ESRC Research Group on Wellbeing in Developing Countries

QoL Phase 1 Summary

Ethiopia: Yetmen

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WeD carried out focus group discussions with members of Yetmen as part of the Phase 1 QoL fieldwork. Six focus groups were held, divided by age and gender. Below are summaries of the answers given to a selection of questions.

The focus groups were asked what kind of life villagers aspire to. Town life was the most frequently given answer. Young people commented that they hope to see the basic needs of all villagers met and middle-aged people noted a wish to own material goods. They were then asked what people need to attain the good life. Hard work was mentioned by almost all groups, and half also commented that people living the good life are knowledgeable and skilful as well as economical. All male groups mentioned that such people have good relationships with others and sufficient money.

Groups were questioned about what they believe characterises their area. Scarcity of land, high fertiliser prices and farming were mentioned by half of the groups. The focus groups were then asked to list the day-to-day goals that members of the community pursue. Those most frequently mentioned were irrigation, the education of children and being able to expand farming activities.

The focus groups were asked what characteristics those living the good life in their community possess. Almost all groups noted that such people are hard working and save money. Half also commented that they are well behaved as they do not engage in adultery or drink alcohol, that they own livestock and are able to educate their children. All female groups noted that they own land. They were then asked what challenges or obstacles to achieving the good life exist. All groups mentioned natural catastrophes in answer to this question, and half commented on the death of livestock and the existence of thieves.

Semi-structured interviews were also carried out as part of the WeD QoL research. Twenty community members participated in this stage of data collection. They were asked to list the characteristics of the life that they aspire to lead. Being able to help parents and family members was mentioned the most often, followed by education. Agriculture was commented on a number of times, but only by men, and many participants noted wealth and food as aspirations. Participants were then asked what characteristics are required to be leading a good life. Half the interviewees mentioned wealth, most of which were male. Land, good behaviour, the ownership of livestock and being hard working were each commented on by many participants, as were health and the nee to have good relationships with others.

Respondents were questioned about the features of their lives that they would like to change. Dependency was the most frequently mentioned, followed by poverty. Lack of land and the high cost of fertiliser were each commented on by a number of participants, all of whom were male. Ill health and having no one to be helped and protected by were also noted as features that people

would like to change about their lives. They were then asked to compare their current living conditions to those that they aspire to have. Most commented that their present state of life is inferior to the one they wish to have, but current conditions were not thought to be too bad on the whole.

Participants were asked what makes their lives worth living. Most mentioned a desire to raise and educate their children well as a reason. Others commented that the fact that their basic needs are met is enough for them. Being able to care for their family and do good work for others were other reasons given for living. They were then questioned about the domain of life that they find it hardest to be happy with. Poverty emerged as the domain agreed on by most respondents, although physical weakness and poor health were also mentioned frequently in answer to this question.

The interviewees were questioned about the aspects of their lives that they are happiest with, or the happiest events that they can recall in their lives. Children and education were commented on the most in response to this. Participants were then asked about the unhappiest events of their lives. The death of a family member was often recalled here although only by women. The Derge regime was also mentioned as an unhappy period, as was the time when people's land holdings were reduced.

The respondents were asked to list the characteristics possessed by people in their area who are living the good life. Livestock and owning a good house made from corrugated iron were the most frequently mentioned characteristics. Wealth and the ownership of large land were also commented on often. Having children who attend school was thought to be an important characteristic by a number of participants. They were then asked how such an individual manages to attain that style of life. Hard work was thought to be the most important factor, along with renting land from others. Rearing cattle was mentioned frequently, as was being able to sell surplus produce or engage in trading activities. The support of one's family was commented on a number of times as important for achieving the good life.

The Person Generated Index (PGI), which asks participants to list the areas of most importance in their lives, was also administered as part of the semi-structured interviews. Health and agriculture were the most frequently mentioned responses to this question. Education was also commented on often, as was marriage.