

# Occupational Aspirations, Opportunity Structures, and Barriers to Youth Livelihood Transformation in Gumbi Boredede Woreda, West Hararghe, Ethiopia



Rural youth participate in orientation for LASER PULSE field-based data collection in Gololcha Kebele, Gumbi Boredede Woreda. Photo by Chanyalew S.

In many developing countries, including Ethiopia, a key challenge facing youth is the mismatch between their occupational aspirations and available employment opportunities in the job market. Youth face tremendous challenges to acquire the necessary knowledge, training, life skills, and experience to compete for available job opportunities. They also encounter various forms of discrimination on the basis of gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural norms. There are several socioeconomic, cultural, institutional/organizational, and demographic factors affecting the participation of youth in development interventions, programs, and projects. Various factors affect the ability of youth to engage in and transform their livelihoods, including the availability of international, regional, and national frameworks; economic opportunities; and infrastructural developments; as well as environmental/ecological conditions. However, an understanding is necessary of what shapes youth aspirations, challenges, and opportunities, as well as what context-specific interventions need to be designed to enhance youth participation in economic activities, youth empowerment, and youth transition to adulthood.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Youth aspirations, if properly guided and nurtured, can lead to livelihood transformations.
- Addressing socioeconomic, institutional, cultural, and environmental constraints to active youth participation is an indispensable mechanism to ensure the economic integration, empowerment, and welfare of youth.
- Building the capacity of youth through entrepreneurial education, training, and behavior change communication, as well as creating an enabling environment for youth livelihood transformation, should be an entry point to build self-confidence, foster employability, and reduce frustration, tension, and conflict.
- Systematically targeting disadvantaged and vulnerable youth through programs, projects, and development interventions can result in active engagement and benefits.

**FACTORS AFFECTING YOUTH'S ABILITY TO ENGAGE AND TRANSFORM THEIR LIVELIHOODS**



International, regional, and national frameworks



Economic opportunities



Infrastructural developments



Environmental/ecological conditions

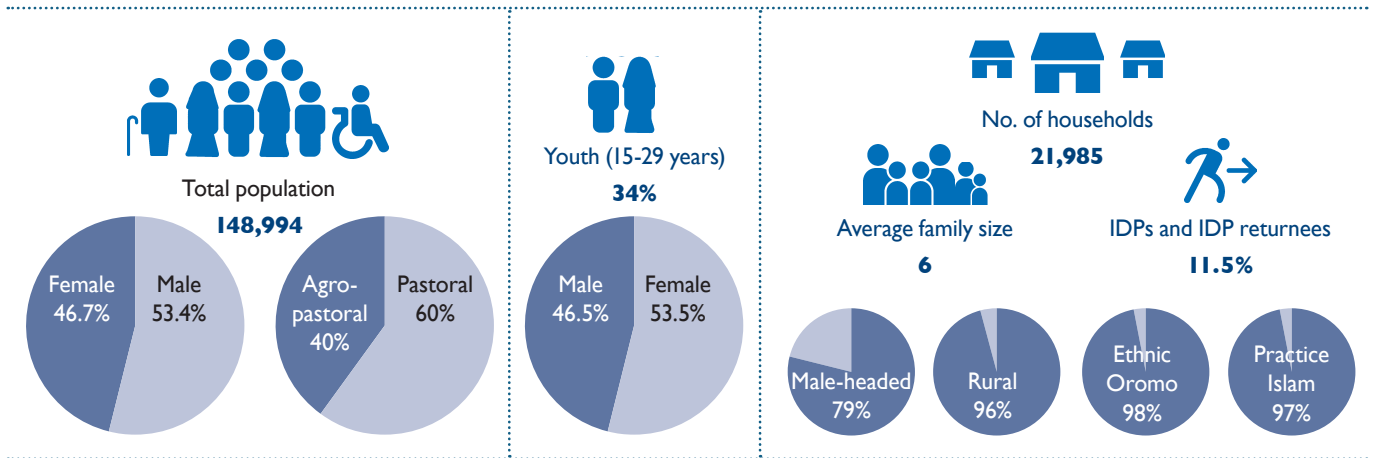


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Figure I. Key facts and figures about Gumbi Boredede Woreda



This desk review was conducted in Gumbi Boredede Woreda (district), in West Haraghe zone of Ethiopia’s Oromia Regional State, to identify key socio-demographic, economic, and ecological factors; livelihood activities and employment; opportunity structures (i.e., enabling environments); and barriers to agro-pastoral youth participation in programs, projects, and interventions aimed at livelihood transformation. It also assessed youth occupational aspirations, unique needs and challenges, and participation in development interventions, programs, and projects.

The key methods followed were desk reviews of published and unpublished documents to identify and list all relevant stakeholders, youth-focused interventions, institutions, impact pathways, and

processes involved in empowering youth in an agro-pastoral context.

In the selection of relevant documents, inclusion and exclusion criteria included: 1) time period (i.e., within the five years preceding the survey); 2) studies that exclusively state improvements in youth livelihood and nutritional outcomes, employment and empowerment, ending gender discrimination, and removing barriers to youth participation in development interventions; 3) studies that evaluate the impact/effect of development interventions, policies, and programs/projects; 4) availability/ accessibility of publications; and 5) study design considerations, including credible evaluation protocol, justification, and analysis.

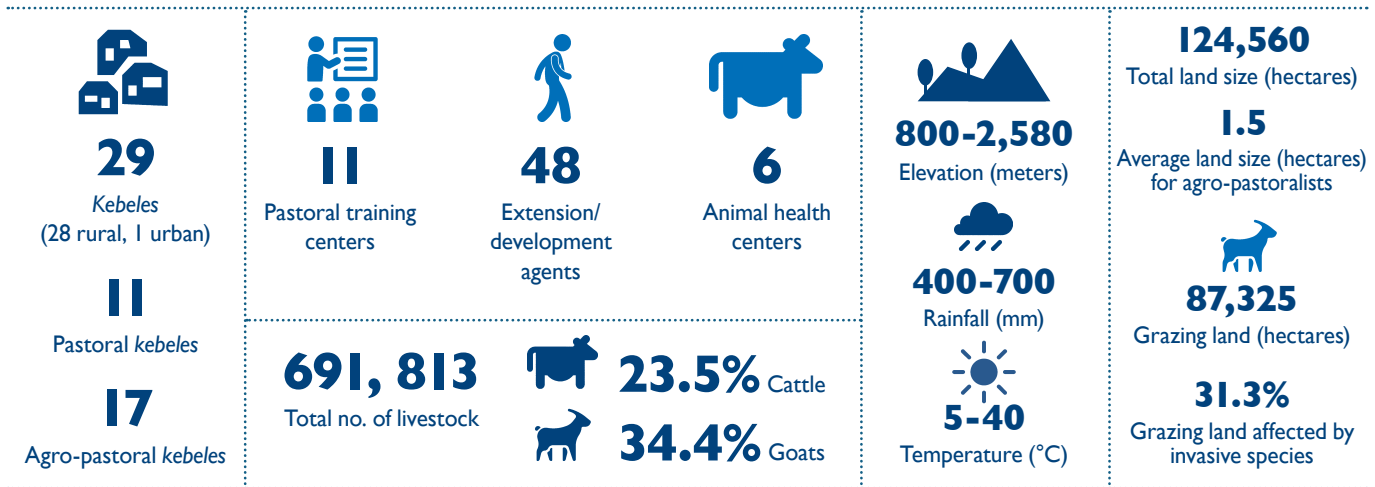
## Key findings on youth livelihood transformation

Youth aspirations in the study area were found to be influenced by a range of demographic, socioeconomic, institutional, and cultural constructs, including parental background and socioeconomic status, age, gender, social norms and expectations, and available infrastructure and basic services. Important factors for youth to engage in the cattle fattening business included accessibility of the study area to cattle marketing towns near the main road; indigenous beef

cattle fattening knowledge and management; cultural medication of cattle; and availability of model cattle fatteners. The study found a number of opportunities for youth livelihood transformation in the study area: 11 tourist attraction sites; livelihood activities, including pastoralism, agro-pastoralism, beekeeping, charcoal production, and petty trade; 56 schools; 5 health clinics; 6 animal health posts; 11 pastoral training centers; water resources; and customary institutions.



Figure 2. Study area descriptions and available opportunities



## Challenges

The identified challenges included:

a) food insecurity due to low crop and livestock productivity; b) livestock disease, lack of feed and water, invasive species (weeds, desert locust), limited capacity and quality of animal health services, and conflict; c) drought, deforestation,

and soil erosion; d) lack of finance, poor roads, lack of reliable electricity supply, and limited banking services; e) poorly equipped schools and a shortage of teaching materials; f) limited human health service provision; and g) socio-cultural constraints.

## Recommendations for Policy and Practice



Youth development and livelihood transformation interventions by the local, zonal, and regional government and their development partners (NGOs, community-based organizations) should take into account differences between the occupational aspirations of young men and young women.



Strengthening formal and non-formal education, training, and behavior change communication interventions should be prioritized by the *Woreda* office, as it focuses on small and medium enterprise promotion, farmer training centers, and youth, women, and children's affairs.



Provision of business skills and entrepreneurship training, start-up capital, market information and integration, and basic services and infrastructural development should be strengthened.



Local government, customary institutions, and NGOs operating in the study area should concentrate on addressing all forms of discrimination and its impact on the aspirations, employability, empowerment, and overall livelihood and welfare of male and female youth.



Local government and NGOs operating in the study area should encourage the participation of male and female youth through carefully designed targeting and selection criteria, exclusively targeting vulnerable segments of the population, and coordinating programs/projects using multi-stakeholder innovation and engagement platforms.

**Haramaya University Project Team Members:** Dr. Muluken G. Wordofa; Dr. Getachew S. Endris; Dr. Chanyalew S. Aweke; Dr. Jemal Y. Hassen; Prof. Jeylan Wolyie; Dr. Dereje Kifle; Dr. Million Sileshi; Kadija Kadiro Geche; Dr. Abdulmuen M. Ibrahim; Kidesena Sebsibe.

**Research Translation Partners:** Bonsitu Ibrahim (former Head, Oromia Pastoralist Area Development Coordination Commission, East Hararghe); Michael Abraham (Head, Oromia Irrigation and Pastoralist Development Bureau, East Hararghe); Gezahegn Manyazewal (Chinaksen *Woreda*); Abdi Bekri (Midega Tola *Woreda*); Adinan Ahmed (Head, Miesso *Woreda* Bureau of Agriculture and NRM); Aliyi Ahmed Omer (Gumbi Boredede *Woreda*); Dr. Elias Ahmed (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Member of Parliament – Policy Partner)

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**Main contact:** Dr. Muluken G. Wordofa

**Phone:** +251902590665

**Email:** [mgw.tud@gmail.com](mailto:mgw.tud@gmail.com)

**Website:** <https://laserpulse.org/portfolio/youth-empowerment-through-livelihood-transformation/>

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