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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING THE SOCIAL CAPITAL OF SEBAT-BET GURAGHE AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLE IN THE PEOPLES' LIVES

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ABSTRACT

This study has focused attention on discovering of the social capital of *Sebat-bet Gurage* people and examining its social and economic implications. The study basically focuses on the *Sebat-bet Guraghe* area in *Guraghe* zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia. A descriptive cross-sectional research design and mixed research approach have been used to gather relevant data. In-depth interviews, FGDs and household survey were the main instruments of data collection. A sample of 199 respondents were consulted in a self-administered questionnaire in attempt to collect data related to the social capital basis of Sebat-bet Guraghe people and its socio-economic value to the peoples' lives. Descriptive methods of data presentation and analysis were utilized in the study. The findings show the existence of strong neighborhood and family ties; strong adherence to cultural institutions, values and norms that support solidarity and mutual help; culturally institutionalized ways of settling/resolving disputes through 'Yejoka qicha'. In the study, *Iqub* and *Iddir* are identified as the most important self-help and mutual support cultural institutions among the people in the study area. The social system among Sebat-bet Guraghe was also found to be compassionate of natural resource preservation and conservation practices since it emphasized The Role of Community Participation and Customary Norms in the process. The role that community elders play in the community is found to have a contribution to maintaining peaceful social order and maintaining conformity of deviating members, particularly the youth. There is also a welcoming and fostering socio-cultural system where strangers could simply get accustomed to. The strong intra-community ties are contributing in many ways to improving the people's livelihoods business engagements.

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INTRODUCTION

The term social capital attempts to capture community and wider social claims on which individuals and households can draw by virtue of their belonging to social groups of varying degrees of inclusiveness in society at large (Ellis, 200:36). Social capital is made up of both networks of inherited and elective relationships between individuals, which may be vertical as in authority relationships, or horizontal as in voluntary organizations, and of the trust and expectations which flow within those networks. Social capital refers to the collective value of networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other. The basic idea of social capital is that your family, friends, associates – even acquaintances – are an important asset.

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You can tap that asset to survive a crisis, improve your financial footing, or just enjoy life more. This is true for individuals and for groups. Communities that have a rich and diverse stock of social networks and civic associations are less vulnerable, and can more easily tackle problems (Swift cited in Ellis, 200:36). Social capital is related to the stock of social relations, based on norms and networks of cooperation and trust, that spillover to the market and state to enhance collective action between formal actors and achieve improved social efficiency and growth. Social capital contributes to economic growth by highlighting the importance of cooperation and trust within the firm, the market and the state. The interdependence between decisions of individual agents and the emergence of externalities and common goods makes cooperation imperative to maximizing social welfare. The superiority of social cooperation has long been documented in economic and social thought. But social capital, as social norms and networks, sustains cooperation by emphasizing its intrinsic value and its pursuit as an end in itself. It is a mixed-motive cooperation, in which individual behavior takes account of its effects on the welfare of others, alongside its own.

In this manner, it operates as an internal commitment mechanism to resolving the social dilemma or collective action problems from free-riding and narrow-interested calculation (Christoforou, 2008). Economists have traditionally focused on natural capital, physical capital and human capital as key determinants of economic growth and a vast body of theoretical and empirical literature in growth economics has examined these relationships. But the focus on these three types of capital often overlooks a critical aspect in the process of economic growth in that they do not explain how economic actors interact. More recently, it has been suggested by some economists and political scientists that the missing link in the growth process is 'social capital' (Iyer, et al, 2004). Social capital consists of resources with in communities which are created though the presence of high levels of trust, reciprocity and mutuality; shared norms of behavior; shared belongingness and commitment; both formal and informal social networks; and effective information channels; which may be used productively by individuals and for groups to facilitate actions to benefit individuals, groups and community more generally. Social capital research is inadequate as far as the people of *Sebate-bet Guraghe* are concerned. There are some studies undertaken to show the relationship between *Guraghe* peoples' socio-cultural life and livelihoods. For example Fekede (2014), studied the discourses of development in *Guraghe* proverbs. In his study, Fekede, investigated how *Gurage* people address development issues and inculcate them into the community through proverbs. Nebiyu (2012), identify, classify, describe and document the house utensils of *Enemor* in an effort to document endangered elements of material culture of the *Enemor* people in south Ethiopia. Fu (2004), concludes that trust and social capital are mutually reinforcing- social capital generates trusting relationships that in turn produce social capital. Haile (2009), conducted a study on *ensset* as a means of existence, social organization, and ethnical identification for the *Guraghe* people. None of these studies thoroughly investigated the social capital of the *Guraghe* and its contribution in the peoples' socio-economic life. But what exactly is social capital? And why is its study meaningful for social scientists? Do the *Sebat- bet guraghe* people have their own social capital? If so, what are those assets? More particularly, does the study of social capital have consequences for socio-economic development? What are the social values of the people of *Guraghe*, and how do those social values benefit the people economically and socially? This research has tried to answer these and related question by employing mainly qualitative methods of research and quantitative methods of research as well.

Objective and Scope of the Study: Overall, this study has focused attention on discovering of the social capital of *Sebat-bet Gurage* people and examining the social and economic consequences of the social capital of the *Sebat-bet Guraghe*. In terms of area coverage, the study basically focuses on the *Sebat-bet guraghe* area in *Guraghe* zone. As already described in the 'objectives' part, this study emphasizes such substantive issues as discovery of social assets /capital and the roles those social assets have in peoples' socio-economic life. As far as the time scope is concerned, the study is carried out between the periods: December, 2016 and June, 2017.

METHODS

Description of the Study Area: *Guraghe* zone is situated in the north tip of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples regional state and covers an area of 593,000 square kilometers.

The zone is divided in to 13 administrative *woredas* (districts) and two reform city administration which is Wolkite and Butajira city administration (*Guraghe* Zone: Department of Culture, Tourism and State Communication Affairs, 2013:8). According to the 2007 Central Statics Agency reports, the population of *Guraghe* zone was 1,340,376, out of which 622,253 are males and 658,229 are females. In *Guraghe* zone, Christianity and Islam are the two major religions and other traditional religions such as *Waq*, *Muet* and *Demuamit*, gods and goddesses of war, fertility and thunder respectively were practiced. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy and the area is known by *ensset* (false Banana) production (CSA, 2007).

Research Design and Approach: Research design involves set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied, among what population with what research methods for what purpose (Earl, 2007:112). Hence, this study is carried out based on exploratory descriptive research design. The researchers have utilized mixed approach (giving special emphasis to qualitative methodology due to nature of the issue under consideration) with methodological triangulation. Qualitative data were collected from the experts and key informants as well as documents were reviewed. The quantitative data was gathered through questionnaires. In order to achieve the objective of the research it has been employed by the researchers both primary and secondary data collection methods. Therefore, primary data were gathered through *methodological triangulation*- the use of several research methods in one and the same research project (Yeraswork, 2010: 66). Triangulation in social research is the combination of different methods, methodological perspectives or theoretical viewpoints. Taking the metaphors of the stability of a tripod or the need for navigators to take bearings on at least three points in order to locate themselves accurately on a map reference, proponents of 'triangulated' approaches to research assert that the result of combining varied approaches is a net gain the strengths of each contrasting approach more than cancel the weaknesses of their counterpart (Milner and Brewer, 2003:326). In this study, both quantitative and qualitative tools of data collection were used in generating data relevant to the objective of the study. These include; In-depth interview, Focused group discussion, survey, and secondary sources. Basic information is collected from different individuals. First those experts and individuals working within developmental associations and culture, tourism and state affairs office in the zone were considered. Data relevant to objective of the study were gathered from key informants (such as community elders-main sources qualitative data this study) through unstructured in-depth interviews. FGDs were also conducted with some residents of data collection sites. Sample of respondents have been systematically drawn to gather survey data. Also *Guraghe* community members in Addis Ababa city were interviewed.

Samples and Sampling: The researchers have used purposive sampling so as to select samples for survey data collection. Hence, among the seven *woredas* of the *Sebat-bet*, three (*Eza*, *Cheha* and *Enemourna ener*) were selected purposively on the basis of number of household in each *woreda*. Hence, 100 samples were obtained from *Enemourna ener* and the remaining 99 samples were drawn from *Eza* and *Cheha Woredas*. Since the purpose of the research was not found to be explanation of casual relationships between variables, it was not necessary to draw random samples. Rather, the researchers

tried to ensure the validity and representativeness of data by using methodological triangulation and by giving due emphasis for FGDs and Key-informant in-depth interviews. The main sampling techniques that were used to obtain key informants are Snow-ball sampling and purpose sampling. Following is the summary table showing the number of key informants under each study site. The samples were selected based on the researcher's assumption regarding knowledge and experience of participants in the study. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to attain samples for FGD. The following table presents summary of FGD participants under each study site. The samples were selected based on the researcher's assumption regarding knowledge and experience of participants in the study.

Method of Data Analysis and Interpretation: The study basically emphasizes qualitative and approach for data collection, interpretation and analysis. Quantitative data is descriptively analyzed by descriptive statistical methods such as frequency distribution, tables and percentages. The qualitative data which were gathered from purposively selected respondents through methods of in-depth interviews FGDs, and questionnaires were coded and classified according to common attributes. Next, the data in Amharic were translated in English. Then the organized data were interpreted and analyzed using thematic arrangement and systematic descriptions of narratives.

Theoretical Framework

Social Capital: Meaning and Measurement: "Social capital" refers to the resources available in and through personal and business networks. These resources include information, ideas, leads, business opportunities, financial capital, power and influence, emotional support, even goodwill, trust, and cooperation. The "social" in social capital emphasizes that these resources are not personal assets; no single person owns them. These resources reside in networks of relationships. Social capital, in essence, is the institutions, relationships, attitudes and values governing interactions amongst people and contributing to economic and social development. It has been defined as 'the net works, norms, relationships, values and informal sanctions that shape the quantity and co-operative quality of a society's social interactions. Social capital includes shared values and rules for social conduct including trust and civic responsibility. Its increasing prominence in economics discourse parallels the rise of the 'informal institutions' literature in related fields such as development economics (Iyer, 2005). The original theoretical development of the concept by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1980) and the American sociologist James Coleman (1993a, 1993b) centered on individuals or small groups as the units of analysis. With some significant variations, both scholars focused on the benefits accruing to individuals or families by virtue of their ties with others. Bourdieu's treatment of the concept, in particular, was instrumental, going as far as noting that people intentionally built their relations for the benefits that they would bring later (Bourdieu, 1985). In a few brilliant pages, the French sociologist dealt with the interaction between money capital, social capital, and cultural capital, the latter defined as the formal educational credentials that an individual possesses and the more intangible complex of values and knowledge of cultural forms in his or her demeanor. Bourdieu's key insight was that forms of capital are fungible, that is they can be

traded for each other and actually require such trades for their development. Social capital of any significance can seldom be acquired, for example, without the investment of some material resources and the possession of some cultural knowledge, enabling the individual to establish relations with others (Portes, 2011). The social capital of a society includes the institutions, the relationships, the attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development. The notion that social relations, networks, norms, and values matter in the functioning and development of society has long been present in the economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science literature. Only in the past 10 years or so, however, has the idea of social capital been put forth as a unifying concept embodying these multidisciplinary views (Bastelaer and Gootaert, 2001).

The overriding lesson that emerges from the SCI is that it is possible to measure social capital and its impact. The empirical studies indicate that social capital has a profound impact in many different areas of human life and development: it affects the provision of services in both urban and rural areas; transforms the prospects for agricultural development; influences the expansion of private enterprises; improves the management of common resources; helps improve education; can prevent conflict; and can compensate for a deficient state. More generally, it helps alleviate poverty for individuals and for countries as a whole. Lest this sound excessively simplistic or overly generalized, we note that the extent to which social capital matters varies tremendously across settings, as do the aspects of social capital that are effective (Bastelaer and Gootaert, 2001). Experience with the multitude of social capital indicators in the case studies suggests that the focus should be on three types of proxy indicators: membership in local associations and networks, indicators of trust and adherence to norms, and an indicator of collective action.

Membership in local associations and networks: Using membership in local associations as an indicator of structural social capital consists of counting the associations and their members and measuring various aspects of membership (such as internal heterogeneity) and institutional functioning (such as the extent of democratic decision making). Which associations to include in the indicators is culture specific: agrarian syndicates could be relevant in one country, rotating credit and savings associations in another, parent-teacher associations in yet another. In the case of networks, which are less formal, the key information is the scope of the network and the internal diversity of membership. Indicators of membership in associations and networks proved of key importance in the studies of watershed management in India, access to water systems in Indonesia, solid waste collection in Bangladesh, primary schools in Kenya, access to services in Russia, and civil conflict in Cambodia and Rwanda (Bastelaer and Gootaert, 2001).

Indicators of trust and adherence to norms: Measuring trust and adherence to norms (cognitive social capital) requires asking respondents about their expectations about and experiences with behavior requiring trust. Key questions relate to the extent to which households received or would receive assistance from members of their community or network in case of various emergencies (loss of income, illness). Questions of this type were included in the data collection instruments of several SCI studies. The measurement of trust

was critical for the studies of traders in Madagascar, agricultural extension in Mali, and the civil conflict in Cambodia and Rwanda (Bastelaer and Gootaert, 2001).

An indicator of collective action: The provision of many services requires collective action by a group of individuals. The extent to which this collective action occurs can be measured and is an indicator of underlying social cohesion (at least to the extent that the cooperation is not imposed by an external force, such as the government). Several SCI studies successfully used such measures, including the studies on watershed management in India, water supply in Indonesia, and solid waste removal in Bangladesh (Bastelaer and Gootaert, 2001). Despite some ambiguity social capital is generally understood as the property of the group rather than the property of the individual. Hence the most common measures of social capital examine participation, e.g. membership of voluntary organizations, churches or political parties (Schuller, 2001 cited in National Statistics, 2001). Measures of social capital should be as comprehensive as possible in their coverage of key dimensions (networks, values and norms) and should be balanced between the attitudinal/subjective and the behavioral (Cote and Healy 2001 cited in National Statistics, 2001). Such measures should be related to the cultural context in which the behavior or attitudes are being measured (National Statistics, 2001).

Bonding and Bridging Social Capital: Sociologists and economists have distinguished different types of social capital. 'Bonding' social capital links 'sameness' and enables cooperation between groups such as networks and clubs. The key characteristic of bonding social capital is that its potential power is positively related to the size of the group. But it is not always the case that 'bonding' social capital is good for an economy. For example, Olson, cited in Iyer, 2005 argues that horizontal associations can hinder growth as they may encourage special interests and groups lobbying for preferential policies that may impose a disproportionate cost to society. In contrast, 'bridging' social capital, this is also described as 'cross-cutting social ties' or 'weak ties' concern relations across rather than within groups, and which are less dense than the relations within bonding forms of social capital? Therefore, in the presence of disparate social subgroups, bridging social capital may be needed to improve economic and social performance. In many countries, both developed and developing, such social capital is considerably under-provided and it has been argued that without such social capital, the opportunities for social exchange are lowered and the potential for destructive conflict is raised (Iyer, et al., 2005).

Socio-economic Significances of Social Capital: The Economics of Social Capital: Implications for Economic Development: One of the key debates that have surrounded discussions of social capital is to what extent is it 'social' and to what extent is it 'capital'? Social capital is considered 'social' in that it involves social interactions and to the extent that the effect of these interactions might have some economic persistence, one can also think of social capital as 'capital'. There are a number of mechanisms through which social capital affects economic growth. For example, in the Solow-Swan growth model (Solow, cited in Iyer, et al., 2005), output is a function of technology, physical capital, human capital and, in more recent vintages, social capital. In such models, social capital may affect output through changing the manner in which technology is used. It may lead to the early adoption

of new innovations and, therefore, an economy may experience faster and earlier technological progress if it has high levels of social capital (Iyer, et al., 2005). The classical economists identified land, labor, and physical capital (i.e., assets that generate income) as the three basic factors shaping economic growth. In the 1960s, neo-classical economists introduced the notion of human capital, arguing that a society's endowment of educated, trained, and healthy workers determined how productively the orthodox factors could be utilized. The latest equipment and most innovative ideas in the hands or mind of the brightest, fittest person, however, will amount to little unless that person also has access to others to inform, correct, assist with, and disseminate their work. Life at home, in the boardroom, or on the shop is both more rewarding and productive when suppliers, colleagues, and clients alike are able to combine their particular skills and resources in a spirit of trust, cooperation, and commitment to common objectives. The vast majority of people, moreover, live, work, vote, pray, and recreate as members of various but distinct social groups that shape one's very identity, values, and priorities (Woolcock, 1998).

It is widely accepted that economic performance is positively correlated with innovative activities, such as expenditure for research and development) and patent applications. Additionally, it is known that societies in which people enjoy each other's confidence experience a higher level of economic performance. By enabling information exchange and reducing transaction costs social capital may induce more effort toward inventive activity. The combination of these observations has not received attention but could imply that societies with a higher level of social capital are better able to manage the process of innovation and that creative effort will be more richly rewarded in relatively trusting societies (Akcomak, 2008:21).

Social Capital and Implementation of Policies: The role of social capital to implement government policy can be both positive and negative. Social capital is positively correlated with levels of education as it supports access to publicly provided education and to credit for the poor. This positive correlation is important because higher levels of education generally induce denser networks where social capital forms. In this situation, social capital generates positive externalities which are in turn generated by social interactions. These externalities increase knowledge associated with the behavior of people, which in turn reduces the potential for opportunistic behavior to take hold. In addition, and most importantly, these externalities are able to withstand the free-rider problem that occurs when information is limited resulting in coordination problems and failures. The free-rider problem can be reduced by providing public goods and other government initiatives that foster development and reduce friction; by creating banking and insurance institutions; and by creating mechanisms to penalize disobedient 'group members'. In general, regions with higher levels of education on average do better in terms of economic performance and thus receive less government support. This is certainly true in the case of EU structural funds. That said, it is important to note that, given a certain level of development, regions with higher levels of social capital are more likely to effectively implement support programmes because they are able to internalize the externalities generated by social interactions and networks. This implies that a positive correlation between the average level of education, the measure of social capital and the

government support program will exist, which is the predicted outcome of the empirical analysis. This analysis also predicts that regions with higher levels of education will be more likely to devote resources to innovative activities. So, the determinants of innovation are likely to be positively correlated to the interaction between social capital, education and government support ((Akcomak, 2008:104). At a local level, policies could be developed that encourage local people to get together and form social networks. The formation of voluntary organizations along with Local Exchange Trading (LET) schemes, mentoring, volunteering, and so on will contribute directly to the building of local social capital. Institutions and programs that foster a sense of community and help articulate shared values can be encouraged. Strengthening the community ownership of public assets such as village halls and community centers is a practical way of promoting growth in local social capital (Kay, 2005).

Social Capital, Social Enterprises Social Economy and Local Development:

Social enterprises that did emerge from local social capital, such as those in smaller isolated, rural localities, usually drew upon bonding social capital embedded in the networks of the informal and shadow economy. However bridging social capital to other groups, organizations and communities within, beyond and outside the locality - become important as the social enterprise emerges and formalizes as part of the social economy. Social capital is important in the start-up, consolidation and sustainability of social enterprise. Social enterprises, once established, also continue to use and build social capital. However its importance relative to other forms of capital may vary over the specific development trajectory. Nevertheless, one common scenario is that a social enterprise which is in crisis and which has failed to maintain its social capital is less likely to survive. Social enterprises generate social capital often in a virtuous cycle of development where a social consensus to meet a local need leads to the ignition of the other elements of social capital (sense of belonging, values of co-operation, trust, mutuality and reciprocity) in networks of support to address the need. Similarly, a social capital cycle is proposed which indicates how two-way relationships between ranges of organizations, groups and individuals generate network linkages that through regular usage strengthen and encourage the sharing of values central to the specific social capital thus creating trust. The social entrepreneurial cycle, is not found to fit with the research evidence and is dismissed as serving a neo-liberal perspective on social enterprise development. Such a model is considered to be at odds with the context, the collective action and the social capital resources in which all social enterprise is rooted (European Commission, 2003).

The Role of Social Capital in Local Development: Identifying social capital as important in local development policy assumes a desire and will somewhere (whether bottom up or top down) to promote improvement. This however is no guarantee that it becomes part of policy or that it will have a positive influence. The possible presence of 'downside' social capital, the relationship to other types of capital and the developmental context (state role for instance) may conspire to suppress positive outcomes (European Commission, 2003). Informal ties do not necessarily promote improvement in material wellbeing any more than wealth or technology is necessarily used to promote human betterment, but if people can't trust each other or work together, then improving the material conditions of life is an uphill battle (Evans, 1996 cited

in European commission, 2003). An awareness of the role and impact of social capital might permit the generation of measures to enhance and direct such a role, to make of it a tool of policy and this is our concern in this section of the report. The first task in this regard is to recognize its social roots in networks; to 'socialize' (European Commission, 2003). One of the consequences of socializing social capital is that networks, norms and identities are rescued from relegation. There is a welcome irony in the fact that when this is done we seem to learn more about economic development than we do when working with the reductionist conceptions of economics. It seems that by refusing to succumb to the logic of economic rationality we might begin to understand more about the way in which development occurs." (Fevre, 2000 cited in European Commission, 2003). Social capital is coming to be seen as a vital ingredient in economic development around the world. Scores of studies of rural development have shown that a vigorous network of indigenous grassroots associations can be as essential to growth as physical investment, appropriate technology or ...'getting prices right'" (Putnam, 1993 cited in European Commission, 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents:

Majority of the respondents (73.8) are male in terms of gender, whereas (23.2%) are females. In terms of age, the majority (46.7%) are between the age of 31 and 41, whereas few (9.6) of the respondents are 53 and above years old. As far as marital status is concerned, 106 (53.3%) respondents are married whereas the widows/ers constitute the least percentage (4%). Concerning household size, 73 (36.7%) respondents have family members that range from 4 to 6, followed by 69 (34.7%) respondents who 1 to 3 family members. When we look at the educational status of respondents, 71 (35.7%) respondents can read and write, followed by 41(20.6%) respondents who have completed primary school. Finally, the majority (69.4%) of respondents reside in urban and semi-urban areas.

The Social Capital of *Sebat-bet Guraghe* People: This section consists of discussions pertaining to the existing condition of social assets in *Sebat-bet Guraghe* area. The discussion is mainly based on qualitative data obtained through key-informant interview methods and FGDs. These qualitative data are translated in to English language and narratives are presented to substantiate discussion. Additionally, quantitative data are analyzed in the form of simple statistics such as percentages and frequency distributions.

Strong Neighborhood and Family Ties: As one note from the above table, 98.5 percent of the respondents reported that they have good ties with their neighbors. Focus group discussions and key-informant in-depth interview results also indicate that there is a strong social relationship among neighbors. The elaboration made by one of the key-informants (place of interview: *Yeseray village, Eza Administrative Woreda*) on this point is presented as follows.

Two or more families that are living with physical proximity as neighbors share everything... they support each other in times of problems such as illness, death, loss of property and cooperate in occasions such as agricultural activities like farming and harvest, wedding ceremonies, spiritual ceremonies such as 'meseqal' and so forth.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=199)

Variable	Response Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	52	26.2
	Male	147	73.8
	Total	199	100
Age	20-30	46	23.1
	31-41	93	46.7
	42-52	41	20.6
	53 and above	19	9.6
	Total	199	100
Marital status	Never married	74	37.2
	Married	106	53.3
	Divorcee (e)	11	5.5
	Widow (er)	8	4
	Total	199	100
Household size	1-3	69	34.7
	4-6	73	36.7
	7-9	39	19.6
	10-12	18	9
	Total	199	100
Educational status	Illiterate	25	12.6
	Read and write only	71	35.7
	Completed Primary School	41	20.6
	Completed Secondary School	33	16.6
	Certified with Training	16	8
	First degree and above	13	6.5
	Total	199	100
Residence	Rural	61	30.6
	Urban	138	69.4
	Total	199	100

Source: Own Household Survey, 2017

Table 2. Social Capital among the Sebete-Bet Guraghe People (n=199).

Questions/Statements:	Responses	Frequency	%
Have good relationship with neighbors	Yes	196	98.5
	No	3	1.5
	Total	199	100
Help and protect people in the neighborhood who encounter different socio-economic problems	Yes	199	100
	No	0	0
	Total	199	100
Can claim family and community support under any socio-economic hardship	Yes	199	100
	No	0	0
	Total	199	100
Had attained financial and in-kind support from friends, relatives/families or other members of the neighborhood	Yes	167	83.9
	No	32	16.1
	Total	199	100
Respect the customs, values and norms of the community	Yes	199	100
	No	0	0
	Total	199	100
Participate in the cultural institutions of <i>Iddir</i> and <i>Iqub</i>	Yes	157	78.9
	No	42	21.1
	Total	199	100
Attain credit and support from the cultural institutions of <i>Iddir</i> and <i>Iqub</i>	Yes	153	76.9
	No	46	23.1
	Total	199	100
Participate in communal activities such as natural resource conservation, rural road construction and so on	Yes	67	33.7
	No	132	66.3
	Total	199	100
Can present personal cases and/or problems to community elders and seek solution	Yes	175	87.9
	No	22	12.1
	Total	199	100
There is an opportunity for all members of society (including children and women) to participate in social events and decision making processes.	Yes	179	89.9
	No	20	10.1
	Total	199	100
There is respect and care for strangers such as government employees assigned to the locality	Yes	199	100
	No	0	0
	Total	199	100
The community is receptive to government regulations and policy directions	Yes	162	81.4
	No	37	18.6
	Total	199	100

Source: Own Household Survey, 2017

Table 3. Socio-economic Implications of Social Capital in Sebete-Bet Guraghe (n=199)

Questions/statements:	Responses	Frequency	%
Do you have strong ties with members of the community you are living in?	Yes	194	97.5
	No	5	2.5
	Total	199	100
Is there care and protection for public service provision centers and infrastructures?	Yes	151	75.9
	No	48	24.1
	Total	199	100
Do you ever know someone in your community who bounced back from economic losses/bankruptcy by the help of relatives, friends, neighbors of other members of the community?	Yes	127	63.82
	No	72	36.2
	Total	199	100
Do you ever know people who have improved their livelihood and living standard with the help of families and friends?	Yes	131	65.83
	No	68	34.2
	Total	199	100
Is there any special care and protection for vulnerable members of society such as the elderly, the sick and people with disability?"	Yes	153	76.9
	No	46	23.1
	Total	199	100
Is there strong trust among members of your community?	Yes	176	88.45
	No	23	11.56
	Total	199	100

Source: Own Household Survey, 2017

Table 4: The role mutually cooperative, interdependent, and stronger family and neighborhood ties to peoples' socio-economic life (n=199)

Mutual Support and Cooperation (Social Capital Aspects):	Response	Frequency	%
There is mutual support in agricultural activities especially for people who encounter health problems, for the aged, for persons with disability, for single parent (female headed) families.	Yes	199	100
	No	0	0
	Total	199	100
Senior business men play a role in job offering and creation for the jobless, an opportunity to share experience in profit making or business undertaking, farming and so on.	Yes	175	87.94
	No	24	12.06
	Total	199	100
The local community facilitates informal saving and access to credit through the cultural institutions <i>iqub</i> and <i>iddir</i> .	Yes	184	92.46
	No	15	7.54
	Total	199	100
Participated and participating in solutions making for failure in business undertaking (such as small-business bankruptcy) and crop failure problems in the localities.	Yes	87	43.72
	No	112	56.28
	Total	199	100
The local community's strong solidarity and cohesiveness serves a function of social security for people under problems.	Yes	179	89.95
	No	20	10.05
	Total	199	100
I have loyal customers and I am loyal too others in business undertaking.	Yes	169	89.92
	No	30	15.07
	Total	199	100
There is cooperation in farming leading to productivity and resource sharing such as land, money, farming oxen and so on.	Yes	193	96.98
	No	6	3.01
	Total	199	100
Societal expectations instill in the minds of traders and service providers to serve their neighborhood in a better way.	Yes	152	76.38
	No	47	23.62
	Total	199	100
Easy and organized facilitation of social events such as marriage ceremonies, spiritual ceremonies, funerals and etc.	Yes	197	98.99
	No	2	1.01
	Total	199	100
Resolving and cooperating in times social crisis such as death, illness, loss or damage of property such as fire incidences in the neighborhood.	Yes	185	92.96
	No	12	7.04
	Total	199	100

Source: Own Household Survey, 2017

A neighbor is everything... it is the one providing immediate support for the other more than any other body.

Another key-informant added the following (place of interview: Gunchire Town, Enemourena Ener Administrative Woreda).

Members of a neighborhood in sebat-bet Guraghe area help each other in a number of ways...a person in sebat-bet guraghe don't want see his neighbor starve or face difficult situations, rather he gives a cow for milk, 'enset' for food preparation and so on. We celebrate cultural and spiritual holidays together, elders providing their blessings and the young receiving the blessing. We support each other in times of house construction by fulfilling materials such as wood.

During emergent situations such as fire explosion, people cooperate unselfishly to save the lives and property of their neighbors. Children of a given family are like children of the whole neighborhood...they (especially those living apart and meeting their own families during celebrations like 'meseqel') bring their parents different commodities and food items and share it to the whole neighborhood; check the situation of people in the locality, give advices to children to properly attend school etc.

From the above data, it is possible to infer that there is strong family and neighborhood tie among the people of *sebat-bet guraghe*. People have the practical experience of mutual help, strong social relationships that are not materialistic. However, these strong social relationships would have contributed to the peoples' livelihood and/or economy though this will be dealt with in detail in a special upcoming section.

Besides, all of the respondents (100%) replied that they help and protect people in the neighborhood who encounter different socio-economic problems. This is like the principle of "each for all, and all for each". All of the respondents (100%) indicated that they can claim family and community support under any socio-economic hardship; and majority (83.9%) reported that had attained financial and in-kind support from friends, relatives/families or other members of the neighborhood. Here, it is commendable to mention the speech made by a key-informant (Place of interview: Imdibir town, Cheha administrative woreda).

Iqub is the main cultural and financial institution that has existed for long and the people of Guraghe utilize it to meet their local social and economic needs. For example, if someone wants to start a business activity his/her friends, relatives and any other persons he/she knows help him/her by entering in to Iqub in the name of the person in need of help. Then the person getting help pays the money back to the support providers in a gradual process of money making or business activity. After a time, the person becomes self-reliant and he/she is expected to provide the help to others.

Such kind of networked economic cooperation is appreciable that it would have created job opportunities for the jobless; contribute to minimize increasing income and living standard disparities among the people, and eventually to poverty reduction efforts. Additionally, the possibility of claiming and/or seeking claiming family and community support under any socio-economic hardship without hesitating feeling of shame and provides a form of social and psychological security/safety for people of the *sebat-bet guraghe*.

Adherence to Cultural Institutions, Values and Norms: As it is possible to see from the above table 4 (specifically the 5th dimension of social capital), we can infer that members of the *Sebat-bet Guraghe* have high level of regard and respect the cultural values and norms of their own society. For instance, all of the respondents (100%) reported that they respect the customs, values and norms of their society. FGD and Key-informant interview qualitative information also suggest that even the young generation in the people is manifested by strong involvement in cultural and spiritual ceremonies, spirituality and respect for the elderly, emphasis for mutual cooperation, some level of adherence to traditional conflict and / or dispute resolution mechanisms and so forth. Culturally institutionalized ways of settling/ resolving disputes among the *sebate-bet Guraghe* is still being given high emphasis by the people. People take their cases like killing, theft and any other form of injustice to the cultural institution which is known as *qicha* (*Yeqicha Sereat* in Amharic). This dispute resolution mechanism is still playing a vital role in the life of the people, and this shows how the people themselves are strongly adhering to the system despite the expansion and penetration of modern education and formal legal institutions. Here it would be awesome to add the description of a key-informant (Place of Interview: Gunchire town, Enemour and Ener Administrative Woreda) as regards the point right here.

'Yeguraghe qicha' is still playing indispensable role in our life..., when there is killing for instance, community elders/elders just intervene to stop revenge by the close relatives of the victim and bring sustainable peace in the community. Such a practice of intervention by the

community elders to stop reactive revenges is called 'ketarate' in Guraghe language. When the community leader just says 'ketarate', the one who is agitated to take revenge against an enemy just quits doing anything. But when the person keeps on revenging despite the ban, he/she will be the one who will pay a sum of money to the destruction he/she cause. So 'ketarate' is important to avoid 'berche' (a Guraghe word which means revenge) by the families of victims. However most of the time people respect the cultural tradition of 'ketarate'. After the 'ketarate', the case is presented to community elders (yejoka) and through the 'qicha', decisions will be passed. The decisions include compensations to the victim or his/her families. When the destruction is loss of life and when this is done intentionally by the criminal, the compensation is 150, 000 ETB. Besides the compensation, the convict and the victim will be made to wholeheartedly apologize for each other make a vow of avoiding anonymity.

The Cultural Institutions of Idir and Iqub: Among the total respondents who were asked whether or not they participate in the cultural institutions of *iddir* and *iqub*, 157 respondents (78.9%) reported that they are already participating. Similarly, the majority of respondents (76.9%) replied that they have attained different kinds of support from the institutions of *iddir* and *iqub*. From this data, it is possible to infer that *iddir* and *iqub* is the main mechanism through which parts of the social and economic and/or livelihood life of *Sebat-bet Guraghe* people is being met. Business activities such as providing transportation services through Bajaj and minibus driving, shop keeping, self-service restaurant, and other small businesses would have been impossible even to imagine in the study area without the support of *iqub*. Beyond facilitating strategies for livelihood, people also use it for fulfilling the different requirements of human worldly life. Simply, it is possible to sense the relevance of *iqub* in the life of the people just by looking at the frequency of *iqub* advertisements at many different places in towns such as Wolkite.

In fact *Iqub* and *Iddir* are the most important self-help and mutual support cultural mechanisms that prevail in most areas of Ethiopia, especial in the past times. Following is a speech made by one of the key-informants highlighting the importance of *Iqub* and *Iddir*, and other meanses of mutual support in *Sebate-bet Guraghe* area.

The people of Guraghe are known for using 'iddir' and 'iqub' longer before others so that we can even say that the cultural institutions originate in this area. The main reason why the people of Guraghe emphasize those cultural self-help institutions is there is scarcity of farm land in the area despite large household size. For instance, I have 15 children but a hectare of land only. Therefore, to support the family, children are engaged in different income generating activities and save money using 'iqub'. People who are not capable enough to support themselves (especially the jobless) are helped through 'iddir' and 'iqub'. Iddir is also very important form of mutual support. I have four iddirs for instance..., which are (1) 'ye cheha iddir', (2) 'ye gura iddir', (3) 'ye mogebene iddir' and (4) 'ye guraghe iddir'. I am member of all of the four 'iddirs' through which I and other members support each other in happy and difficult events/moments.

The Role of Community Participation and Customary Norms in Natural Resource Conservation: Almost one third of the

respondents (33.7%) responded that they participate in activities such as natural resource conservation such as soil conservation care for forest resources and cultural landscapes like the *jefoure*. The rest majority of the respondents (66.3%) answered that they don't have such experience, and this is partly because most of the respondents were of urban residential area since the household targeted more urban areas than rural ones for reasons already explained in the methodology part. In FGDs and field observations, it was founded out that people are playing role in conserving and preserving natural resources. For instance, there are cultural norms that prohibit the cutting of trees; the cultural landscape which is called *jefour* contributes for maintaining the fertility of soil; and people are contributing to reduce loss soil fertility due to runoff by constructing small protections. Here, it is important to present the clarification made by one key-informant (Place of interview: *Awria-dibbir* natural forest, *Cheha Woreda*) on the role of customary norms in natural resource preservation.

There is a customary norm that forbids people that cause destruction to this forest resource..., the forest is a home for different wild animals and plant/tree species. Unless a person is given permission by community elders/leaders to use the forest for purposes like house construction, no one can exploit part of it. This is because our ancestors told us that there is spiritual prohibition, and we tell our children to restrain themselves from destructing the forest. However, such a prohibition now days it is not serious as it was in the past and hence the role of customary norms of forest preservation is already being overtaken by the government and formal law.

Socio-psychological and Reconciling Roles of the Community Elders:

The majority of respondents (87.9%) in the survey indicated that they can present their personal and family matters to elders community elders for solution and/or help. Based on FGD and In-depth interview data it was possible to infer that issues such as conflict, seeking for advices, deviant behavior by children, marriage related issues, killing and theft matters, problems related with inheritance, livelihood matters, so and so forth are all issues that community elders address that eventually result in social, psychological and economic positive contributions. Such a function is not something that one cannot downplay since now a days, deviant behavior, divorce and mental problems is flourishing. A society that provides optimal regulation and emotional nurturance for its members is likely to more stable and peaceful the one which do not.

The young members of the people in *Sebate-bet Guraghe* have the advantage attaining regular check-on and constructive advices. This is a true case especially for those that are making business in other places/towns like Addis Ababa. A key-informant's idea as regards this issue is following.

Guraghe parents love their children..., especially, when the son is in a distant place, the parents regularly call and make sure the welfare of their son. Even there are some parents that are fasting for the sake of their children. Parents think of their daughters and sons in daily prayers. Similarly, children also play their own part in making sure that their parents are safe and healthy.

Welcoming, Fostering and Receptive Local Community

Respondents in a 'yes' or 'no' question were asked whether there is or no care and respect for strangers to their locality.

Hence, all of the respondents opted for yes. They were also asked to elaborate the way they treat newcomers or strangers such as government employees, and family and community members who live in other faraway places. The answers tell that there is nurturing social environment which eases for strangers to get adapted to new circumstances. Here, it is possible to argue that the level of culture shock which can be experienced by an outsider in *Sebate-bet Guraghe* area is very minimal because of fostering socio-cultural environment.

Qualitative data show that the existing good neighborhood ties play a significant role in familiarizing newly coming persons. Without a doubt it is possible to tell the fostering socio-cultural environment just by re-considering about the circumstances during our fieldwork at different areas of the zone. Besides, 81.4 percent of the respondents have shown that are receptive to government regulations, policy directions and improvements (especially improvements pertaining to some extravagant practices). Here, it would be very creditable to substantiate this idea by mentioning the information by key-informants.

Our people are very progressive and receptive to the ideas and directions that we suggest to them. For instance, by this year we succeed in making some reforms related to the way marital ceremonies are carried out. The excessive resource demands of wedding ceremonies in our areas have been one of the pushing factors for migration of boys and girls. However, in consultation with the mass, we are making easy the way wedding ceremonies are done by reducing the number of attendants and by using other resource saving mechanisms. If the resource for wedding and marriage is relatively lower, marriage age people can easily get a partner, and this eventually contributes to reducing migration in our area.

Socio-economic Implications of Social Capital

Strong Intra-community Ties and Peoples' Livelihood Strategies:

As it's understandable in the previous sections, there are mutually cooperative, interdependent, and stronger family and neighborhood ties among people of *sebat-bet Guraghe*. Survey respondents, FGD participants and Key-informants were made to react on the ways by which the existing social ties are playing role in their socio-economic life. Following is a summary table consisting of this importance.

The data contained in the above self explanatory table shows how the *Sebat-Bet Gurage* support each other socially and economically. In a related another question, respondents were asked whether they ever know people in their community who recovered from business/ livelihood activity failure with the help of relatives, friends, neighbors, or other people. Hence, the majority (63.82%) opted for the 'yes' option, indicating that strong social bonds in the study area are contributing to peoples' livelihood strategies/basis. Likewise there is a strong sense of mutual trust and special care for members of society who are aged enough, people with disability, and generally for those that need others' support. One key-informant strengthened this idea in the following way. *Guraghe* people respect the elderly and any of those members that require help. For example; old persons are not expected to work in 'debbo' (a culturally institutionalized means of collectively carrying out agricultural activities), rather the simply avail themselves in agricultural field and give some constructive comments and suggestions pertaining to how to undertake the work.

When someone is also sick, his/her families, neighborhood and/or the entire community contribute to help the person under setback.

Conclusion

The results show that there is a strong social relationship among neighbors, families and community members in the study area. People have the practical experience of mutual help, strong social relationships that are not primarily materialistic. These strong social relationships would have contributed to the peoples' livelihood and/or economy. Members of the *Sebat-bet Guraghe* have high level of regard and mutual respect for the cultural values and norms of their own society. FGD and Key-informant interview qualitative data suggest that even the young generation in the people is manifested by strong involvement in cultural and spiritual ceremonies, spirituality and respect for the elderly, emphasis for mutual cooperation, some level of adherence to traditional conflict and / or dispute resolution mechanisms and so forth. Culturally institutionalized ways of settling/ resolving disputes among the *Sebate-bet Guraghe* is still being given high emphasis by the people. *Iddir* and *iqub* are the main mechanisms through which parts of the social and economic and/or livelihood life of *Sebat-bet Guraghe* people is being met. Beyond facilitating strategies for livelihood, people also use these cultural institutions for fulfilling the different requirements of human worldly socio-cultural life. There is nurturing social environment which eases for strangers to get adapted to new circumstances, and the elderly play very important psycho-social and legal roles for members of their community.

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