area.

Settlements are found in small clusters scattered all over the area. It is only along the Kora ridge that settlement is sparse. In many cases eucalyptus trees have surrounded settlements. The northern part of the area has patches of forest residue and riverine tree covers, while the remaining part is devoid of natural forest cover. Peasant tukuls were mostly of thatched roof, circular type, and the walls were made of poles and plastered with mud. However, there were some corrugated iron-roof houses. Rural livelihood largely depends upon subsistence agriculture, involving mixed farming of crop and livestock. Agriculture was characterized by traditional methods of farming, smallholdings and low productivity. There was one clinic and one first and second cycle school that provide provision of health and education. The main Ambo road transects the area passing through Olonkomi town.

Theoretical Perspectives and Review of Related Literature

Sustainable Rural Livelihood Framework

It was noted that rural development theories are various, nearly as heterogeneous as rural areas themselves, and evolved over time as international attitudes have changed (Shumet 2012). Although oversimplified the trends may be summarized as a focus on modernization and large-scale state investment in the 1960s; strong state intervention and social investments in the 1970s; structural adjustment policies (SAPs) and associated market liberalization in the 1980s; and finally a more balanced attempt at poverty reduction based on public participation in the 1990s (Ellis and Biggs 2001, Ashley and Maxwell 2001). In the mean time rural development policies of the 1980s and 1990s shifted from a ‘top-down’ management approach to one of ‘bottom-up’ participation. As the failures of SAPs became evident, donors began to fund social programs through non-governmental agencies (North and Cameron 2000). Since then rural development endeavors have been viewed as participatory processes (Shumet 2012).

Despite such policy fluctuations, the dominant paradigm of development remained largely unchanged. Ellis and Biggs (2001) identified it as “agricultural growth based on small farm efficiency”. However, the prevalence of large farms characterized by declining agricultural prices and the preponderance of environmental degradation challenged this paradigm. Hence, the small farms may

not any longer broadly assume to have greater efficiency. Most problematic for the theory of small farms (poor) efficiency has been the increasing realization of the importance of 'rural livelihood diversification' out of agriculture (Ellis and Biggs 2001).

Current Trends in Rural Development Theories

Despite 50 years of development endeavors based on the above noted paradigms, policy environments and theoretical restructuring, the number of poor remained rising until the late 1990s (Gilling et al 2001). Meanwhile, the share of aid and attention focused on rural development and agriculture was small and declining. This has resulted in a paradigm shift, with increased emphasis on broad-based action which targets rural life rather than agriculture alone. This emphasis includes not only increased income of the poor but also improved access to assets and services, empowered the poor to participate in decision-making processes, and reduced the vulnerability which drives rural poverty through a focus on diversification (Gilling et al 2001).

This integrated poverty reduction approach was adopted in the international poverty reduction forum and then by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) demonstrating a national policy framework for poverty reduction prior to funding (Gilling et al 2001). Thus, it appears that international agencies have adopted the ideology of 'bottom up' rural development, and are seeking more coordinated and long-term poverty reduction initiatives (Ellis and Biggs 2001).

The main narrative in current development theory is the 'sustainable livelihoods approach' (SLA) (see Fig 2), which recognized the deficiencies of a solely income-based measurement of poverty, and adopted a multi-dimensional view of poverty including indicators to measure improvements or shortcomings pertaining to health, education and environment (Prowse 2008). It emerged in the mid-1990s as an integrated, people-centered approach to research and policy formulation. It has had a significant influence on rural development policies and can be used as a tool of understanding rural lives in their totality, including varied lived experiences of continuity and change (Cameron 2005).

The concept of livelihood is widely used in contemporary writings of poverty and rural development, but its meaning can often appear elusive (Ellis 2000). A popular definition is that provided by Chambers and Conway (1992) wherein a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social assets) and activities required for a means of living. Briefly, one could describe a livelihood as a combination of the **resources** used and the **activities** undertaken in order to live (DFID 2000), but it is one way of "organizing" the complex issues

surrounding livelihood; it is not the only way. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from **shocks** and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future (Chambers and Conway 1992). The focal point of the sustainable livelihood approach has been people in the rural areas, their assets, their needs, their aspirations, and also their constraints (Gerster 1999).

A primary objective of the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) is to understand how **policies, institutions, assets and processes** affect local livelihoods. The basic features common to SLA is that it focuses on the livelihoods of the individual, rejects the standard procedure of conventional approaches of taking a specific sector such as agriculture, water, or health as point of entry, and it places great emphasis on people involving in both the identification and implementation of activities where appropriate. Moreover, the SLA differs from other approaches in that it does not necessarily aim to address all aspects of the livelihoods rather it employs a holistic perspective in the analysis so as to identify those issues of subject areas where an intervention could be strategically important for effective wellbeing construction (Scoones 1998). The SLA, therefore, follows the principles of being people-centered, responsive, participatory, building on people's strengths (assets) and addressing vulnerabilities, holistic, multi-level, and conducted in partnership, sustainable, and dynamic and are not static (Scoones 1998).

Scoones (1998), by way of outlining the whole process of sustainable livelihood framework (Fig 2), poses a question that given a particular (***vulnerability) context-*** policy setting, politics, history, agro-ecology and socioeconomic conditions- what combination of ***livelihood resources*** (household assets, different types of capital) result in the ability to follow combination of ***livelihood strategies*** (agricultural intensification/extensification, livelihood diversification and migration) with what ***livelihood outcomes***?

What may be interesting is ***the institutional processes***, i.e. matrix of formal and informal institutions and organizations, which mediate the ability to carry out such (***livelihood) strategies*** and achieve (or not) such (***livelihood***) ***outcomes***.

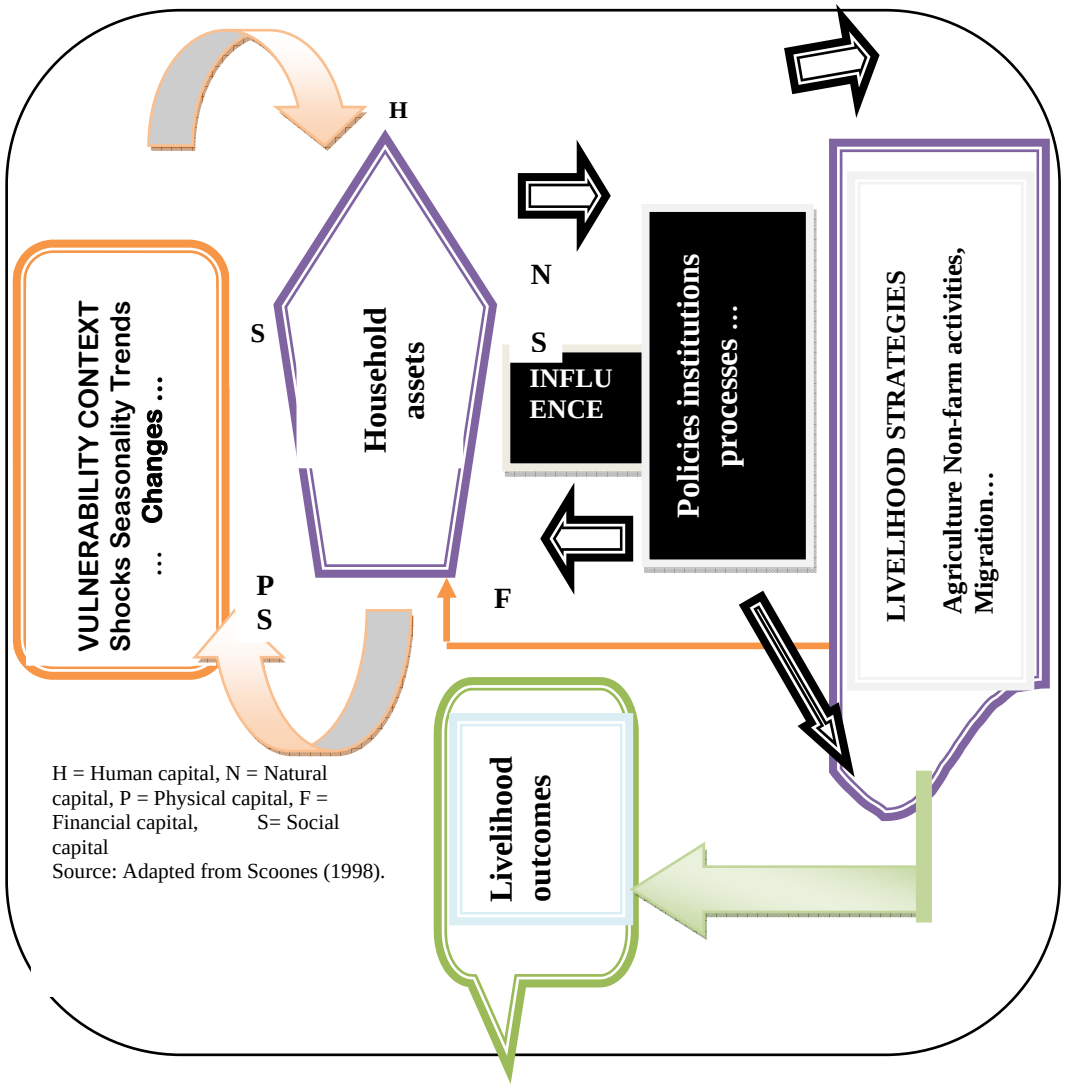

Figure 2: Sustainable Livelihood Framework
Source: Adapted from Scoons (1998)

Livelihood Diversification as a Survival Strategy: Review of Literature

In the absence of employment opportunities in the primary industries such as mining and other secondary and tertiary industries in a country, the scarce land

resource was distributed among the rural people. As a result, many people became landless and many others were forced to have very small farm. Tegegne (2000) asserted that the peasant model that shows peasants' livelihood which is reliant only on access to land is no longer adequate to depict the rural economy.

In various regions of the world, the patterns of rural diversification showed much difference. Studies proposed that rural households engaged in various activities rely on diversified income portfolios. In sub-Saharan Africa, roughly 50 present of the rural household incomes were generated from non-farm activities and transfers from urban areas or abroad in the form of remittances and pension payment (FAO 2004). This accounted for about 36 percent in Ethiopia (Reardon 1997 cited in Degefa 2005). This figure was as much as 80-90 percent in South Africa. However, in South Asia, 60 percent of rural household's income on average was from non-farm sources (Ellis 1998).

The nature of diversification differs along with the economic status of households and gender. The better off ones tend to diversify in the form of non-farm business activities (trade, transport, shop keeping, brick market and so on.), while the poor tend to diversify in the form of casual wage work. In case of gender, diversification is more of an alternative for rural men than for women. This may be due to the fact that men and women have different assets, access to resources and opportunities. Women rarely own land, have lower coverage of education due to discriminatory access as children to schools, and their access to productive resources as well as decision making process tend to take place through the mediation of men. Furthermore, women typically face up to a narrow range of labor markets than men. This is reflected more in occupational segregation and wage differentials. Hence, it appears diversification can improve household livelihood security while at the same time trapping women in customary roles (Ellis 1999).

It is clearly shown that the largest proportions (85%) of the formal sector jobs in developing countries were dominated by men, while female-dominated occupations account for 15 percent (Ellis 2000). This shows that much of women's exclusion from mainstream economic opportunity has guided their participation in casual, informal and unregulated labor at rates that exceeded those of men (Oberhauser 1998). Therefore, women's livelihood diversifications role focused more on the informal sectors. It occupied 30–70 percent of the labor forces in the developing countries in which a growing majority or informal sector workers are women (INSIRAW 1990). In addition to the total involvement of women in income generation, they have been responsible for domestic tasks and agricultural production burdens, which placed significant pressure on their time and physical well-being.

Demographic Adjustment

In developing countries, people devise different mechanisms, which enable them to cope with adversely affecting livelihood conditions. Adjustments of fertility and migration are among the strategies by which humans attempt to alleviate livelihood problems and hence to sustain life.

Adjustment in fertility could involve either raising or lowering the number of children in a family (per woman). In either cases, the levels of fertility tends to influence income saving, expenditure, education and labor supply. Of course, the consequence from the adjustment of fertility level could be either positive or negative. The presence of a large number of children in a household may reduce per capita income. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, a large number of children in a household are assumed to enhance access to land resource and labor supply and hence positively contributing to the household's income (Virginina 1990).

In many parts of Ethiopia, marriage takes place at an early age. Thus, the total fertility rate in rural area was seven children per woman (CSA 1998). According to the 1994 census results, the high level of fertility rate was assumed to have emanated from parents' demand for more labor force, social respect and economic support at old age (Assefa 1992). However, a large size of children raises the need for more subsistence (food), clothing, schooling and health care. It also increases the chance of health complications on women during pregnancy and delivery. Hence it adversely affects the livelihood conditions of women, households and the community at large.

Rural out-migration is the other option that rural people employ to overcome some of the livelihood challenges (shocks) in their households. A study made in Latin America revealed that females were more migratory than their counterparts while male were found more dominant in the case of Africa (Todaro 1976). Low income, poor agricultural productivity, drought and poverty have been the main factors that pushed people out from their agrarian economy. The outward movement of individuals was also stimulated by the availability of income and employment opportunities, strong pull factors, at the place of destination (ILO 1960).

In Ethiopia 25 percent of the population was migrant (internal) (CSA 1999). The direction of population movement has been from North to Central, South, Southeast and Southwest parts of the country. The main push factors were drought, environmental degradation, famine and poverty. A study conducted on internal migration in the Arsi region reported that female migrants dominated intra-regional migration while males dominated the inter-regional movement (Almaz 1990). Conceding with the study of Todaro (1976), Almaz explained that economic factors have been the main drives of migration in the country. In doing

so migrants can improve the standard of living of themselves and their households by sending and bringing home money and other resources including new skills and ideas in the form of remittances that would enable to diversify household income (Almaz 1990).

Results and Discussions

Typology and Background Characteristics of the Households

Local Perception of Wealth Categories and Indicator: The criteria used during the participatory household wealth ranking exercises were similar in the two sample KPAs. Poor households were identified based on the size of their landholding, number of livestock owned, and possession of corrugated iron-roof houses rather than thatched houses, availability of adult male labor and their status of saving. The better-off households owned at least two pair of oxen, large size of land, corrugated iron-roof house, have considerable amount of cash deposit or cereals for unfavorable seasons, and engaged in capital-intensive activities like livestock and grain trade. However the remaining categories owned less than a pair of oxen or none, small or marginal land and sometimes they become landless and own thatched houses, etc. Using these criteria, all households in each KPA were designated as very poor, poor and better-off households. Accordingly, about 39 and 38 percent of the respondents from both Cheleleka Bobe and Gare Kora KPA, respectively, were categorized as poor and very poor households, while the remaining about 23 percent better off (see Table 1).

Table 1: Typology and Distribution of Households by KPAs

Household typology	Samples KPAs						Grand Total		
	Cheleleka Bobe			Gare Kora					
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Over all
Very Poor	27	11	38 (38%)	12	7	19 (38%)	39	18	57 (38%)
Poor	30	7	37 (37%)	18	4	22 (44%)	48	11	59 (39%)
Better off	25	-	25 (25%)	8	1	9 (18%)	33	1	34 (22.6%)
	82	18`	100 (100%)	38	12	50 (100%)	120	30	150 (100%)

Socio-economic Profile of the Surveyed Households

Table 2 shows the distribution of households by socio-economic characteristics of the two KPAs. In most of the variables, there is a slight variation among the KPAs. Generally, observed average size of the household and landholding sizes were 6.15 and 2.18 hectares per households respectively. A household in both KPAs owns at least one ox, 32 percent of them have corrugated iron roof and average household agricultural labour size was about 4 persons.

Table 2: Variations of Household Socio-economic Characteristics by KPAs

Household characteristics	Cheleleka Bobe (Mean values for sample) (100)	Gore Kora (Mean values for sample) (50)
Household size (no.)	6.15	6.16
Age of household head (yrs)	47.37	47.84
Labour size (no)	4.40	3.94
Land owned (ha)	2.21 (8.86 *Timad* *)	2.15 (8.6 *Timad*)
Land fragmentation (plots)	4.6 plots	3.7 plots
Oxen /bull owned (TLU)	1.75	1.44
Cow /heifer owned (TLU)	1.33	1.25
Goats /sheep owned (TLU)	0.15	0.20
Donkey /horse owned (TLU)	0.61	0.43
Chicken owned (no)	3.2	2.5
Bee hive (no)	0.42	0.38
Households with		
Corrugated iron roof (%)	38	32
Thatched houses (%)	62	68

Source: Field survey, 2006; * one *timad* equals to 0.25 of a hectare.

Table 3 also shows variation and distribution of households by socio-economic characteristics as identified based on categories. Variation was also observed considerably among different income (wealth) groups identified based on assets. In particular, the low-income groups (very poor and poor) were marked by lower education attainment, diminutive landholding size, smaller labor size and number of cattle owned, and house construction as compared to the other two income (wealth) groups. Age wise, very poor households were found younger than the other two social groups. This was due to the fact that many of the very poor households with younger heads were landless.

Table 3: Variation of Household by Socio-economic Characteristics Identified based on Income Category and Gender

Household characteristics	Household Heads		Socio-economic Class		
	Male 120	Female 30	Poorest 57	Poor 59	Better – off 34
Household size (no.)	6.45	4.97	4.84	6.59	7.59
Age of household head (yrs)	46.34	52.27	44.44	47.08	53.47
Education levels (household heads)					
Illiterate (%)	70.0	93.3	45.5	34.8	19.6
Church school (%)	4.2	-	20	40	40
Read and write (%)	9.2	-	18.2	45.5	36.4
Grade1-6 (%)	10.8	3.3	--	64.3	35.7
Grade 7-12 (%)	5.8	3.3	37.5	50	12.5
Labor force size	4.34	3.90	3.27	4.54	5.35
Land owned (ha)	2.13	2.08	1.51	2.28	3.05
Land fragmentation (plots)	4.28	4.36	2.75	5.05	5.58
Oxen /bull owned (TLU)	1.79	1.05	0.42	1.93	3.21
Donkey/horses (TLU)	1.34	1.14	0.091	0.54	1.34
Cow /heifer owned (TLU)	0.18	0.10	0.55	1.40	2.41
Goats /sheep owned (TLU)	0.61	0.02	0.04	0.19	0.26
Chicken owned (no.)	3	2.93	1.98	3.32	4.11
Bee owned (no.)	0.44	0.26	0.2	0.32	0.82
Household with					
Corrugated iron roof (%)	40.3	16.7	9.4	39.6	50.9
Thatched houses (%)	59.7	83.3	53.1	39.6	7.3

Source: Field survey, 2006

Table 3 shows that gender of household heads, be it female or male, makes differences in the socio-economic as well as demographic behavior of the households. In most cases female-headed households appeared disadvantaged. They were less educated, have had smaller household and hence scarce labor force, and diminutive landholding size, lesser number of livestock and other asset constraints.

In addition, Figure 1 shows information disaggregated based on gender to examine whether the observed economic differentiation follows gender line. Out of 30 female-headed sample households 60 percent were regarded as very poor. The other two social groups, poor and better-off, accounted for 37 and 3 percent of the female–headed respondents while the male counter parts accounted for only

40 and 28 percents of the respondents respectively.

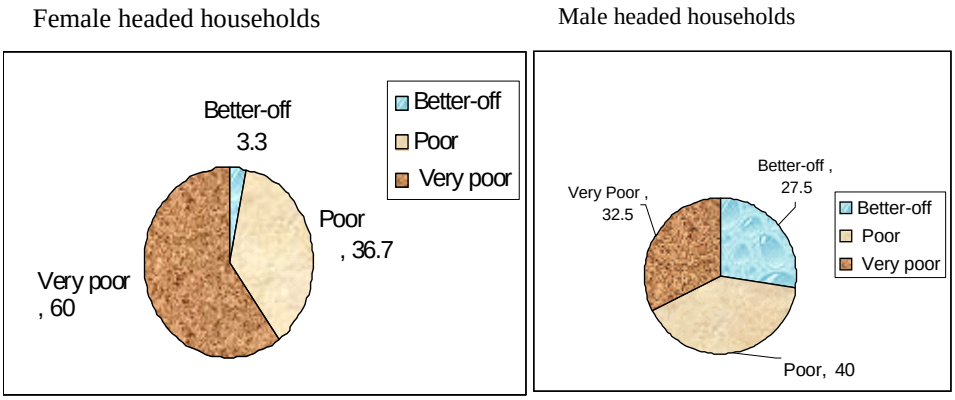

Figure 3: Gender Based Socioeconomic Categories

Rural Livelihood Strategies in the Olnokomi Locality

Livelihood diversification: In the rural Olonkomi locality, households were found engaged in a number of activities. However, the main activity was crop production meant for consumption and sale. The survey suggests that households were engaged also in activities other than crop production like livestock rearing and off-farm and non-farm activities. In the survey conducted in Kembata and Tembaro zone, Tegegn (2000) observed that the main activity, which accounted for about 69 percent, was on-farm employment in which people engaged in crop production for consumption and sale. The remaining households 31 percent of the communities engaged in off-farm and non-farm activities.

In addition, about 75 percent of the rural households engaged in off-farm/non farm activities such as wage labor, processing and selling local drinks, selling firewood and charcoal, making handcrafts, selling pebbles and receiving remittances from migrant household members. Some recent studies in other parts of Ethiopia also indicated that most households undertook some form of non-farm activities. For instance, Muluneh (2000) in West Gurageland and Tegegne (2000) in Damotgale and Kachabira *Wereda* cited in Degefa, (2005), identified that 73 percent and 70 percent of the sample households engaged in non-farm activities, respectively.

Most of the landless and small landholding households earned their livelihood by engaging in wage labor. Moreover, the landless households engaged in

transportation sector using cart and pebble collection and selling. They collect some valuable pebbles along river courses and supply it to a market. Such activities are seasonal in character, however.

To cover some of the household expenses, most women in the male-headed as well as female-headed households were engaged with processing local drinks especially *areke* and *tella,* which are not usually profitable and are seasonal activities, requiring more labor. In addition to these, women were engaged also in the selling of fuel wood, charcoals, and vegetables. Especially women of Gare Kora were engaged more in selling in shops and vegetables. Generally, this shows that a less remunerative type of trade (selling local drinks) was more practiced by women of poor or female-headed households. It was practiced more for survival. Hence, the nature of diversification differs along with the economic status of households and gender line (Ellis 1999).

As indicated in Table 4, the average estimated annual income of the households in the two KPAs as a whole was about 5074 Birr or about 825 Birr per person. The highest average annual income was for Cheleleka Bobe. It was about 5858 Birr or about 953 per person while for Gare Kora was the lowest in amount which was about 3506 Birr and 569 Birr per household and person, respectively. On the other hand, male-headed households had the average annual income of about 5627 Birr and 872 Birr per household and per person, respectively. The female-headed households, however, had the lowest average annual income, about 42 percent of male-headed household.

Table 4: Mean Annual Incomes by KPAs and Socio-economic Categories

KPA	Socio-economic categories		
	Very poor (59 no.)	Poor (57no.)	Better-off (34 no.)
Cheleleka Bobe	781.12 (Birr)	924.70 (Birr)	1113.3 (Birr)
Gare Kora	476.66 (Birr)	552.2 (Birr)	777.0 (Birr)

Crop production both for domestic consumption and market accounted for about 57 percent of the average annual income of the households, followed by income from off-farm (18%) and non-farm (14%) activities, respectively (see Figure 4). The income from livestock sales and dairy production accounted for about 12 percent of the average annual income of the households.

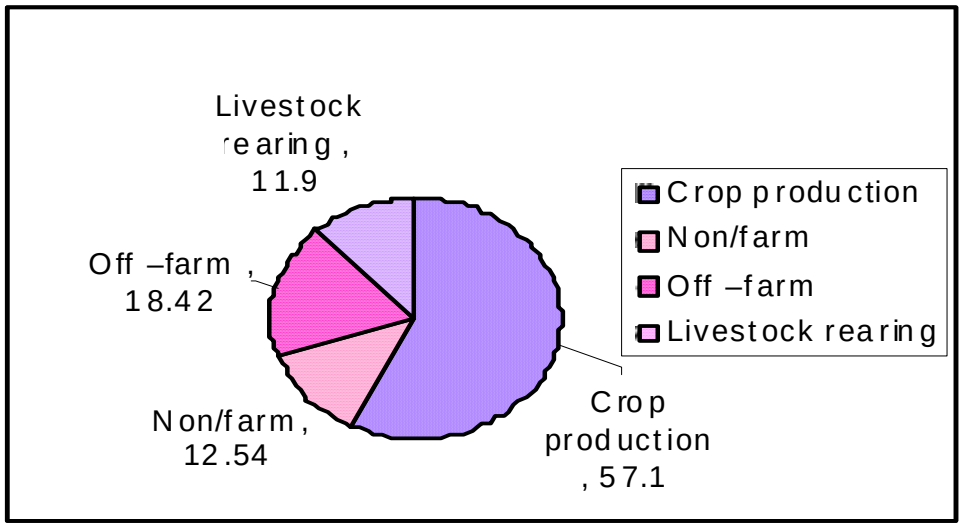

Figure 4: Distributions of Mean Household Income Portfolios
Source: Field Survey, 2006

Women have also contributed considerably to the average annual household income by involving in different activities to sustain life and/or to change and improve livelihoods. However, some of the determinant factors of livelihood diversification strategies of women such as limited access to and control of land, credit, labor and oxen were found constrained or pulled them away.

Out of 116 women in male-headed households, about 87 percent of them did not have access to (their own) land. The remaining 13 percent told they have had the access simply due to the fact that the male household heads, in this regard, were either too old, sick or disabled to work on and control the land.

Therefore, most of the time males dominate in controlling land and its production. Regarding the control of land, about 36 percent of female-headed households control 5.5 hectares land. However the remaining female-headed households "owned" marginal land or are small holders.

Legislation clearly entitles women to the right to share equally all the household assets. However, when it comes to land, women may receive no or smaller size of or marginal land. About 23 percent of the divorced female-headed households have 0.9 hectare. In contrast, widowed household heads have a better opportunity to control larger size of land. Many widows that accounted for about 54 percent had 3.45 hectares per household, which was more than the divorced ones.

Regardless of what has been noted in the case of inheritance and other forms of family transfers, women were less advantaged. Traditions favor males in land

inheritance and it entitles men for land ownership. Owning land is considered unnecessary for a woman, for there is a belief that the man has already got land at the time of marriage.

Some of the studies made in the same context also showed similar findings. For instances, Etenesh (1999) conducted similar survey in Ada *Wereda,* Central Ethiopia, and identified that the average farm size of male- and female-headed households was 2.35 and 1.60 hectares, respectively. The work of Dejene (1994) in East and West Showa showed that among 1,515 rural households 22 percent were women, and the average size of their landholding was 0.7 and 0.55 hectares for male- and female-headed households, respectively.

Limited access to labor and oxen are also other constraints to livelihood diversification. Especially female-headed households do not have adult male labors at home; hence, they are forced to rent out their land or give to share croppers. This however, has contributed to their livelihood. In contrast, male-headed households, having adult male labors and oxen, live more or less a better life. They can better sustain life because they can produce more.

In this regard, a woman whose age was 35 in Gare Kora told us "I have three daughters and a small son. I was divorced with my ex-husband five years ago. Now, I do not have adult son at home. I do not have money to hire daily labourers to plough my land. Therefore, I am forced to give out my land and to share the product equally. I know it is not enough to feed my four children but I do not have any better alternative except wait until my son grows up. For the time being my daughters and I make a living by selling *areke*, locally made liquor, firewood and charcoal".

Regarding credits, only about 17 percent of female-headed households got access to credit provision. The remaining female-headed households do not have access. In the case of women in male-headed households, almost all did not have access to credit. This was because many of the women serve as a bail when their husbands borrowed money from credit associations. They are also afraid of credit because they feel they may not be able to pay back the money. This may be due to lack of experience and confidence, which resulted from misconception of the society that females are inferior to males.

Demographic Behavior of Rural Households

Changes in Population Size and Growth Rate: As it can be seen from Table 5, the absolute number of people in the Olonkomi locality increased at an alarming

rate. The 1984 census result showed the total population of Olonkomi locality was 9663, which increased to 12,148 in 1994. In the recent past (2005) local authorities of Dendi *Wereda* estimated the population of Olonkomi area at 15,179.

Table 5: Population Size by KPAs.

KPAU	1984*	1994*			2005**			
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Growth Rate
Cheleleka Bobe	**1824**	**1336**	**1310**	**2646**	**1666**	**1634**	**3300**	**2.47**
Dega Egu	**1603**	**1222**	**1186**	**2408**	**1524**	**1479**	**3003**	**2.47**
Fincha Godeti	2176	1217	1222	2439	1517	1524	3041	2.46
Gare Kora	718	794	736	1530	991	918	1909	2.47
Jamjam L. Baut	1640	1023	956	1979	1275	1193	2468	2.47
Kalana Imburtu	1702	590	556	1146	735	693	1428	2.46
Total	9663	6182	5966	12148	7708	7441	15149	2.47

Source: * Census and Housing Report, CSA, 1985 and 1995; ** Dendi *Wereda* Administration Office.

Growth rate of the population of Olonkomi locality during 1984-1994 was about 2.60 percent per annum. This has declined slightly to about 2.50 percent per annum during 1994-2005 (see Table 5).

Levels and Trends of Fertility (TFR**):** The current fertility level of the study area was determined using the formula for TFR, which takes into account the age structure of the population, age specific fertility rates (ASFR). The rates showed an increase with age ranged from 66 births per 1000 women aged 15-19 to 344 births per 1000 women at the age of 25 to 29 (see Table 7). It then gradually declined to a value of 75 births per 1000 women aged 45-49. The age specific fertility rates revealed that the middle four age groups (i.e., 20-24, 25-29, 30-34 and 35-39) were the most fertile group. They have contributed nearly 76 percent of the total fertility rate, while women in their 40s contributed only about 14 percent of the total fertility. Hence, it may be safe to say that the population of the

two KPAs was characterized by a high fertility rate over the broad age range (see Table 6).

Table 6: Age Specific Fertility Rates Per Woman for the Two KPAs.

Age group	Number of women	ASFR	Cumulative fertility
15-19	105	0.066	0.333
20-24	121	0.190	1.283
25-29	122	0.344	3.004
30-34	146	0.267	4.339
35-39	181	0.182	5.250
40-44	173	0.154	6.022
45-49	93	0.075	6.398

Source: Field Survey, 2006

The above table indicates that the reported total fertility rate for Olonkomi locality was about 6.4 children per woman. This rate is one of the highest as compared with the Oromia region and Ethiopia at large, which, respectively, were about 5.10 and 5.4 per woman (CSA 1999 and 2005).

However, the fertility trend shows that **t**he total fertility rate of Olonkomi locality has been declining as calculated from the census row data. In 1984 the rate was about 6.82 children per woman while in the following census, 1994, the rate declined to about 6.52 and further dropped to 6.4 children per woman in 2006. Although the rate of fertility did not show significant change, there is a declining trend, which is commendable and showing demographic adjustment.

Regarding the desired family size and perceptions, more than half of the women respondents, which accounted for about 53 percent, showed no interest to have additional children. This may bring down household size in the near future. On the contrary, about 47 percent of women respondents told that they want more children (Table 7). Among women who responded, 'want some more', their desire ranges from one to four more children. Many of them wanted one more.

The attitudinal change for lower number of children is the result of the improvement in access to family planning and health services, which led to the decline in infant mortality rate and economic incapability of households to support larger household size.

Therefore, these days the fertility preference of women in general and very poor households in particular showed attitudinal change towards child bearing, which contributed to the declining fertility rate and household size. The findings

indicated that the 'very poor' households have a size of 4.84 members while the 'better-off' households have, on average, household size of 7.59.

Table 7: Percentage Distributions of Households by Desire for More Children, Cheleleka Bobe and Gare Kora

Desire for children	Number of women		Number of desired children			
	Number	Percent	One	Two	Three	Four
Want some more children	14	46.6	9	4	-	1
Want no more children	16	53.3	-	-	-	-
Total	30	100				

Source: Field Survey, 2006

As noted in the preceding paragraphs and shown in Table 7, one can understand that the ambition to have more children is declining among women in the study area. The respondents put large family size as one of the causes of poverty in the household. One of the respondents, landless female spouse, described this fact as follows:

> I am 26 now. I have five children. I gave birth to my last daughter twenty one days before. We do not have land. My husband is a blue-collar worker. In the harvest season he works on others' farms on contract basis. Additionally, he chops woods. I spend most of my time in taking care of children. All of my kids do not go to school. Our living condition is declining. Sometimes, we do not have anything to eat. Our living condition has worsened due to having many kids. But now we have decided that when my menstruation resumes, I decided to start using contraceptives. We do not want to have kids anymore.

Another respondent further noted, "I have seven children. All of them did not get a chance to attend school because we could not afford to pay their school expenses. Even we could not feed them properly. We live a hand-to-mouth life. Therefore, I will start using contraceptives".

On the other hand, for some parents, children are considered as an asset because parents believe that children can provide social and economic support and protection to them during old age. They may also contribute to household income by engaging them in different activities and help their family. One of the respondents stated that:

> I have five children. I am now thirty-nine. Two of my daughters are married, and two more of my sons live far away. We just have a daughter at home and

> there is nobody to help us at home. My husband is facing a problem. He needs someone to take care of the herd. We could not pay for a shepherd. Therefore, we are expecting a baby son and I am pregnant.

Another respondent reported "all my children have got married. We have no one to help us. We need someone to take care of our chores. So I am trying to become pregnant."

With regard to husbands' attitude towards the number of children, about 48 percent of the respondents told they need additional children; where as, about 41 percent of the respondents showed no interest to have additional children. Others did not show interest for either. The main reasons for additional children were expecting support from their children when they are grown up, followed by respondents who needed a specific gender.

Women's Knowledge and Attitude towards Contraceptive Use: All the 30 respondents (currently married women of reproductive age) told they have the awareness of contraceptive use. About 17 percent of the respondents told they are aware of at least one method of contraceptive and about 73 and 10 percent of them have had the awareness of two and three methods respectively.

Most commonly known contraceptives are ingested and/or injected. Some respondents know about Norplant and condom but most of them know condom is used to reduce transmitted diseases, not birth control. Amazingly, they think that when someone uses condom he/she is not trusted for his/her marriage partner and suspected that he/she may do sex with another partner. One of the women respondents asked, "why should we use condoms?" She went on saying, "I am faithful to my husband and he is also faithful to me and in the near future we will go to a church to take Holy Communion." "I heard about condoms. But I heard that it can protect from disease not from pregnancy" said another respondent.\

It appears that the society might have been misinformed about the use of condoms and lack of the right information, for what purpose and when condoms may be used. Many of the respondents who accounted for about 47 percent, heard about the use of contraceptives from their neighbors and about 27 percents from *kebele* meetings and the radio. About 7 percent of the respondents heard about it from their relatives and during polio vaccination programs.

Information on the attitude of respondents and their husbands towards family planning methods was also collected during the survey. In the two KPAUs, most of the respondents approved of the use of contraceptives to regulate pregnancy. However, some of the respondents gave their testimony that using pills in particular affected their health, caused stomachache and altered the frequency of menstruation. Regardless of this, about 77 percent of the respondents approved

that they use contraceptive pills while some of them, which accounted for about 24 percent, disapproved the method. This could be a lack of access to the right information, and husbands' negative attitude toward contraceptives and limited choices lead to disapproval of the methods.

In one of the group discussions, one of the participants who approved the methods confirmed,

> in my opinion it is good to use contraceptives because its use is good for the mother's health and she will raise her children properly. Although I gave birth to nine children without having the knowledge of using contraceptives, I do not want to see my children repeating the same history of mine. They have to limit the number of children they should have. Now my two daughters are married and they are using contraceptives."

One of the interviewed respondents, who disapproved the method, affirmed, "I used to take pills three years ago. However I got sick many times and I could not eat well. It did not go well to my expectation. Then, I threw away the pills and did not go to the health center since that moment. My husband also advised me not to use contraceptives after he knew the side effects. Thus, I stopped using the pills and then I gave birth to a baby girl."

With regard to husband's attitude towards the use of contraceptives, about 47 percent of sampled women reported that their husbands disapproved of the practice of contraception. The main reason was they wanted to have more children and the need for a particular gender of a child. In addition they have doubts on the reliability of the use of contraceptive. About 37 percent of the respondent women have reported that their husbands approved of the practice of contraception. The remaining 17 percent of the respondents were not sure about their husbands' attitude.

Ever Use of Contraceptive: The findings showed that about 37 percent of the women respondents have ever used traditional and modern contraceptive methods. Out of these, about 90 percent of the respondents have used the modern methods of contraceptives including pills and injection. The remaining respondents used 'natural' or 'traditional' methods especially periodic abstinence.

Of all the modern contraceptive user respondents, about 70 percent used only one method either pills or injection and 30 percent used two methods. All ever users were asked the reasons why they are using contraceptives. It was often heard that "having more children is an economic burden". According to the respondents, after using contraceptives, they are able to improve their livelihood. One of the

indicators of this is being able to educate their children. From all ever-used, about 80 percent of them reported that, after they started using contraceptives, their children started attending school and also they became partially able to satisfy their needs better. The second indicator is their food intake. Most of ever-used respondents stated the frequency and quantity of their food intake has also improved since they began using contraceptives. Moreover, they are now able to save more money and cereals. Therefore, they can live now in a planned way. This is the result of limiting the number of children. One of the interviewed respondents stated "before using contraceptives I had four children. Therefore, I was supposed to give more time and attention to nurturing them. By that time it was hard to live by and change our livelihood because my husbands' income was the only means of survival. Sometimes even we did not have anything to eat. But now everything has changed; our children can attend school, we can cover their school expenses and can secure our food than before. I started also engaging myself in processing and selling local beverage to earn additional household income and improve our household livelihood. This is the result of using birth control.

The third indicator is the engaging of women in non-farm activities. Almost all ever-used respondents now participate in many non-farm activities, which contributed to increment of amount and diversification of household income. However amongst the ever users of contraceptives about 27 percent of them discontinued using contraceptives at the time of the survey. All these respondents were asked about their reason for discontinuing contraceptive use. They said using contraceptive has side effects. This may be due to absence of counseling and inappropriate application of the methods. Some others opted to have some more children.

Current use and Availability of Contraceptives: Out of all interviewed respondents, only about 27 percent of the married women were using one type of contraceptive methods or another at the time of the survey. Many of the users, about 63 percent, relied on a modern method of using injection. The remaining 38 percent used the traditional (natural) method, especially periodic abstinence.

In Olonkomi locality, contraceptive methods can be obtained from Olonkomi private and public clinics. There are two private clinics and a public health center. The health center renders health services for the inhabitants of 11 KPAs including KPAs in the locality of Ihud Gebya. In addition, condoms are sold in Olonkomi town. The health center was run by a health officer and three health dressers and yet the services rendered could not cover the inhabitants of all the KPAUs (eleven of them) in the area.

According to the health officer of Olonkomi health center, 'the number of users of

the center increased from time to time. In 2002 the number of regular injection users for family planning purpose of the 6 KPAs of Olonkomi locality was about 64 females and this had increased to 81 in 2003, 95 in 2004 and to 113 in 2005. This showed that the number of contraceptive users increased at an annual rate of 19 percent since 2002. Moreover, the number of the users of pills also increased from time to time. Women of the area prefer injection than pills however. A nurse who was working at Olonkomi health center reported that the service we provided in family planning program is given only on Saturdays and Tuesdays. These are market days hence many women are coming to the market on these days. They are using the opportunity to get family planning services on the market days. Besides, they do not easily understand the method of taking pills because of their poor educational background. Most of the time, they become sick because of contraceptive use, therefore they hate taking contraceptives. Because of their poor nutritional status and lack of proper application, the pills they use can have a side effect. They are unable to use the medicine properly, and terminate using it. Most of the husbands have negative attitudes towards contraceptive use and this has the effect of diminishing the supply and application of contraceptive methods at needed scale.

It appears that a large number of women respondents did not get access to any kind of formal or informal family planning education. The health center apparently has no scheduled programmes for teaching about contraceptives and its method of application to its clients. But once or twice a year they teach about it at market places and/ or in the *Kebele*s. This appears not sufficient.

Migration and its Impact on Rural Livelihood: the level of migration to an area is measured by taking the percentage of migrants against the total sampled population of the area. From the total of 930 household members included in the households of sampled respondents which accounted for about 90 percent were residents of the area since their birth, where as about 10 percent migrated from and to within and outside the Dendi *Wereda*. However, the rate of in-migrants ranges from about six percent for Gare Kora KPA to about 12 percent for Cheleleka Bobe KPA (see Table 8).

Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Place of Birth by KPAs

KPAs	Non migrant		Migrants	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Cheleleka	555	88.51	72	11.48
Gare Kora	285	94.05	18	5.94
Total	840	90.3	90	9.7

Source: Field survey, 2006

Out of all migrants, spouses, either male household heads or female household heads, accounted for about 36 percent. Those who have in-migrated have survived for a period ranging from less than a year to more than a decade. About 48 percent of the respondents migrated to the area and lived there for more than ten years, followed by 32 and 20 percent of the respondents who lived there for about 6 to 9 and 1 to 9 years, respectively.

It was also observed that about 98 percent of the in-migrants were of rural origin who moved directly from other rural areas, while about 2 percent were from urban areas such as Olonkomi, Ihud Gebya, Debreberhan, Holeta and Addis Ababa. Therefore, the main form of migration in this area was rural–rural, especially within Dendi *Wereda*. This finding is similar to the observations made in Oromia region where the rural-rural forms of migration was about 50 percent (CSA, 1999).

Most of the in-migrants left their birthplaces because of marriage, villagaization and personal reasons. Especially many female respondents, who accounted for about 82 percent of the spouses of the head, left their birthplace because of marriage. For instance, one of the interviewed women respondents told that 'I was born and lived in Olonkomi town. I attended formal education up to grade six there. Two year ago, I met my husband in the market when I was selling goods. Then, after sometimes, we got married and moved to and started living at Gare Kora KPA.'

In a number of studies made particularly in the less developed countries, the most recurrent explanation for migration of women is that married women have been moving with or to join their spouses or single women moving with the intention of acquiring spouses (Caldwell, 1969).

With regard to the out-migrants, observation also showed that about 29 percent of the respondent households reported that one or more of their household members moved out to other areas. The average number of out-migrants of the area was about 0.47 per household. According to the rural livelihoods survey, results showed that about 14 percent of the households had at least one out-migrant member. The figure is comparable with the national figure of 13 percent for Ethiopia (CSA, 1998).

Table 9 shows out-migrants relationships to head of the household. As shown on the table, children accounted for about 96 percent of the total migrants, but spouses of female house heads accounted only for about 5 percent of the migrants. The gender composition showed that there were more female migrants than male migrants, especially at the age of 10-29, which accounted for about 47 percent of the total out-migrants. According to Caldwell (1968) in most early African

migration studies, males were noted to constitute higher proportion of migrants than females. However some recent studies showed that females tend to dominate the migratory streams.

Table 9: Percentage Distribution of Migrants in Relation to Head of Households.

Relation ship to head of household	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1. Spouse	2	100	-	-	2	2.8
2. Children	26	37.6	43	62.3	69	97.2

Source: Field survey, 2006

One of the universal features of migration is age selectivity. The survey showed that adolescents and young adults were preponderant. The age distribution of migrants usually differs from that of the non-migrants and this holds true in this study. Many of the out-migrants were adolescents and young adults, whose age was between 10 and 29 that accounted for about 69 percent of the total migrants of the area.

About 41 percent of the out-migrants were found illiterate, followed by about 30 percent who completed up to grade 6 and the remaining out-migrants attained above grade 7.

The main reasons of out-migration were looking for job opportunities, health problems, further education, search for food, and shortage of land. About 59 percent of the out-migrants left their villages due to economic reasons to look for employment. They left their villages to search for jobs in other areas. Among those who out-migrated about 57 percent were female while 43 percent of them were males.

During group discussions and interviews some of the respondents explained why children often migrate. 'In the area of Gare Kora KPA the unemployment of males was more serious because migrants were landless. Therefore, they prefer to go to other cities to look for employment. These days, females also have started to migrate especially to Addis Ababa to get employment where many of them work as housemaids. One of the respondents reported that "before two years our neighbor's daughter left for Addis Ababa and was working as a maid. When she came back home to visit her family… my 12 years daughter also left home. By now we do not know where she is. May God be with her."

Another respondent said that "I lost two sons and a daughter. My sons had disagreement with their father because of land and left their homeland but my daughter went to Addis Ababa with her uncle with a promise to educate her. I

have no knowledge what they are doing now." Most of the male out-migrants that accounted for about 35 percent work as daily laborers. Moreover, about 43 percent of female out-migrants also work as housemaids. The remaining out-migrants might remain unemployed or married, or attending schools. About 71 percent of the migrants went to Addis Ababa, and the rest to Adama and Busa *Wereda*. Some of the out-migrants moved to places unknown to their families. Many of them migrated to Addis Ababa because of its proximity and better employment opportunity.

Table 10: Percentage Distributions of Out-migrants by Reasons of Migration

Reason of Migration	**Male**		**Female**		**Total**	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Search for food	1	3.57	3	7.1	4	5.70
Look for work	17	60.7	24	57.1	41	58.57
Shortage of land	1	3.57	-	-	1	1.40
Education	3	10.7	7	16.6	10	14.3
Health problem	1	3.57	2	4.76	3	4.2
Other	5	17.8	6	14.26	11	15.7
Total	28	100	42	100	70	100

Source: Field survey, 2006

Regarding remittance, only about 32 percent of the out-migrants were sending some amount of money to their parents. The remaining 68 percent of the out-migrants did not send remittances. Out of all out-migrants who sent remittances to their families about 52 and 48 percent were male and female migrants, respectively. Only about 17 percent of the female- headed household respondents received remittances from out-migrants. The remaining 83 percent of the beneficiaries were male-headed household respondents. This shows that the female-headed households did not have that much support and live in low living condition. But it does not mean that the remittances that male-headed households received could make appreciable difference in their livelihoods. About 58 percent of the male-headed households received up to Birr 200.00 a year and about 26 percent of the male-headed respondents received money ranging from Birr 201-400 yearly. The remaining 16 percent of the male-headed households received remittances ranging from 401 to 1200 Birr yearly. In the case of female-headed

households, all the respondents reported that they received 25 percent of their household income in the form of remittance.

Out-migration did not bring a significant change in the rural livelihood especially among the poor households including female-headed households. This is because most of the out-migrants from the area earned low wage or were unemployed probably because of lack of basic skills required by urbanites at places of destination. Some of the respondents reported that some out-migrants needed even support coming from their parents living in the rural villages. So their family sent them grains instead of receiving remittances. Hence, as a result of this the livelihood conditions of some households were adversely affected. One respondent reported, "I have ten children. All of them are in Addis Ababa. They are all daily laborers and are not well paid. We even send them grains once in a year to support them. They (out-migrants) expect us to support them although we are poor."

Discussions: Impacts of different Livelihood Strategies on Rural Conditions

Income Diversification: As noted in the previous section, agriculture is the main activity in the area. However, to ensure, survival, some households engage in non-farm activities and accumulate wealth. About 75 percent of the rural households engaged in off/non-farm activities such as processing local beverages, selling firewood, collecting pebbles, receiving remittances, selling vegetables, crops, eucalyptus trees and making handcrafts in addition to farming. About 31 percent of the household's income in the area was generated from off/non-farm activities. This shows that the income from farming is not sufficient to support the household economy. Actually, engaging in non- and off-farm activities, besides agriculture, made them not to depend only on farming. This has diversified sources of the household income and improved their livelihood conditions to some extent. However, the nature of diversification varies along with gender and the economic status of the households. For instance, male-headed households improved their household livelihood conditions from time to time and considered such activities as a source of wealth accumulation. Whereas women, especially female-headed households, diversified into casual and informal activities such as processing local beverage, selling firewood, vegetables and handcrafts tended to be poor on the average. But this does not mean that it had no constructive effects on the livelihood conditions of the society. One important means by which the positive effect of diversification of household income occurred via gender division of labor was a kind of non-farm activities in which women were engaged. Processing local beverages, selling firewood, handcrafts and selling vegetables,

and raising poultry, were commonly associated with women. In addition, diversification gave self-confidence to women and made them relatively more economically independent. To improve the contribution of non-farm activities to household economy in general and female-headed households in particular, it seems there is the need to improve access to microfinance credit provision.

Demographic Adjustment: Migration strongly influenced not only the demographic characteristic of the population but also the socio-economic structure of the region. It was noted in one of the previous sections that most of the in-migrants came to the area either as a result of marriage union or resettlement and or villagaization programs or military demobilization. In-migration could have accentuated population growth, which in turn resulted in population pressure on land resources manifested in the form of land scarcity, increased the problem of landlessness and forest degradation.

On the other hand, many youths who did not have land of their own migrated to other areas. Actually, it is customary to migrate to other areas to get a source of income and send remittances to their families. However, only about 31 percent of the respondents received remittance from the out-migrants, which could not bring significant change on the household economy in particular and rural development in general. On the contrary, the out-migrants might have transferred new land use technologies and modernization to the area. Moreover, it might have played a role in poverty reduction. However, due to lack of employment opportunities because of lack of basic skills required by urbanites at places of destination, some of the out-migrants were forced to become street children, beggars, especially females were forced to become sex-workers that could have contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Some of the small girls that were taken to towns served as babysitters and maids, which sometimes exposed them to works which they were not able to do. This could have affected their health and development of their personality. The most remarkable happening in the area was that a few out-migrants received supports from parents living in the rural areas. Hence, both labor and resources, which could have contributed to rural livelihood, were drained away. This could have partly accentuated the poverty situation at the household level.

Regarding fertility, there was a growing awareness about the disadvantage of having many children or large family size on the livelihood conditions in general and access to and accentuated degradation of natural resources in particular. Decline in fertility showed a remarkable effect on the livelihood conditions. Livelihood improvement was observed in the households that utilized family planning as a strategy. However, households that did not use family planning showed no improvement in livelihood conditions. Their children engaged in some form of household activities instead of going to school; and women spent much of

their time to take care and raise their children. In general, this had compelled them to live a life of hand-to-mouth. On the contrary, those women who decided to limit the number of children showed improvement in their livelihoods compared to their earlier living conditions. This was due to engagement or involvement of women in gainful income generating activities. This enabled them to take care of their children's and their own health and to live in a more planned way. Moreover, observations showed that the rural households in general and women in particular admitted that fertility adjustment was used as a strategy to improve livelihood conditions.

So, family planning seems to have indirectly changed considerably rural livelihood conditions in particular and rural development in general. In the long run, it is expected that this will contribute to rural life improvement, change of attitude and will have a remarkable effect on poverty reduction.

In light of the established theoretical framework for sustainable livelihood analysis (Fig 2) the observations made so far in this survey substantiate the idea that was propounded by Chambers and Conway (1991) and promoted by Scoones (1998) and others. A large proportion of the Olonkomi communities, the communities under scrutiny, were found living under unwelcoming household livelihood conditions (under poverty) due to shocks caused by poor or no access to some of the basic household assets such as land resources (and or landlessness) and financial capital resources, poor physical and social infrastructure such as inadequate schooling and training, health care and modern communication provisions.

Despite the observed declining trend of fertility which resulted from family planning practices, the problem of poverty was accentuated due to large household size of about 6.15, on the average. The main livelihood options available to the communities were crop cultivation and animal husbandry, out-migration to urban areas and non-farm activities. In spite of their very modest contribution to household income, most of the non-farm activities did not develop to the expected level. But they are proliferating and emerging as one of the best alternatives to diversify sources of rural household income and may become one of the best means to curb rural poverty. What may be safely said, based on the observations made so far, that, although rural poverty is still prevalent particularly amongst households that have poor or no access to land resources, and have large number of children, there are encouraging improvements in the households' living condition (**livelihood outcomes**). This can be improved further and the improvement can be made long lasting (sustainable) provided access to land, family planning, education/training, microfinance provision and physical infrastructure are improved further and developed.

Conclusions

In this article an attempt was made to assess rural livelihood conditions, alternative livelihood strategies of rural communities, women in particular, and their impacts on the livelihood of rural communities in the context of fast population growth.

The findings clearly indicated that fast population growth leads to landholding diminution and fragmentation, and the emergence of landlessness especially among youth, demobilized soldiers and women. Besides, rural households were not found 'homogeneous group' especially in connection with endowment of livelihood assets. The livelihood of the poor female-headed households, elderly and young household heads, who largely depended on cultivating marginal lands, did not only face uncertainty related to the right of access to land resources but have also limited access to services provided to the public.

Therefore, as a survival strategy and as a means of improving their livelihood, the rural communities in general and women in particular, engaged in various non-farm/off farm activities, migrated to the nearest area and made demographic adjustment by limiting the number of children. However, some of the strategies did not bring considerable change in their lives. This could be due to inefficient technology generation including credits, social bias along gender line and lack of resources and basic social services which failed to supplement successful local strategies and to effectively build the capacity of the rural households at the required pace to respond to growing demographic pressure. For instance, lack of access to credit facilities for women, access to and control of land, inefficient family planning services and limited contraceptive methods were some of the main determinants. Hence local authorities in collaboration with all that have stake with local communities and government development partners should work strategically to improve access to health care and family planning, education and training, provision of financial credit and development of infrastructure and harmonize land use policy.

Furthermore, one type of rural livelihood strategy could be more successful than others in terms of attaining food security, stabilizing family size, and sustainable use of natural resources base. The landless (very poor) segment of the society used contraceptives to limit the number of children. It was found to be one of relatively effective, promising and sustainable means of positive changes in households' livelihood. Furthermore, the better-off rural households, which diversified their livelihoods by engaging in other activities such as renting carts, and selling eucalyptus trees, are found to be more profitable and sustainable.

On the basis of the empirical findings, the rural livelihood condition can be improved and changed for the better under favorable government policy environment and tailored development interventions that can bring about a better access to household assets/ capital resources. Thus, all those who have a stake need to work to improve access to credit services and institutionalized safety net, training, and health care and family planning programs in the area and others of similar socio-economic and cultural settings.

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