

Applying an Asset-Based Community-Driven Development Approach in Ethiopia, 2003-2011

Final Internal Evaluation Report

Compiled and edited by
Brianne Peters

Coady International Institute • Oxfam Canada • Comart Foundation
Hundee • KMG Ethiopia • Agri-Service Ethiopia

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The Coady International Institute
St. Francis Xavier University
PO Box 5000
Antigonish, NS
Canada B2G 2W5

Phone: (902) 867-3960
Phone: 1-866-820-7835 (within Canada)
Fax: (902) 867-3907
Web: www.coady.stfx.ca
Email: coady@stfx.ca

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Applying an Asset-Based Community-Driven Development Approach in Ethiopia, 2003-2011

Final Internal Evaluation Report

Introduction

This report presents the results of the final evaluation of the application of an asset-based community-driven development (ABCD) approach in Ethiopia, carried out by an internal team from June 01 to June 30, 2011. The team consisted of staff from all partner organizations: Oxfam Canada, the Coady International Institute, Agri-Service Ethiopia, Hundee, and KMG Ethiopia. The report compares baseline information collected in seven communities in 2008 with that collected in 2011.¹ An independent external evaluation was undertaken alongside the internal team's assessments and it is referenced in this report to show congruence and points of difference.

Learning has been at the core of this collaborative initiative, and so several appendices are included in the report to provide more context to the findings, plus a list of printed materials and video documentaries that have been jointly produced by the partners since 2003 (see Sources). These materials provide additional information and insights on community-level activities, experiences of NGO staff, challenges encountered, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and evaluation.

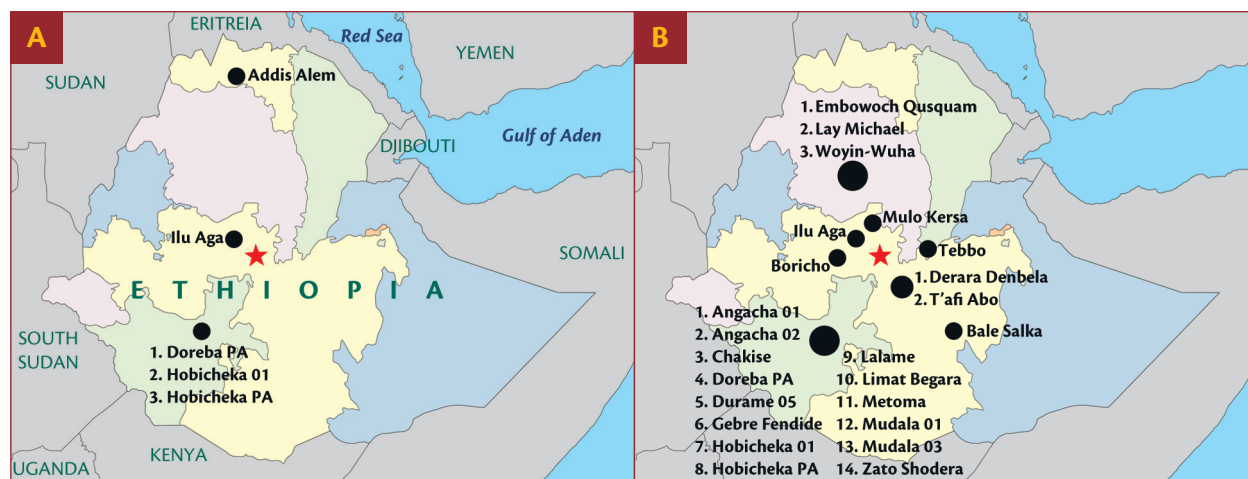
Background

The partnership between Oxfam Canada, the Coady Institute, Hundee, KMG Ethiopia, REST, and five community groups started in 2003. While REST is no longer involved in the partnership, it has expanded significantly and now includes another local NGO, Agri-Service Ethiopia, as well as 20 new community groups and the Comart Foundation, a private foundation based in Toronto, which supports the application of an ABCD approach across Africa. The overall goal of this initiative was to determine if it was possible for outside organizations to stimulate genuine community-driven development, building on existing community assets: human, social, institutional, financial, natural, and physical.² An ABCD approach was introduced gradually to communities either by NGOs or by the local ABCD groups established earlier. Figure 1 shows the expansion of the initiative from five ABCD groups in 2003 to 24 groups in 2011.

¹ The team designed a participatory methodology to collect baseline data for assessing changes in: 1) the number and importance of formal and informal associations; 2) relationships with external institutions; 3) income and expenditure patterns; and 4) physical infrastructure and natural resource base. Unplanned and unforeseen developments were also documented using the "Most Significant Change" technique (see Davies & Dart, 2005). A comprehensive summary of the mid-term evaluation results is available online at <http://coady.stfx.ca/tinroom/assets/file/resources/publications/research/ABCD-approach-Ethiopia.pdf>.

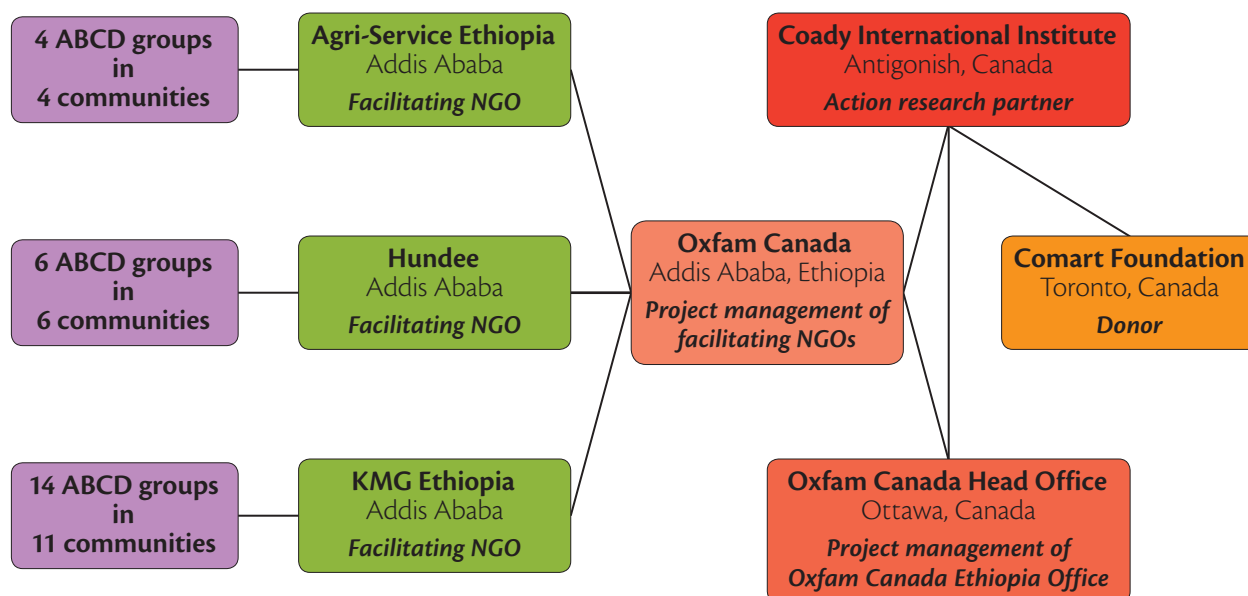
² See Appendices C and D for additional information on ABCD principles and processes.

Figure 1. Number of ABCD groups in Ethiopia in 2003-2006 (A) and 2011 (B)



Relationships between the partners are shown schematically in Figure 2.³

Figure 2. Partners in ABCD-testing initiative in Ethiopia



ABCD in Ethiopia

An in-depth scan of the development approaches used in Ethiopia demonstrates that top-down, needs-based approaches have been the dominant model for several decades.⁴ In an effort to try an alternative strategy that used local assets and strengths as the starting point, this partnership

³ See Appendix D for additional information on this partnership.

⁴ See Oxfam Canada, Ethiopia Program Office (2011) for an historical analysis of participatory approaches applied in Ethiopia.

sought to look at ways in which outside organizations could stimulate genuine community-driven development using an asset-based approach. Partners defined community-driven development as a process whereby a group of people in a community, motivated by an issue or opportunity, self-mobilizes to undertake an activity without any direction from an external organization. The group uses only its own resources (at least initially) and maintains control even when external organizations do get involved. This approach necessarily means that outside organizations have a different type of relationships with communities than do typical aid agencies, and therefore enter communities in a different way.

Their role is to build awareness and facilitate the use of existing assets and opportunities as opposed to defining problems and identifying gaps that only outside organizations can fill. In a development sector characterized by preoccupation with externally-driven agendas and results, adopting this new perspective has proven to be a considerable challenge. The assumptions and intentions behind this work thus had as much to do with the way in which NGOs engaged with communities as with the ways in which community members organized and mobilized around their own resources and aspirations.

Theory of Change

Although partnership coordinators at the Coady Institute, Oxfam Canada, and facilitating NGOs felt it was paradoxical to develop a theory of change when communities were expected to drive the agenda, they wanted a flexible framework to capture the way they thought change would occur within their own organizations and at the community level. None of the actors involved in developing the theory of change were confined by it and they expected it might change over time.⁵

In broad terms, the proposed theory of change involves NGOs initially taking an active facilitative role in helping communities identify local resources and develop their action plans. Over time, as communities take their action plans forward, NGOs would come to play primarily a mediating role, linking local ABCD groups to other NGOs, government offices, knowledge-based institutions, and private sector actors. If ABCD groups are successful, they would become more confident and undertake more ambitious activities. External actors would then come to play mainly an enabling or catalytic role—supporting the community’s own investments (with in-kind or cash contributions) rather than carrying out development interventions on their own initiative in the form of goods, services, or capital. As opposed to being treated as “beneficiaries” of services provided by NGOs, communities would become equal partners and contributors, which would enhance the relevance and sustainability of NGO activities and the ownership of these activities at the community level. Such collaboration would also lead to improved livelihoods. Eventually local ABCD groups would take a central role in moving activities forward in their communities and the role of NGOs would be diminished.

⁵ A diagram of the proposed theory of change is presented in Appendix E.

Evaluations

Three participatory evaluations of this ABCD initiative were carried out to compare the proposed theory of change with what was actually occurring on the ground. Two of these were conducted by an internal team (in 2008 and 2011) and one by an external evaluator (in 2011).⁶ The objectives of the evaluations were as follows:

- ◆ Assess the successes, challenges, and impacts of ABCD initiatives at both the community and organization levels (including local NGOs, Oxfam Canada, and the Coady Institute)
- ◆ Assess the role of local partner NGOs in stimulating genuine community-driven development and the overall effectiveness of facilitating ABCD
- ◆ Provide evidence / insight to support decisions of:
 - ◆ community members—regarding their future activities
 - ◆ partner NGOs—regarding further institutionalization of asset-based approaches
 - ◆ Oxfam Canada—regarding appropriate forms of support to partners and communities
 - ◆ donors—regarding effective partnership strategies for asset-based approaches
 - ◆ all stakeholders—regarding the next phase of this partnership
- ◆ Strengthen techniques employed to monitor and evaluate ABCD approaches
- ◆ Deepen the understanding of the ABCD process among all stakeholders, with a view to creating relevant curriculum and publications as well as improving development practices in general.

Evaluation Design

As mentioned above, this final evaluation has involved both internal and external components. The internal team focused on the baseline information collected during the mid-term evaluation in 2008 so that comparisons could be made in the same seven communities and overarching trends could be observed. The team employed the same mixed-method research design as was used in 2008, which included various tools intended to capture quantitative and qualitative changes (both planned and unplanned) at the community level.⁷

Historical timelines were used to document the major changes that had occurred since an ABCD approach had been introduced. In this exercise, ABCD group members were asked to present a chronological sequence of significant successes and challenges they experienced since the start of the ABCD process by plotting them along a horizontal line (drawn on a flipchart or created on the ground with various objects at hand—see Figure 3). The evaluation team also asked ABCD group members questions aimed to assess the changes in their organizational and leadership capacity.

⁶ See Coady International Institute & Oxfam Canada (2009) for a summary of the mid-term evaluation findings, and Coady International Institute & Oxfam Canada (2011) for the external evaluation report.

⁷ It should be noted that during the final evaluation, the qualitative technique of demonstrating change through storytelling was largely left to the external evaluator.

Figure 3. Creating a historical timeline in Boricho



Maps of local associations and institutions served as springboards for discussions about changes in relationships between local associations and other community groups as well as external institutions. These discussions focused on the following questions: Were new linkages created with outside institutions since the start of the ABCD process? Were these linkages forged to advance the community's agenda? Did the authority and membership base of ABCD groups expand or shrink?

Figure 4. Documenting the number and size of local associations in Tebbio

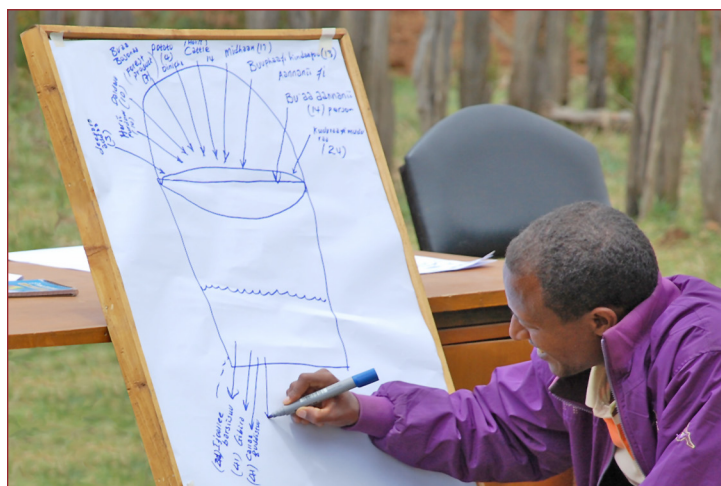


ABCD group members also created **maps of physical assets** identifying new or improved infrastructure and changes in the use of natural resources within their communities, which were then used to stimulate conversations about how these developments had occurred.

Figure 5. Mapping physical assets in Tebbo



Figure 6. Drawing a Leaky Bucket diagram in Ilu Aga



A tool called the “**Leaky Bucket**” was used to identify changes in the local economy—namely, diversification or intensification of income-generating activities since the start of the ABCD process, as well as the ways in which individual households or the community as a whole had “plugged leaks.” Members of local ABCD groups were also asked to assess the relative health of their community’s economy by comparing the current situation to that at the starting point of their ABCD activities.

Individual and household interviews were conducted to capture changes in the major components of household wealth and to compare the reported changes with the more general trends observed at the group level.

Figure 7. Interviewing an ABCD group member in Zato Shodera



Although assessment of the various outcomes of the ABCD process by means of storytelling techniques was entrusted largely to the external evaluator, the internal team did rely on a story-based process known as the “**Most Significant Change**” (MSC) method to tap the judgments of people involved in implementing an ABCD approach with respect to its outcomes. In this process, ABCD group members were asked to identify what they considered as the most significant change to have occurred in their communities since the mid-term evaluation (2008), to illustrate this change with a story, and to explain why they considered this change to be the most significant.

Stories collected in each community were reviewed by the internal team and emerging trends were noted as the process unfolded over the course of a month-long data gathering period. These trends were compared with the baseline. The internal team then compiled a community profile for each of the seven communities involved in both the mid-term and final evaluations and conducted an analysis of the content across all MSC stories collected to identify cross-cutting themes. Whenever possible, a triangulation rule was applied, whereby findings needed to be supported by at least three different sources within each community.

The external evaluator, while observing the story-collecting activities of the internal team, conducted her own interviews with ABCD group members. Aside from discussing the successes and

challenges that different ABCD groups faced as well as their future plans, her interviews involved asking the group members to draw ‘what ABCD meant to them’ (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Demonstrating “what ABCD means to me” in Bale Salka



The external evaluator also conducted interviews with NGO personnel. With a focus on evaluating the overall partnership and the effects of applying an ABCD approach over the eight-year period, she performed her own analysis and compiled an independent report. She explored the following questions:

- ◆ What was the initial intention behind the ABCD initiative and have its objectives been met?
- ◆ To what extent has an ABCD approach been integrated into the culture and ethos of partner NGOs?
- ◆ How did the partners experience multi-stakeholder relationships and program design?
- ◆ What are the key lessons and critical themes arising from eight years of testing an ABCD approach in Ethiopia?
- ◆ What major challenges did the initiative experience and how were they addressed?
- ◆ What improvements and recommendations can be made for moving forward?

The external evaluator’s report was made available to the internal team and both reports were read by representatives of all partner organizations to make sure they were accurate and to record any differences of opinion. The external evaluator then reviewed the internal team’s report and commented on its findings based on her own observations. In this way, the external evaluator contributed important insights to the internal team’s report while maintaining an independent stance.

The external evaluator conducted group and individual interviews with the field and headquarters staff of partner NGOs, the personnel of the Coady Institute and the Comart Foundation, local government officials at the *woreda* [district] level, and field-level development agents. Following a month-long data gathering process, the external evaluator presented her findings at a valida-

tion workshop with representatives of partner NGOs and the Coady Institute. This workshop served as a springboard for a broad-based discussion of lessons learned and next steps.

Figure 9. External evaluator interviews ABCD group members in Tebbo



Results

Interviews with more than 400 ABCD group members, NGOs, and local government officials in 2008 and 2011 provided evidence of several trends at the community level: changes in attitudes, organizational capacity, infrastructure, and group and individual household savings and income patterns. Of these changes, there were two that stood out the most in the final evaluation.

First, in terms of organizational capacity, there was a significant expansion in the number of associations in six of the seven communities involved. The activities of these associations also expanded from traditional mutual assistance to include development initiatives that improved the overall well-being of communities. This suggests a link between the ABCD process and the value group members placed on cooperative action.

Second, significant income diversification or intensification of income-generating activities occurred in all communities involved. Many ABCD group members attributed this to their newly gained ability to see opportunity where they had not noticed it previously. In addition to this attitude change, many people also reported feeling more confident about their own abilities and those of other group members. These changes were most common in the stories of men, who tended to focus on the importance of intangible changes such as attitudes and organizational capacity—in contrast to women, who focused primarily on tangible changes such as improvement of roads and water supply.⁸

This difference notwithstanding, both female and male members of ABCD groups in all seven communities typically mentioned changes in organizational capacity and related their increased ability to mobilize resources to these changes. The most commonly reported indications of increased organizational capacity were as follows:

- ◆ New spin-off associations started by ABCD group members that put the strengths of individuals in the group to use in a more collaborative way
- ◆ Increased membership in ABCD groups or other community-based associations
- ◆ Increased scope of activities of ABCD groups
- ◆ Increased internal contributions towards development activities
- ◆ Increased ability of ABCD groups to leverage external support in their activities
- ◆ More diverse membership and leadership in ABCD groups

⁸ During the mid-term evaluation, over 400 men and women (divided into separate groups) in seven communities were asked to identify the most significant change that had occurred in their community since the start of the ABCD process and demonstrate it with a story. The evaluation team then grouped the stories into categories of change. As it turned out, half of men's stories focused on changes in organizational capacity, 40% on changes in attitudes (such as increased confidence, appreciation of previously unrecognized assets, and the like), and 10% on tangible improvements (e.g., road repair or upgrade of school facilities). Half of women's stories focused on tangible changes, 25% on changes in attitudes, and 25% on changes in organizational capacity.

- ◆ Sharing of lessons learned by ABCD groups, inspiring the creation of new ABCD groups
- ◆ Ability of ABCD groups to resolve conflicts and overcome challenges without outside assistance; emergence of new leaders
- ◆ Recognition of ABCD groups as models by NGOs and government

These observations were consistent with the baseline findings obtained during the mid-term evaluation. However, there were two areas where differences between the mid-term and final evaluation findings could be observed—namely, inclusiveness of groups and emergence of new leaders.

Inclusiveness

The final evaluation revealed a greater emphasis on ABCD group inclusiveness. Based on interviews with NGO staff and ABCD groups, this meant one of two things: group membership had increased or it had become more diverse. For example, one NGO reported that an important change was the realization that “everyone can contribute what they have—even the most marginalized.”

In its turn, increased diversity of ABCD groups was often related to gender and could be a result of the emphasis facilitating NGOs placed on women’s full participation in the ABCD process. Indeed, increased participation of women was observed in every community, and the staff of KMG identified it as the most significant change since the start of the ABCD process. In particular, KMG’s executive director highlighted the “improved relationships between men and women, more equal opportunities to actively participate in development activities, and a more equal division of labour at the household level.” These changes were confirmed at the community level: five groups indicated an increased participation of women in economic activities; and in all seven groups, men reported appreciating the contributions of women more fully than they had in the past.

Figure 10. Female members of ABCD group in Durame share their impressions of the most significant change related to the ABCD process



Figure 11. Members of ABCD group in Bale Salka

However, there was one instance where exclusivity was observed as well. One ABCD group that had started informally morphed into a formal savings and credit association. It has been active for many years now and its members' expectations of financial contributions for obtaining membership have become progressively higher. Those who cannot afford the start-up fee cannot join the association. A second group with lower contribution expectations has emerged in the same community, but it has had difficulty attaining formal recognition as local legislation allows only one savings and credit cooperative per community.

Emergence of New Leadership

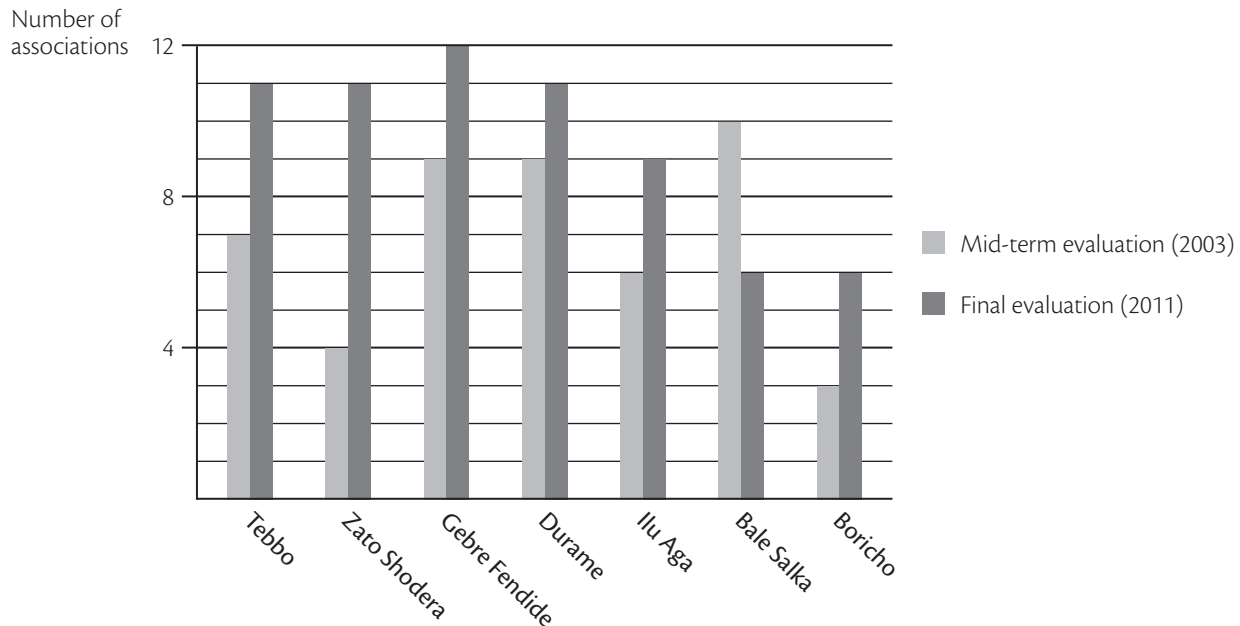
A second area where changes from the baseline findings were observed had to do with the emergence of new leaders, which was reported by four ABCD groups in 2011 as opposed to seven in 2008. The new leaders identified in the final evaluation emerged for different reasons. In one case, ABCD group members explained that there had been a rift between some members and their longstanding leaders. This resulted in the replacement of two of the ABCD group leaders. Despite this setback, the group size had increased from 42 to 87 members between 2008 and 2011.

In another case, new leaders emerged as a result of the dissolution of the ABCD group. Initially, the ABCD group formed under the guidance of an NGO, which was trying to maintain inclusiveness by inviting the leaders of different *iddirs* [burial societies] to participate in the ABCD process. The NGO staff selected two members with different incomes and education levels from several *iddirs*: some were farmers who earned money seasonally; some were teachers and police officers who relied on steady salaries. As a result of income differences within the group, some members could not make the same level of contribution nor could they make payments on the same schedule as others. Furthermore, the group members could not agree on action plans, and the group dissolved shortly after the 2008 evaluation. The final evaluation revealed that it had self-formed into a new entity with a different leadership.

Growth of Associations

A number of new associations emerged in six communities, which may suggest a more dispersed leadership and improved organizational capacity in these communities. Figure 12 presents the number of informal and formal associations that existed in each community in 2008 and 2011.

Figure 12. Growth of associations in communities involved in the ABCD process



In addition, the external evaluator obtained some anecdotal evidence that ABCD group membership had increased:

First-person accounts of ABCD group membership growth by community members

- *The group has grown from 17 to 34 members. We have shared ideas and experiences with others who are not group members but who could see the positive changes. They expressed interest in learning (Gebre Fendide).*
- *I was guilty of backbiting in the beginning and questioned why people were spending their time going to meetings without any benefit. My neighbour explained . . . that they were learning to manage what they have. I later joined the ABCD group and am now also benefiting (Ilu Aga).*
- *Other neighbours are coming to us as they see how we are improving our lives. They are motivated to join the group (Durame).*
- *Initially when we came together to ABCD, neighbours were asking us what we were doing there. Later, as they observed the changes, they were motivated to join. I was one who joined three years later after my mindset changed. I could have benefited earlier (Boricho).*

Figure 13. Data on ABCD groups that worked with KMG at the time of the final evaluation (location, membership broken down by gender, and group capital in birr)

Detail Data of ABCD Groups by Woreda Kebele, Membership, Group Saving Support and Current Capital										
SN	Group Name	Woreda	Kebele	Members			Group Saving	KMG Support		Current Capital
				F	M	T		Cash	Kind	
1	Zato Shodera	Kedida	Z. Shodera	13	21	34	13,692	38,750	2 oxen 158 chicken	52,442
2	Metoma	Durame	LALO	27	1	28	4270	20,042	1 table weight 19 ground weight	24,570
3	Angacha 01	Angacha	Angacha 01	18	16	34	20,042	29,000	5 oxen 140 chicken	49,042
4	Gerba fendide	"	Gerba f.	18	16	34	7300	24,000	17 sheep 150 apple	32,300
5	Durame 05	Durame	Zeraro	17	17	34	13000	24,000	190 chicken	37,000
6	Mudula 01	Tembaro	Mudula 01	22	13	35	6500	18,000	14 sheep	24,500
7	Chakise	Durame	Zeraro	68		68	2500	14,000	-	16,500
8	Lalame	"	"	48		48	2500	14,000	-	16,500
9	Angacha 02	Angacha	Angacha 02	49	15	64	2866	10,000	-	12,866
10	Mudula 03	Tembaro	Mudula 03	26	29	55	1345	15,000	-	16,345
11	Limat Begara	Kachabira	Doreba	42	80	122	5000	18,000	-	23,000
12	Doreba PA	"	"	25	25	50	900			900
13	Hobicheka 01	"	Hobicheka	25	25	50	10,000			10,000
14	Hobicheka PA	"	Hobicheka PA	25	25	50	2000			2,000
TOTAL				423	282	705	91915	224792		317965

A Case in Point: Growth of Associations in Ilu Aga

At the time of the mid-term evaluation in 2008, members of the ABCD group in Ilu Aga were involved in a number of informal associations such as *dabere*,⁹ *equb*,¹⁰ *iddir*,¹¹ *mehaber*,¹² *senbete*,¹³ a horse-riding group, and various mutual work-sharing arrangements. Formal associations

⁹ A wealth redistribution mechanism whereby a household that has suffered a loss of livestock negatively affecting its supply of milk and butter can borrow a cow from relatives or friends. The cow is returned to its owner after the affected family has had time to recover.

¹⁰ A form of savings group in which members regularly contribute small sums of money to a common pool, and can borrow from it either alternately or through a lottery system.

¹¹ A burial society operating through membership dues to cover funeral costs when a person in a member's family dies.

¹² An Orthodox Christian group formed by twelve people who have the same patron saint. They celebrate their saint's day together with a feast that takes place at a member's home. Members take turns in preparing and hosting the feast (which can last for three or four days).

¹³ An Orthodox Christian association whose members celebrate saint feast days together at church.

included an environmental protection club, a cereal bank, and a farmers', women's, and youth groups. Members of the Ilu Aga ABCD group indicated that many of these associations had expanded the scope of their activities and grew in size over time.

In 2008, the group members ranked “being organized” as the most significant change they had experienced since 2003, emphasizing their increased ability to mobilize labour and funds and undertake activities they could not have carried out individually, as well as improved leadership capacity and more intentional sharing of knowledge and ideas. The ensuing years saw further growth in the group's organizational capacity. By 2011, several new associations had emerged: a fruit and vegetable cooperative, a consumer cooperative, a multi-purpose cooperative (with 40 members), and a farmers' cooperative (with 600 members). The once informal potato cooperative (which had grown from 15 to 40 members between 2008 and 2011) formalized as did the cereal bank (which had grown from 60 to 130 members over the same period). In addition, seven self-help groups (with 20 members in each) had organized in Ilu Aga between the mid-term and final evaluations with Hundee's guidance to promote savings and credit activities, literacy training, and discussion of social issues. When asked which associations they considered the most important, the ABCD group members named *dabere* (160 members), cereal bank (130 members), and *iddirs*.

Reflecting on the development of associations in their community during the final evaluation, members of the Ilu Aga ABCD group observed that they were now discussing issues more regularly with their neighbours and that organizing into self-help groups enabled them to resolve certain social issues—for example, to start providing regular support to those of their fellow community members who became ill and did not have any money to sustain themselves.

Figure 14. Members of Ilu Aga potato cooperative



Expansion of the Mandate of Associations

Ilu Aga was not the only community where the activities of local associations expanded significantly after the ABCD process had commenced. In a number of communities, it became common for *iddirs*—which traditionally served only to provide mutual financial, material, and emotional support in time of death—to make contributions to a range of development-related activities. For example, community leaders in Bale Salka mentioned that they had begun collecting money from *iddirs* on an annual basis to help pay the salaries of community guards, support recreation activities of local youth, fund upkeep of community buildings, and subsidize school fees. In Tebbo, several *iddirs* made contributions in cash and labour to the construction and maintenance of a local road. One member of the local ABCD group observed:

The *iddir* was meeting on a monthly basis with people contributing drink and bread. It has now transformed into a savings scheme because of the influence of ABCD members. Families were contributing 300–400 birr for *iddir* gatherings once or twice per year. We have now converted that contribution into savings. Each member gives 3–5 birr per month. Now we gather, but there are no refreshments. The savings will be used for the burial society but over time may also be used for projects like a shop.

Other traditional associations also took on new activities in some communities involved in the ABCD process. In one community, the *equb* evolved into a legally registered savings and credit association, which had 127 members at the time of the final evaluation.

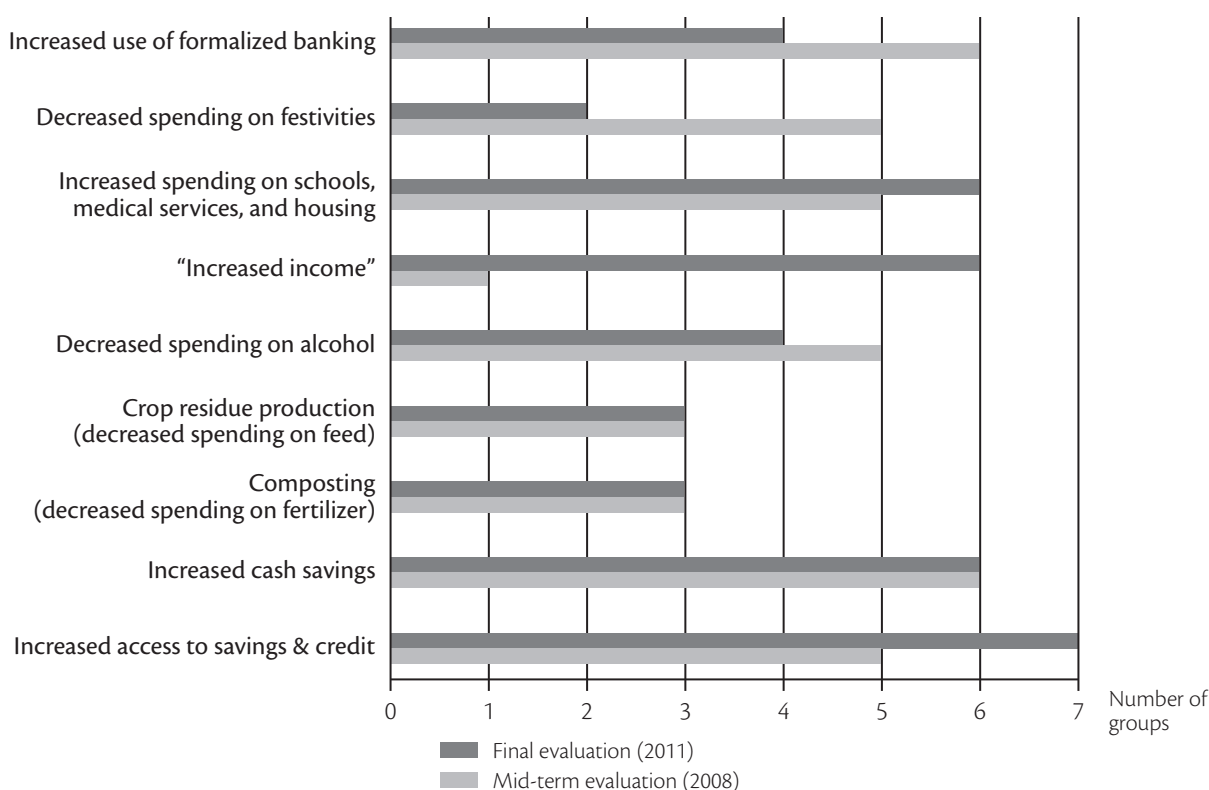
A “Savings Culture”

The importance of, and increase in, savings was reported at the group and household levels by all seven ABCD groups. The development of a “savings culture” was often attributed to the “Leaky Bucket”—a simple tool intended to help community members better understand their local economy,¹⁴ which was introduced during the ABCD process. This tool allowed people to identify the main flows of money coming into and out of their communities or households. In turn, this process often led to the identification of economic opportunities that community members could make use of to improve their individual and collective well-being. It also highlighted the ways in which they could decrease what they considered “unproductive” expenditures (e.g., on alcohol).

The “Leaky Bucket” tool, which ABCD group members continued to use to track their finances at both the group and household levels, complemented the efforts to promote savings groups that many local NGOs were taking at the time. One NGO staff member observed:

Through ABCD training, especially the “Leaky Bucket” tool, the group has realized the importance of saving and changed [its] spending habits. This has improved management of the household economy. There has also been a reduction in the cost of weddings and other social ceremonies.

¹⁴ See Cunningham (2011) for a detailed discussion of how the “Leaky Bucket” has been applied in different countries.

Figure 16. Reported savings and spending patterns of ABCD groups in 2008 and 2011

During the final evaluation, two ABCD groups reported spending less on social festivities as a result of the realizations triggered by the use of the “Leaky Bucket” tool. (The changes mentioned typically included slaughtering fewer animals for feasts, decreasing alcohol consumption, reducing the amount of time spent in coffee ceremonies, or reducing financial contributions to the actual festivity itself.) This represents a considerable decline compared to the mid-term evaluation, when five groups reported decreased spending on social festivities. Whether it means that the other three groups reverted back to spending as much as they had previously been on festivities or whether these groups simply maintained the same level of festivity-related expenditures between 2008 and 2011 is an issue that requires further investigation.¹⁵

Another observation that can be made regarding the above diagram is some increase in expenditures on hospitals, schools, and housing. This could be interpreted in either a positive or negative light. It could mean that community members now actually have more money to spend on these services. However, it could also mean that these services have become more expensive.

¹⁵ Decreased spending on social festivities was not perceived by every member of the evaluation team as unequivocally positive. Even though the related savings were in many cases channeled into activities that were more “rational” economically, this trend raised questions about the effects of spending less on activities that reinforce community relationships.

Ability to Leverage Funds from Outside Actors

Several ABCD groups have attracted investment from external actors. Three groups won awards for a successful application of innovative farming methods. One government development agent observed that “the people, though poor, take on new ideas and are risk takers.” He was referring to the farmers’ marketing cooperative in Boricho, which includes many members of the local ABCD group. Of the 18 cooperatives operating in the area, this cooperative was the one that has recently won a prize of 14,000 Euros for its past achievements and an innovative action plan.

In Tebbo, *iddirs* contributed money to the community-based institution (CBI),¹⁶ which leveraged an additional support from government in the amount of 42,000 birr for road construction and graveling. In Zato Shodera, government granted the local ABCD group legal status plus two hectares of land to build a shop and a separate plot of land for an office. The ABCD group in Bale Salka successfully lobbied local government to provide a teacher and 50,000 birr for school furniture after constructing its own secondary school. This community also was recently granted municipal status, which gave local citizens the hope that they would now gain better access to government services.

Some of the investments mentioned above resulted in improvements in the communities’ physical infrastructure and natural resource base as ABCD groups were able to channel outside resources into, for example, irrigation technologies or the construction of a veterinary clinic. However, a comparison of the physical maps produced by ABCD groups in 2008 and 2011 did not reveal many changes in the natural resource base or physical infrastructure over that period. The improvements detected were as follows:

- ◆ One group constructed a grain store
- ◆ Two groups upgraded schools
- ◆ One group terraced land to reduce erosion and improve soil fertility
- ◆ One group secured additional land from government for cultivation

The external evaluator’s report also contains a number of stories indicating how the ABCD process led to a greater appreciation of the natural resource base within communities. Her respondents often mentioned land protection and rehabilitation activities—including forest regeneration, revival of traditional irrigation practices, terracing, and composting—as components of their community action plans.

Through interviews with NGO staff, government officials, and community members and by consulting reports of local NGOs, it was possible in some cases to assess the contributions made by different actors. The make-up of contributions could be a measure of the community’s capacity to forge linkages with outside organizations and to mobilize internal resources.

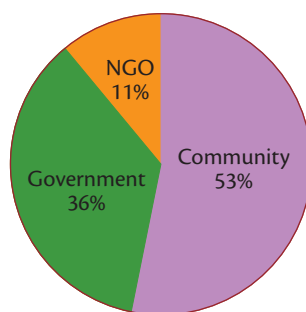
¹⁶ CBI is a type of organization that Agri-Service Ethiopia helps establish in the communities it works with to facilitate the various development initiatives of local citizens in an integrated manner, link with donors, and gain support from local government. For a detailed description of CBIs, see Prolinnova-Ethiopia Secretariat (2008).

Figure 17. The only access road to Bale Salka, restored on the initiative of the local ABCD group with community labour and money contributions as leverage



The graph below (Fig. 18) shows the relative financial contributions of different actors to the overall infrastructure development in Bale Salka—which included expanding the local school to accommodate a secondary section, restoring the only link road to the community, constructing a power line, establishing a cereal bank, conducting a water supply feasibility study, and building a pond to improve irrigation.¹⁷

Figure 18. Relative contributions of different actors to infrastructure development in Bale Salka



The following graphs (Fig. 19-22) present the relative financial contributions of community members, NGOs, and government offices to specific infrastructure development projects in Ilu Aga and Tebbo. Unfortunately, no information of this kind is available for the other communities.

¹⁷ While this and the following graphs in this section do not take into account the sometimes considerable in-kind contributions (e.g., labour or machinery), they nonetheless give an indication of the levels of investment provided by different actors.

Figure 19. Relative contributions of different actors to the construction of a veterinary clinic in Ilu Aga

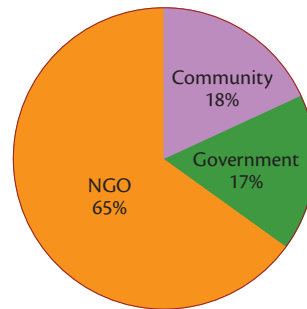


Figure 20. Relative contributions of different actors to the construction of a milk collection centre in Ilu Aga

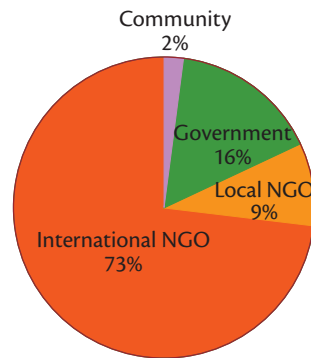


Figure 21. Relative contributions of different actors to road construction in Tebbo

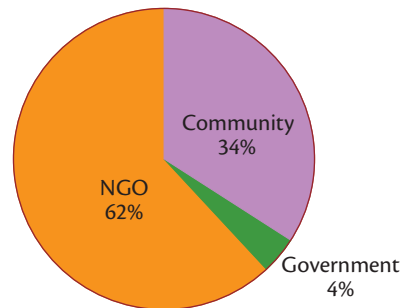
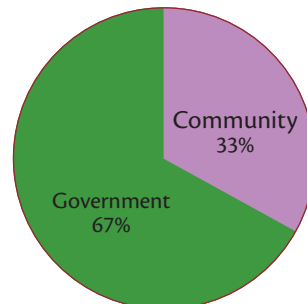


Figure 22. Relative contributions of different actors to road graveling in Tebbo



Unintended Consequences of Outside Investment

A Case in Point: Construction of a Milk Collection Centre in Ilu Aga

Between 2003 and 2008, the ABCD group in Ilu Aga designed and completed several projects using largely its own resources. Group members revived a traditional irrigation practice to improve the production of potatoes and other vegetables; blended newer irrigation techniques with the older ones; increased the use of compost to reduce expenditures on chemical fertilizers; started a tree nursery; planted a hectare of trees and began terracing to reduce soil erosion; dug three small wells and three boreholes; and adopted the practice of fattening their livestock prior to sale.

In 2008, the group decided to try something more ambitious. Building upon traditional resource-sharing practices, 192 female community members formed a dairy cooperative to pool their household milk production to sell to larger markets. The bold initiative soon attracted the attention of an external donor (international NGO), which made a substantial financial donation towards the construction of a milk collection centre and the purchase of necessary equipment. The local NGO, government, and the community also contributed to the project (see Figure 20 above).

Although a feasibility study was conducted (and yielded promising projections for the dairy cooperative), the group and the local NGO that had introduced the ABCD process faced a number of difficulties. First, the NGO did not have expertise in the dairy sector. Second, the group's attention was focused mostly on the supply of resources (e.g., feed for cattle) and milk production, but not on marketing. Transportation was difficult and delivering milk to the Addis Ababa market (about 40 km away) was costly. The milk often spoiled by the time it arrived there. As a result, the dairy cooperative went bankrupt for several months.

Although the cooperative is now running again (selling milk to the local market), its difficulties have provoked a number of questions about the ABCD process:

- ◆ When is the right time for external organizations to inject resources into community-driven initiatives so that their intervention is catalytic, but not overwhelming?
- ◆ How can NGOs better understand the pace of change at the community level and ensure that their support is in sync with the local capacity?
- ◆ When community groups want to undertake ambitious initiatives, how can outside expertise be brought in so as not to undermine the community's control over its own activities?
- ◆ If a project envisaged by the community is largely dependent on outside expertise, can it be sustainable?
- ◆ How can local farmers and ABCD groups identify markets themselves and decide whether a particular venture is going to be profitable?

* * *

The above example demonstrates that as ABCD groups tried to scale up their initiatives, providing the type of support they required without undermining their control over these initiatives proved to be challenging. The external evaluator noted:

In some instances, there was a shift towards reliance on technical assistance from outside. In this case [of a dairy cooperative in Ilu Aga], resources are easily skewed towards service providers (as indicative of a ‘needs-based’ scenario) and the process becomes increasingly externally-driven. The initiative was planned by the farmers in the action planning phase, and they were not initially aware of the complexity of the dairy industry and amount of support required. Communities are clearly justified to request support—whether technical, material or financial—but how can these be accessed so that the principles of ABCD are not compromised? The example highlights the importance of communities’ building on what they are already doing, taking into account the assets they have, and setting the pace organically.

This experience in Ilu Aga influenced the idea of including simplified value chain tools in the design of the next partnership phase so that the farmers could identify markets and evaluate the profitability of their intended activities before undertaking them and be less reliant on the technical expertise of outside organizations. It is hoped that this will allow community-driven activities to benefit more local citizens in more substantial ways than in the past.

It is important to note that the idea of “scaling up” held different meanings for different partners. For example, the external evaluator cautioned that up-scaling might jeopardize the principles of ABCD as financial resources are commonly absorbed by outside organizations when considerable technical expertise is required. She argued for up-scaling of a different sort:

Up-scaling can happen in a decentralized way. Communities could drive skill development locally, supported with the necessary resources. NGOs could play a greater role in popularizing an ABCD approach amongst NGOs, government officials, and knowledge-based institutions. There also seems to be potential for a local hub to be organized around this.

The external evaluator also recommended “deepening” the experience of current ABCD groups, as well as strengthening leadership and management in community associations, increasing leverage funding,¹⁸ channeling resources directly to community associations, and organizing learning exchanges and local ABCD trainings of trainers. Many of these recommendations will be incorporated into the next partnership phase.

Aside from the dairy cooperative case in Ilu Aga, there were a few other instances when outside support had unintended consequences. In two instances, support expressed towards ABCD groups (an award in one case and praise from the government in the other) stirred jealousy among other

¹⁸ Leverage funding refers to small support funds available on a competitive basis, which were invested in community action plans. It was hoped that these investments would help local ABCD groups “lever” additional funds from other sources in support of their activities. See Appendix G for more information on leverage funds.

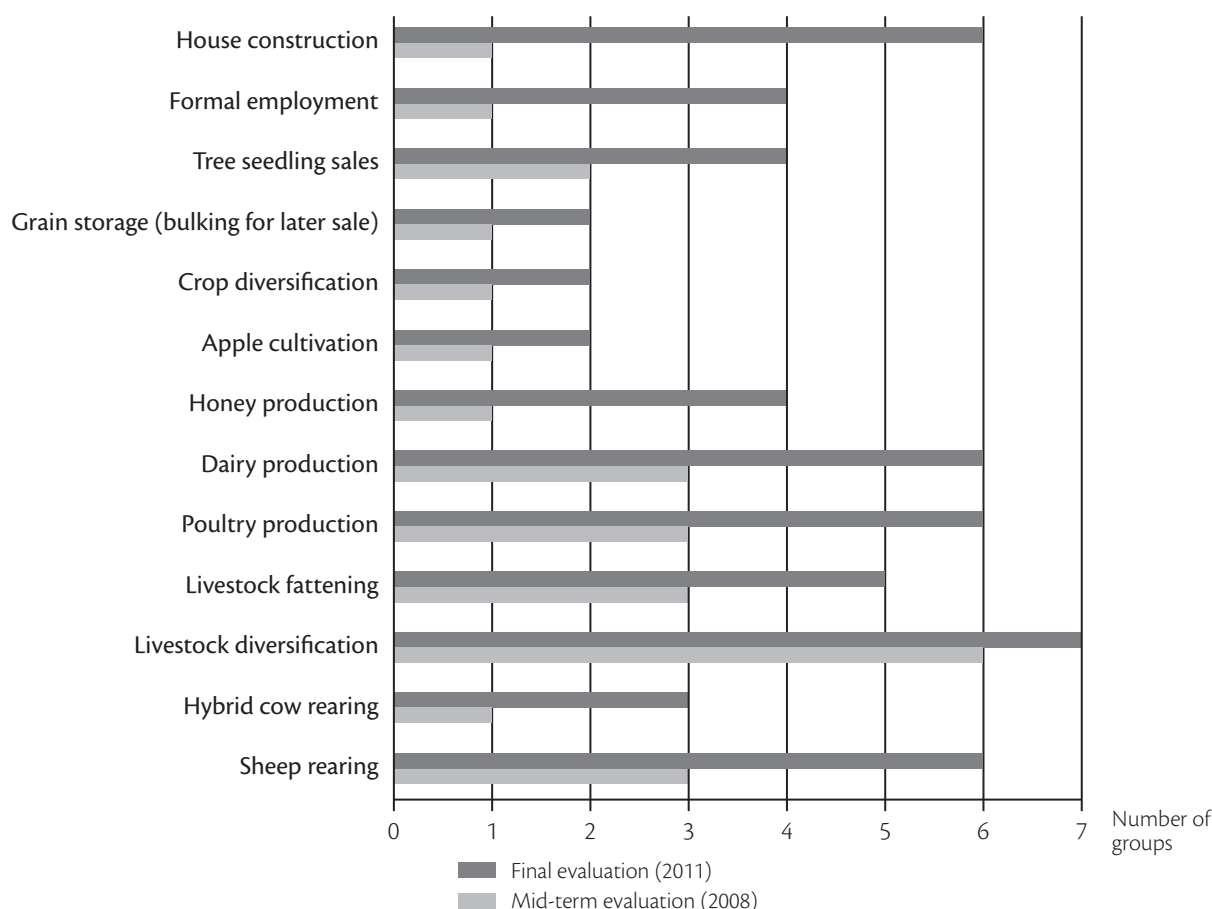
community members. In both of these cases, however, some community members who had initially been hostile were eventually drawn into the ABCD groups after witnessing their success.

There also was one instance when the positive attention an ABCD group received from outside actors was partly responsible for a decrease in government support because the officials assumed that the group was already being supported. This is a worrisome occurrence as it reveals an unfounded assumption on the part of government. (The reality is that, in most cases, this partnership involved the transfer of very small funds to ABCD groups.) Apparently, there needs to be more communication with government offices about the intentions behind this partnership in order to ensure that government assistance for ABCD groups continues in the future, whether it be in the form of service delivery or supporting community activities.

Livelihood Diversification

Thus far, this report has focused on changes in organizational capacity and on showing how ABCD groups have combined internal and external resources to maintain or create new community infrastructure and to improve their management of natural resources. However, perhaps the most obvious changes concerned income diversification at the group and household levels. Figure 23 gives an impression of income diversification that has taken place in all communities.

Figure 23. Number of ABCD groups engaged in specific livelihood activities in 2008 and 2011



During focus group interviews, ABCD group members described how livelihood diversification had taken place. Following are some of their observations:

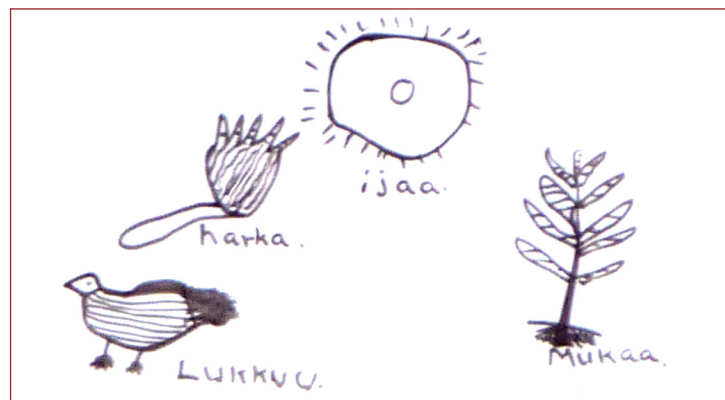
First-person observations of livelihood diversification related to ABCD by members of the Boricho group

- *ABCD has helped us grow our assets and potential for the future. . . . We now have goats, olive trees, and cows for fattening. We started first with poultry, which helped us move to sheep fattening. There are fish in the river and potential for cotton planting.*
- *We started with a small house and small business of sheep fattening. By selling the sheep and saving, we have been able to get bigger livestock and plant larger trees bearing fruit. I now have a larger house with a corrugated iron roof. My wife got an 840-birr loan and bought five sheep. From this, we received a profit of 1,950 birr, paid the loan, and bought eight sheep. These were sold for 4,650 birr, leaving a total profit of 3,000 birr for our savings.*
- *I started with one chicken and was able to grow to six chickens. When the eggs hatched, I sold them and bought two sheep. I sold the sheep and bought an ox, and after the oxen, ten livestock. Now I have started crop production and have ten quintals of white teff. Now my house has a corrugated iron roof and a barbed wire fence.*

Some group members also explained how the ABCD process enabled them to see opportunities they had not previously recognized and to better appreciate and put to use locally available resources. One person described this as an ability to “see life and its possibilities more fully.” Another ABCD group member illustrated this newly gained ability with a symbolic drawing (shown in Fig. 24),¹⁹ explaining it in the following way: “This is an eye that is wide open. If you learn about ABCD, you begin to see everything. You see what you have and what you can do with your hands.”

It is likely that enhanced livelihood diversification was also related, to some degree, to the volatile state of Ethiopia’s economy. In all communities involved in this ABCD initiative, the evaluation team heard stories about how the nation’s economic growth, despite its rapid pace, was not benefiting everyone. High prices coupled with rapid inflation were causing food insecurity in many households.

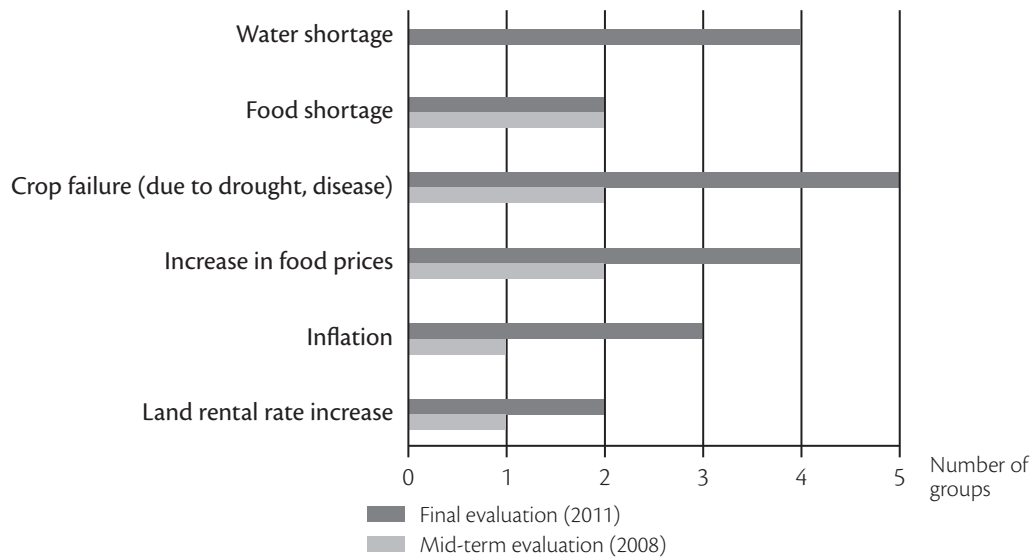
Figure 24. A picture of how ABCD has helped people identify and act on opportunities (Ilu Aga)



¹⁹ The Oromo words in the drawing have the following English translations: *ijaa* – eye; *harka* – hand; *lukkuu* – hen; *mukaa* – fruit.

Figure 25 below presents the constraints most commonly reported by ABCD groups during the mid-term and final evaluations. It suggests that, on the whole, groups were facing more challenges in 2011 than they had been in 2008.

Figure 25. Constraints reported by ABCD groups in 2008 and 2011



Additional constraints reported during the focus group interviews conducted by the external evaluator included: shortage of storage and office space and land (two groups); insufficient capacity of certain individuals and groups (three groups); lack of food stores (three groups); lack of transportation (two groups); and lack of refrigeration facilities (one group). Local NGO staff also observed that some ABCD groups still held expectations of getting paid for participating in the group and continued to rely largely on NGOs for driving the ABCD process forward.

Internalization of ABCD by NGOs

This section looks at how local NGOs internalized ABCD principles, and attempts to answer the root question that guided this initiative: Can outside organizations stimulate genuine community-driven development? The following analysis relies on the interviews conducted by the external evaluator and the reflections that NGO staff and community members shared with the internal evaluation team. It also draws on the mid-term evaluation, annual review workshop reports, and the experience of producing an ABCD manual for Ethiopia, which was based on the partners' activities on the ground.

According to the proposed theory of change, an ABCD approach influences the way in which outside actors engage with communities. It necessarily means entering communities in a different way than does the traditional needs assessment approach, and asking questions that help people identify, value, and put readily available resources to use. Facilitation of the ABCD process requires maintaining a balance between supporting and stepping back, as well as recognizing the moments when responsive investment in a community's activities will help it reach the milestones it seeks. As one partner observed, "The entry point is very challenging and you need to have a good facilitator who can get the confidence and trust of the community."

Figure 26. Members of the ABCD group in Ilu Aga meet with local NGO staff



There is some evidence that skilled facilitators were also able to effectively communicate their knowledge of ABCD to their coworkers through in-house training. For instance, over the course of this initiative, an increasing number of local NGO staff made valuable contributions to annual review workshops, ABCD trainings in other countries, and the production of an ABCD manual for Ethiopia.

A demonstration of what ABCD looked like in practice often boosted the uptake of the approach. Experience sharing among community members and among the personnel of participating NGOs was thus a valuable part of this initiative, reportedly leading to the spontaneous creation of new ABCD groups and expansion of their activities, as well as the spread of an ABCD approach to other geographic and programmatic areas.²⁰

Partners also reported that in-person participation in the evaluations prompted them to reflect more deeply on what worked and what did not. One NGO member observed: “In my old job, we would just spend a day on evaluation and only looked for changes as they related to our own projects . . . overlooking the many other changes that also occurred.”

According to the external evaluator, other peer learning events were regarded as an important part of the initiative as well:

Everyone who participated in the external evaluation said that the ABCD initiative has had a positive impact on them personally and professionally. There has been a great deal of skills and capacity development through training and learning opportunities. Many NGO staff attended ABCD training in Ethiopia or at the Coady Institute. Most have attended review workshops and internal reflection processes. Some have taught themselves ABCD methods by reviewing the manual. There have also been learning exchanges (e.g., in Kenya) and amongst ABCD groups in communities, where partners and farmers became the trainers and showcased their innovations amongst each other.

Broader uptake of an ABCD approach within participating NGOs had also much to do with the engagement of their senior levels of management, as the following observation made by one partner indicates:

The executive director is very much interested and he started from the beginning in 2003. He appears at meetings personally. He is interested and likes to know more; maybe because of his push and interest, most of his staff are conversant with ABCD.

When senior levels of management were not engaged, the spread of an ABCD approach within NGOs was limited to a few “champion” staff members and their geographic focus areas. If several NGO staff were involved in the same community or program and if these individuals did not adhere to the same principles, there was often confusion among the ABCD groups with which they were working.

²⁰ See a video documentary of the farmer-to-farmer exchange visit (Oxfam Canada, 2009) and reports from annual review workshops (Oxfam Canada, Coady International Institute, Agri-Service Ethiopia, Hundee, & KMG-Ethiopia, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010).

Staff turnover also created inconsistency in the NGO's stance on community development, and ABCD principles were often abandoned when the staff members who followed these principles left the organization. However, there is some evidence that former NGO staff who moved on to other career paths have kept involved with ABCD approaches. For example, one former key NGO employee who was involved in the initial phase of this partnership has since moved to a different job but is currently completing his master's thesis that provides a critical reflection on ABCD; another is considering pursuing a PhD in the same area; and two former staff members of a partner NGO have started training other organizations to apply an ABCD approach.

When NGO staff were asked to name the most serious obstacles to adopting an ABCD approach, they usually mentioned the funding environment. They explained that an ABCD approach is, by its nature, slower than interventions driven by NGOs (because it keeps pace with community-level changes as opposed to those designed by outside organizations) and less predictable in terms of its outputs (because the community decides the course of action). Donors did not always respond favourably to these factors and there were instances when participating NGOs fell back on the more conventional service-delivery or needs-based approaches in order to satisfy those donors who wanted predetermined outputs and strict timelines. There are indications, however, that donors are becoming more interested in an ABCD approach when NGOs are able to articulate broad categories of expected outputs in advance. For example, three proposals involving ABCD in Ethiopia have already been approved by new donors since the 2011 evaluation.

Limited funding also caused some issues when community groups came up with action plans that fell outside the mandate or skill set of local NGOs. If linkages with other actors were not an option and there was no funding to hire someone with the necessary expertise, then the NGO staff was forced into offering support in areas where they had neither the appropriate skills nor the mandate to do so. This situation could deter ABCD groups from designing their own activities for fear that they would not be supported if they were not in line with the NGO's priorities.²¹ Indeed, the action plans of ABCD groups often conformed to the priorities of the local NGOs or government. Whether this means that ABCD groups intentionally tailored their action plans to meet the criteria set by the local NGOs and government or whether it indicates that the local NGOs and government agencies have already become more responsive to the areas of community interest (than they were at the beginning of the ABCD process) is a question that requires further exploration.

These observations add insight into whether NGOs with predetermined sectors of focus can actually stimulate genuine community-driven development. Community-level results provide evidence that NGOs did stimulate agency and innovation among ABCD groups in both tangible and intangible ways, including attitude change, increased confidence, ability to network, strengthened organizational capacity, engagement in environmental rehabilitation and infrastructure development, income diversification, and the emergence of a "savings culture." Local assets were often the starting point for the design of particular activities—an indication that the

²¹ It is worthy of note that the challenging funding environment also led some NGOs to integrate ABCD into their own work and undertake income-generating activities to generate more sustainable income streams.

principles of asset building were at work. However, questions remain about the extent to which NGOs intentionally or unknowingly influenced the action plans of ABCD groups. The external evaluator made similar observations:

The strong influence of external agencies was evident across all communities and many initiatives fall within predetermined NGO frameworks. This trend was not surprising as NGO partners were approached to integrate ABCD into existing work, but it raises a question of what is really meant by community-driven development outside of NGO programmatic areas and conventional roles.

There were certain instances when NGOs invested in, and built upon, successful community activities as opposed to introducing their own projects and programs. One example is Hundee's work with *dabere* associations (see fn. 9). By providing livestock or loans to buy livestock, Hundee accelerated livestock lending cycles within the communities it worked with; and because this form of support builds on local traditions, it has good prospects for a sustainable outcome (the *dabere* practice is likely to continue, whether Hundee stays involved in the process or not). In one community, the *dabere* association had increased significantly in size and importance (as perceived by community members) between the mid-term and final evaluations, and several members of the local ABCD group attributed its upswing to Hundee's support.

Just as an ABCD approach had to be adapted to the circumstances of particular communities, it also had to fit with the operational philosophies of the NGOs involved. For example, those organizations that worked from a rights-based perspective tended to focus on social rights as assets and on how these rights could be accessed. Oftentimes, women's rights were the primary focus for these NGOs, and the ABCD process augmented their efforts to raise the profile of women's contributions to community and household well-being. These observations point to the importance of having a "hook" upon which to place an ABCD approach to ensure its broader adoption within an NGO.

Recommendations

This section combines the recommendations for different types of development actors made by the internal evaluation team with those of the external evaluator.

For Donors

The internal and external evaluations have highlighted the benefits of a flexible and responsive approach to funding in the form of “venture philanthropy.” Representatives of all intermediate organizations consistently made complimentary remarks regarding the Comart Foundation’s funding strategy that was grounded in direct experience in the field. The leverage fund was widely complimented as well, although all partners also indicated instances when external funding and scaling-up had the effect of a “doubled-edged sword,” bringing contradictory results. Therefore:

- ◆ Local NGOs have recommended that leverage funding be expanded and that it be distributed using a sliding scale to match community efforts. The external evaluator has come to the conclusion that, in an ideal scenario, communities should access leverage funding directly and engage with donors through user-friendly systems. As she has put it,

Coordination and management of the leverage funding should be as streamlined as possible to minimize external influence and administrative costs. If the relationship between a donor and community is brokered by an NGO, a standardized administration fee (e.g., a certain percentage of the fund) can be allocated for external assistance, which should be clearly defined.

Some NGO staff felt that ABCD groups did not have the necessary expertise and transparent systems in place to manage funding on their own, and suggested providing business skills training for ABCD groups instead of entrusting them with funding management authority in the first place. NGO partners also expressed misgivings about transferring open-ended and flexible funding to ABCD groups in view of the restrictive policies which limited the types of activities NGOs and local associations could undertake. Many staff members of participating NGOs have recommended that NGOs should maintain a management role because they could ensure that the activities of ABCD groups would keep within the limits of the law.²²

- ◆ Local NGOs have recommended increasing the amount of leverage funding so that it could allow ABCD groups to undertake larger initiatives. At the same time, all partners maintain that large amounts of financial resources should only be invested in activities that do not depend heavily on external expertise.
- ◆ Local NGOs have also recommended increasing leverage funding so that they could support new groups that learned about this funding opportunity and developed their own action plans.

²² Ethiopian Charity Law (“Charities and Societies Proclamation”), adopted in February 2009, is available on the Internet at: <http://www.mfa.gov.et/docs/Charities%20and%20Societies%20Legislation.pdf>

- ◆ Partners have recommended that further research be carried out to determine whether leverage funding is more effective than the revolving saving and credit schemes that are already widely practiced in the communities involved (e.g., *equb* associations), and how it can work in combination with these schemes.
- ◆ Partners have found that the donors who are responsive to the aspirations and capacities of particular communities, such as the Comart Foundation, can influence other donors to support community-led development, fostering a critical mass of like-minded practitioners. In view of that, the evaluation team has recommended that the Coady Institute take the lead role in convening forums that would bring together donors, development practitioners, and policymakers from across Africa and beyond.

For Knowledge Intermediary Organizations

The external evaluator has observed that the learning component of this ABCD initiative was highly valued by all partners. One of her respondents noted that learning is “the heart of this program and a core principle of ABCD.” Partners periodically reflected on ABCD practices in review workshops and expressed an interest in building a “homegrown approach” for Ethiopia. The evaluation process has led to the following recommendations regarding learning:

- ◆ The proposed theory of change needs to be critically examined in order to determine its relevance in light of the final evaluation. A key question to consider is what are the conditions that best stimulate community-led development and how can NGOs, donors, and policymakers foster a more enabling environment?
- ◆ The proposed theory of change indicated the importance of linking local knowledge-based institutions with ABCD groups. This did not occur to the extent anticipated and further research is required to determine why.
- ◆ Locally adapted curriculum based on this eight-year initiative should be developed in the form of a training manual for facilitators from ABCD groups and NGOs involved.
- ◆ Monitoring and documenting the learning process are important aspects of this initiative, and interns from the Coady Institute should continue to play a key role in this work. It is also recommended that interns be recruited from within the country as well and placed with local partners. (Addis Ababa University is currently exploring this possibility.)
- ◆ The continued production and dissemination of simple, illustrative, user-friendly materials discussing ABCD principles and practices will assist the organizations participating in this initiative in popularizing an ABCD approach among different actors.
- ◆ Community action plans were successful when they were based on readily available resources and the actual capacity of ABCD groups, and when the group’s financial and in-kind contributions towards a proposed activity comprised at least 50% of its overall cost. The situations

when action plans required such amounts of financial and technical resources that far exceeded the community's own capacity typically created excessive expectations, undermined community ownership, and resulted in its increased dependence on outside actors. This indicates that more work is required to determine how to support community groups in scaling-up their activities without disrupting their sense of ownership.

For NGOs

NGOs play a key role in the ABCD process by helping people at the grassroots recognize and take advantage of their latent capacities as well as resources and opportunities available to them. NGOs work directly with communities and are often instrumental in establishing or supporting community institutions. The evaluation process has led to the following recommendations aimed to ensure a more effective participation of NGOs in the ABCD process:

- ◆ It is desirable that NGOs involved in the ABCD process incorporate its key attributes into their ongoing programs rather than initiating a separate “ABCD project.” Integration of NGOs into the ABCD process requires sensitivity to, and appreciation of, the activities that are already taking place in the communities they work with. No less important is the ability of NGO personnel, including leadership and management, to think beyond the box of their program areas and to facilitate local initiatives that lie outside those areas.
- ◆ NGOs can play a critical role in building support networks responsive to community-led initiatives. Brokering relationships with donors, other NGOs, government agencies, and business entities is another important aspect of support they could provide. It is also important that their future work should involve building the capacity of community groups to make these linkages in the absence of NGOs.
- ◆ NGOs can play a key role in popularizing ABCD within different sectors through training of trainers, research, and production of educational materials. Dissemination of various materials highlighting successes of particular communities (e.g., documentaries, audio recordings, or printed narratives) can be a very effective means of fostering a broad recognition of ABCD principles and practices.
- ◆ It is advisable that before engaging with community groups NGOs should discuss the core principles underlying an ABCD approach and its key intentions with government agencies that are active in these communities. This may encourage stronger partnership, lead to joint investment in community activities, and ensure that government service delivery mechanisms are complementary to—rather than replaced by—community-driven activities.
- ◆ A substantive review of how ABCD complements government policy would be helpful in allaying suspicions of government officials and broadening support for ABCD approaches.
- ◆ It is desirable that NGOs involved in the ABCD process devise support mechanisms that would encourage broader participation in the process both within and among communities.

- ◆ Determining the best entry points for introducing an ABCD approach is important. In some cases, NGOs facilitated the creation of new types of community-based institutions to work with. Some of these new institutions created more democratic and inclusive decision-making processes, which challenged the hierarchical and often elitist structures of certain traditional associations. In other cases, introduction of new and more formal organizational models disrupted the organic ways in which community groups had used to come together, created conflict, and led to the emergence of groups whose members had few common interests.
- ◆ There is a clear evidence that the action plans of ABCD groups were based on community-level assets, but the extent to which they were genuinely community-driven varied between communities. Whether intentional or not, the influence of some NGOs was evident in the design of the groups' action plans, some of which fell directly in line with the NGO's sectoral focus. On the other hand, the circumstances of particular communities clearly influenced the design of certain NGO programs, which built upon traditional practices or associations. Overall, it is important that NGOs have flexible funding schemes allowing for communities to drive the ABCD process.

For ABCD Groups

An ABCD approach envisages communities recognizing and mobilizing their assets to drive their own development. It is an empowering process, which encourages communities to be at the core rather than the periphery of development efforts. Based on the evaluations, it is recommended that ABCD groups engage in the process as genuine and equal partners by:

- ◆ Negotiating terms of reference with NGOs to clarify the levels and specific forms of their engagement;
- ◆ Sending community facilitators for training in ABCD principles and tools;
- ◆ Hosting community dialogues, exchanges, and learning events;
- ◆ Mobilizing local resources as leverage;
- ◆ Growing organizational capacity (which means, among other things, that areas of support should be defined locally and service providers should be contracted by, and held accountable to, community groups); and
- ◆ Contributing to learning processes, including monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

Appendices

Appendix A: “Leaky Bucket” Comparisons

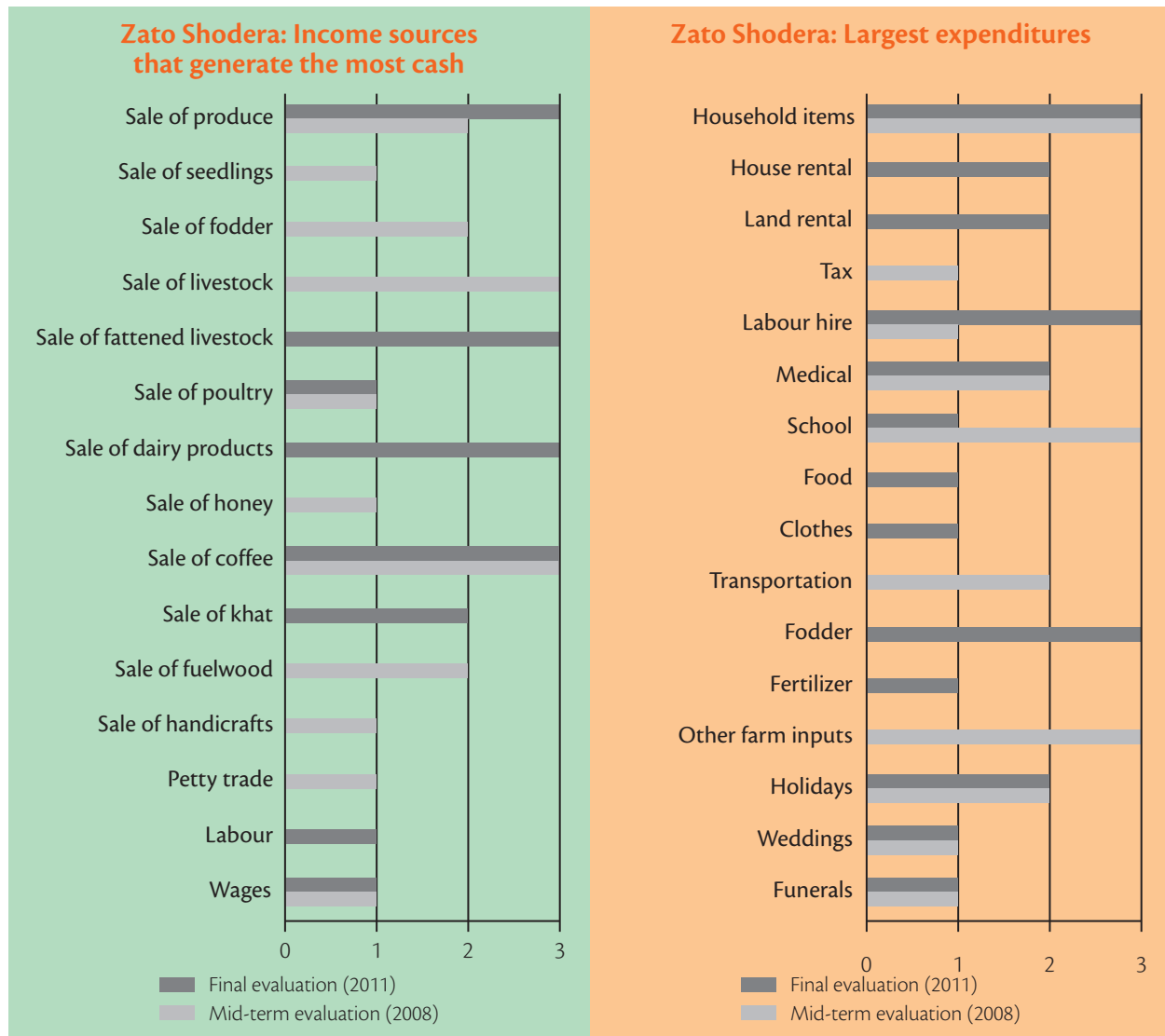
The graphs below show the changing structure of the major sources of income and expenditure of six communities over 2008-2011. They were generated by assigning the highest score (3) to the income sources and expenditures ranked as the most important, and lower scores (2 or 1) to those ranked as relatively less important, by community members. “Social” expenditures typically represent spending associated with various festivities, including religious holidays.

Tebbo



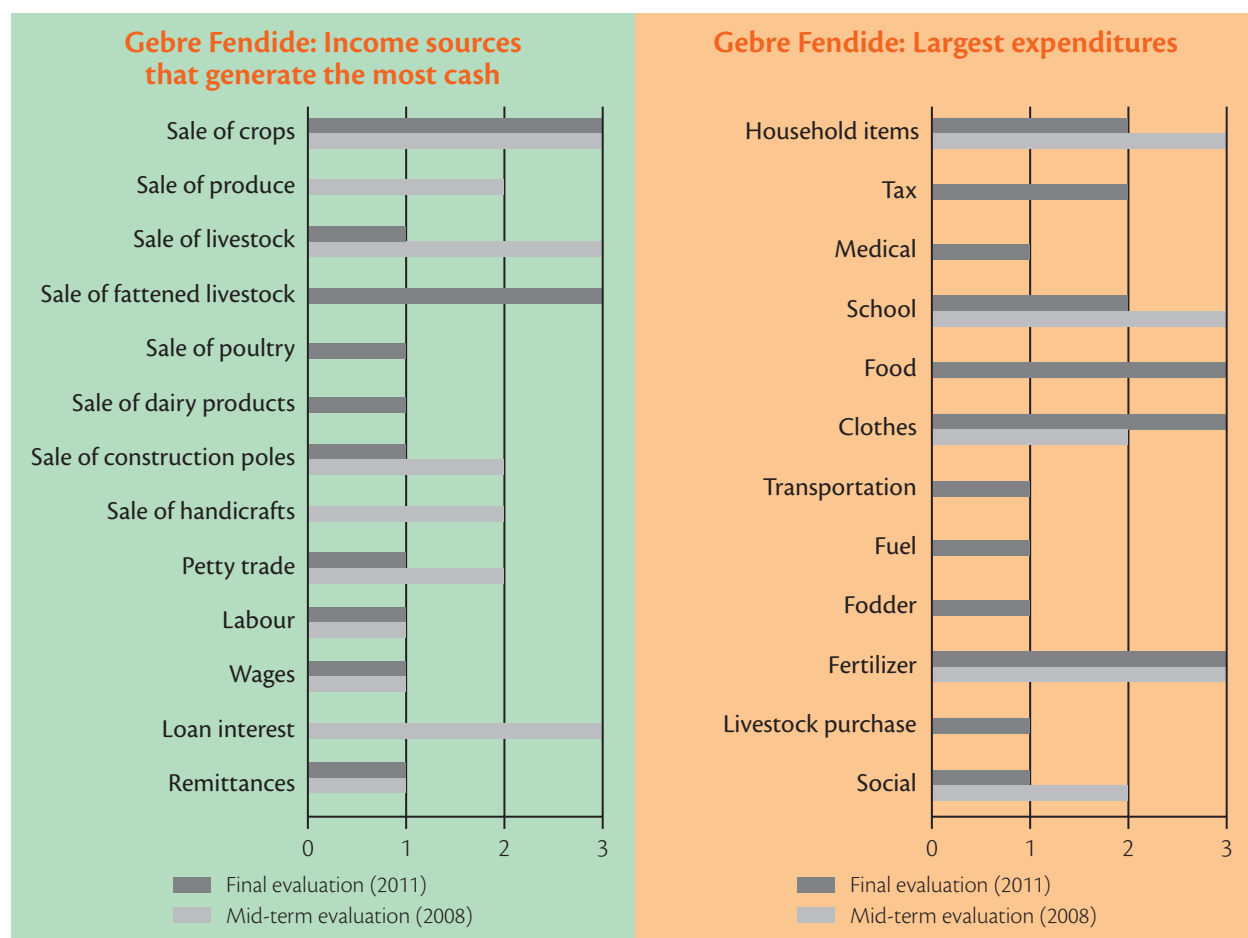
The sale of alcohol in Tebbo has decreased, although it is still one of the top expenditure categories. Community members have identified four new income streams, two of which are significant. One of these is the sale of dairy products, which increased from being zero in 2008 to becoming one of the most important sources of income in 2011. Another new activity which is currently generating considerable income is livestock fattening. In terms of expenditures, more money is now spent on fertilizers and hiring labour (which may indicate an increase in disposable income) and less on festivities, fodder, and loan payment.

Zato Shodera



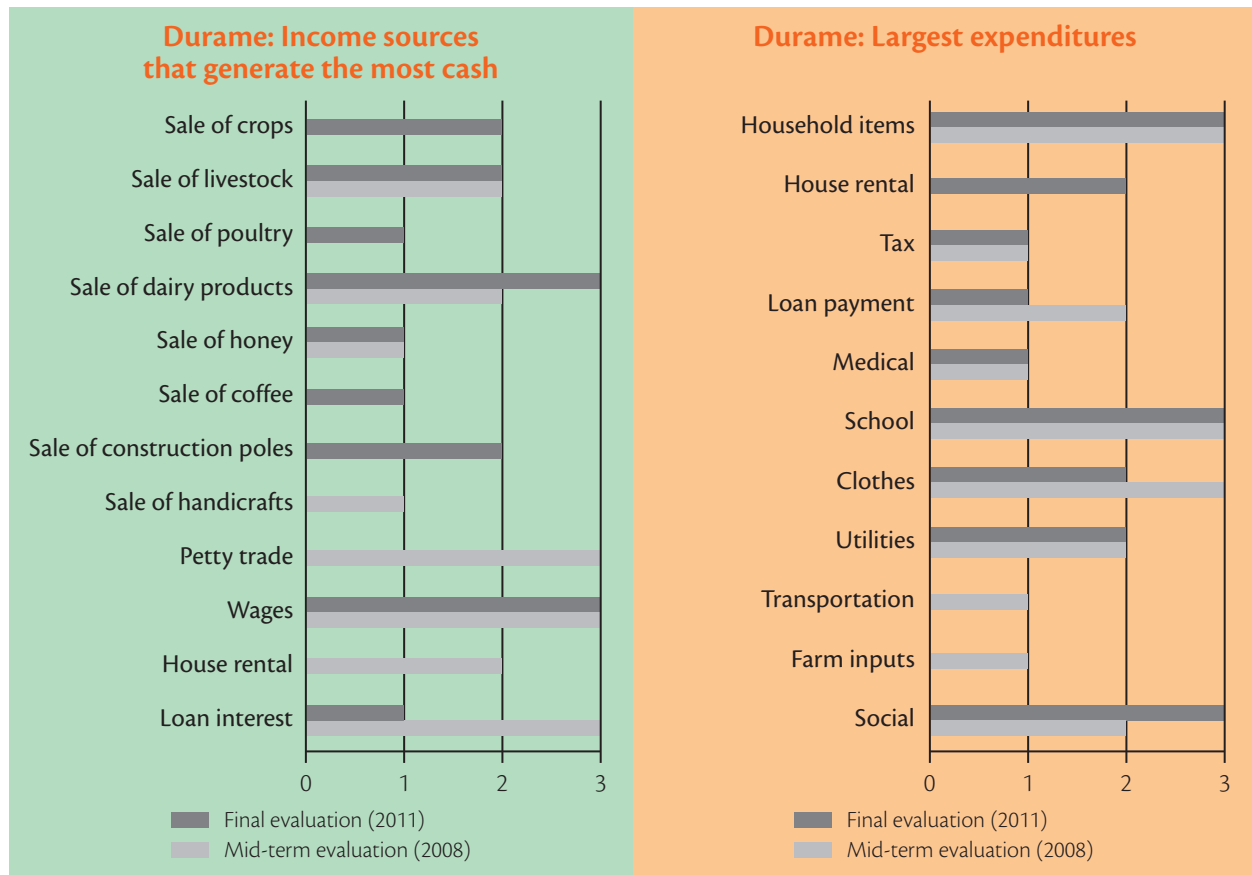
The sale of fattened livestock represents the most obvious change in income structure in Zato Shodera. It was non-existent in 2008 and became one of the largest income generators in 2011. The local ABCD group raised 20,000 birr in 2009-2010 to start this activity and applied for leverage funding from Oxfam Canada (30,000 birr). The sale of produce (fresh fruit and vegetables) and khat has also increased as well as the sale of labour (likely in the nearby town of Durame). The sales of fuelwood, seedlings, fodder, honey, and dairy products have dropped to nil. Expenditures that have increased in importance include fertilizer, fodder (significant increase), other farm inputs, land and house rental, and hired labour. School expenses have decreased.

Gebre Fendide



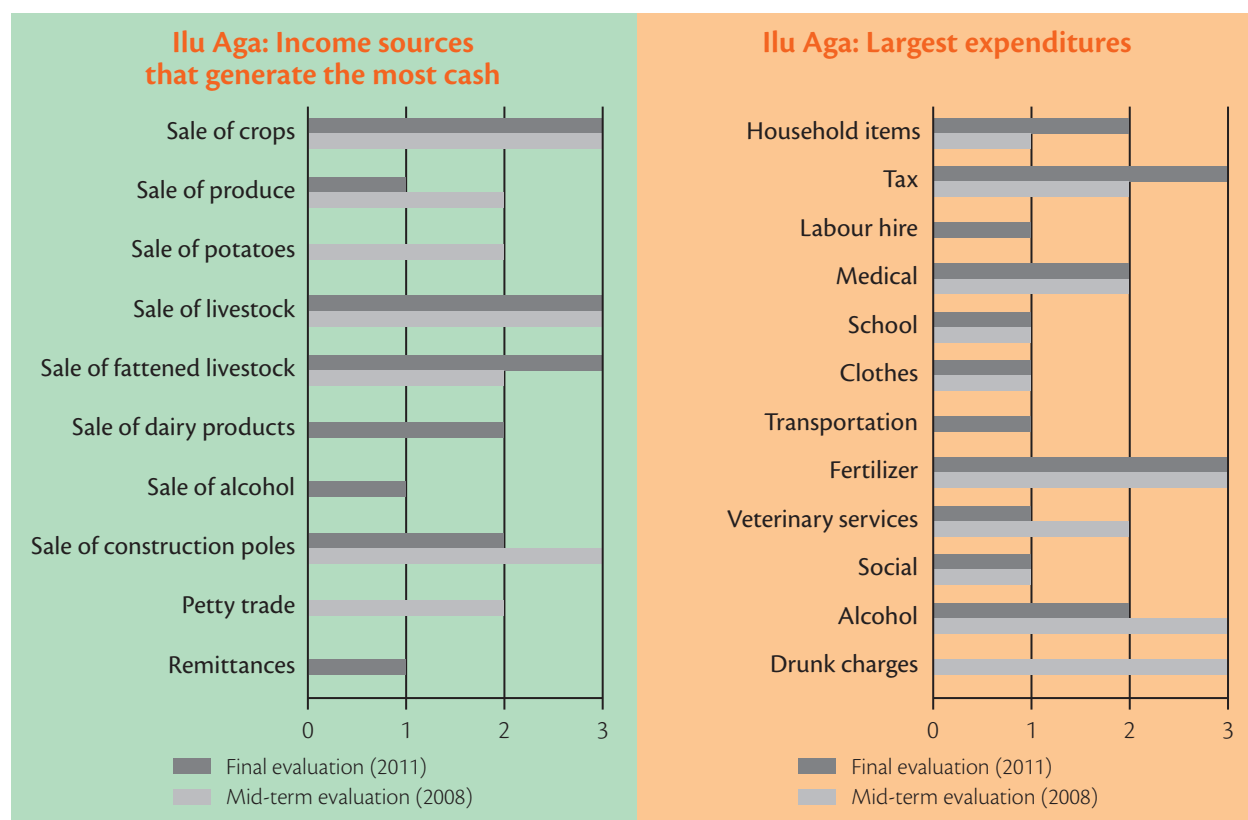
The most important sources of income for the Gebre Fendide ABCD group currently include the sales of crops (similar to 2008) and fattened livestock (an entirely new activity). The sales of dairy products, produce, and poultry have also entered the picture after 2008 (although it is likely that group members clumped produce under the category of “crops” during the mid-term evaluation). There has been a decrease in the sale of unfattened livestock. Loan interest and the sale of handicrafts have decreased from being some of the most significant income streams to nil. The sale of construction poles has also decreased. Several new expenditure categories were reported in 2011: tax, livestock purchase, fodder, fuel, transportation, medical expenses, and food. It is unlikely that all of these are new, although increased government enforcement of taxation has probably improved tax compliance in this community.

Durame



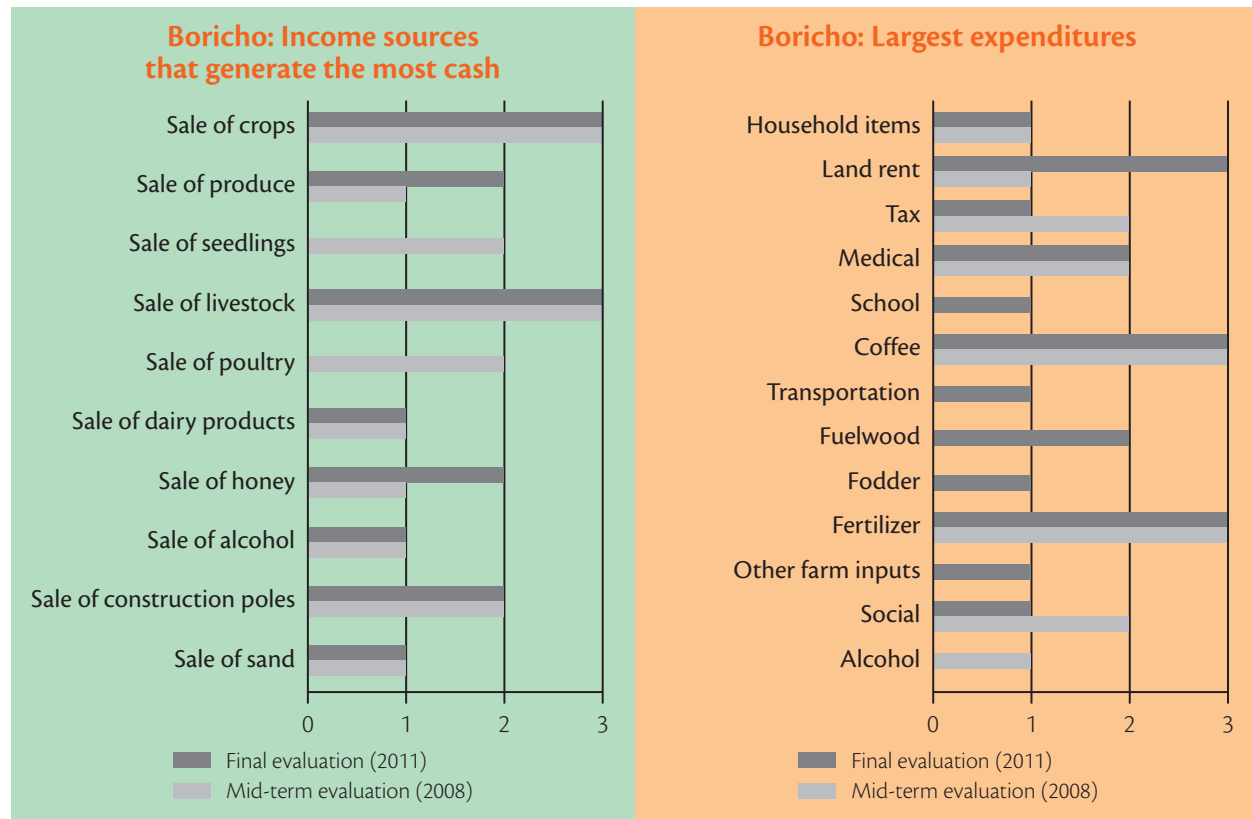
The sales of construction poles, coffee, crops, and poultry have increased in importance in Durame. Incomes from house rental, loan interest, petty trade, and the sale of handicrafts have dropped to nil. Expenditures on social festivities and house rent have increased, while expenditures on transportation, farm inputs, and loan repayment have decreased.

Ilu Aga



Remittances, as well as the sales of dairy products, potatoes, alcohol, and fattened livestock have increased in importance in Ilu Aga. The sales of construction poles and produce, as well as petty trade have decreased in importance. The sales of livestock (unfattened) and crops have remained consistently high. Fertilizer purchases, school expenses, and taxes have become the largest sources of spending. Expenditures on alcohol, drunk charges (related to fights etc.), and veterinary services have decreased.

Boricho



The sales of seedlings and poultry were mentioned by the Boricho ABCD group in 2008 but not in 2011. The sales of honey and produce (fruit and vegetables) have decreased in importance, while the sales of livestock and crops remain among the largest income sources. New expenditure categories—namely fodder, fuelwood, and school fees—have entered the picture. Recent changes also include increased land rental expenditures. Spending on alcohol has dropped off to nil, which requires further research.

Appendix B: Ethiopian Context

Ethiopia is one of the largest recipients of foreign development aid in the world. More than a third of the country's national budget was financed by bilateral and multilateral donors in 2010. Between 30% and 50% of the aid budget was used to provide humanitarian and food aid as the country was experiencing one of the worst droughts in its history. On the surface, this is not surprising: Ethiopia is ranked 174th out of 187 countries on the 2011 UN Human Development Index, sandwiched between Zimbabwe and Mali. The inflation rate, which reached 40% in 2011, has had wide and varying impacts, causing some farmers to profit from increasing food prices and others to struggle. With the sharp depreciation of the national currency and massive land degradation due to overpopulation, millions of Ethiopia's citizens have become food insecure. Indeed, it has become quite common to hear of the "dependency syndrome" among the more than seven million Ethiopians who are reliant on the government safety net program for survival.

Ethiopia's relative stability coupled with its strategic location also make it a country of high political importance. As is the case throughout Africa, the Chinese government and a number of Middle Eastern countries are increasingly asserting their influence in Ethiopia by offering development assistance in exchange for access to its natural resources and markets.

The way in which aid is being delivered has become a matter of concern both inside and outside Ethiopia. The approaches used by development actors have largely been top-down, needs-based models that emphasize problems, deficiencies, and the need for technical expertise (usually external). This way of delivering development assistance has been described as "the inadvertent outcome of well-intentioned community development efforts: communities that are hobbled by a self-perception of their inadequacy and by a dependence on outside institutions for solutions to problems" (Mathie, 2006, p. 1). In such cases, initiatives are often driven by donors, with NGOs serving as "gap-fillers" for communities, which not infrequently leads to a disconnect between community interests and the priorities of donors and NGOs. Not surprisingly, more and more development actors are starting to see a buildup of resentment at the community level towards organizations that have been guided largely by their own agendas.

It was in this context that Oxfam Canada and the Coady Institute began to question the predominant way in which development was taking place in Ethiopia. Was the prevailing focus on helping communities identify their needs and diagnose their problems actually disempowering people, turning them into "clients," "target groups," and "beneficiaries," rather than helping them to become more active citizens—capable and willing to drive their own development? It was this question that led to the creation of a partnership intended to explore a different path, involving Oxfam Canada, the Coady Institute, the Comart Foundation (since 2006), three Ethiopian NGOs (KMG, Hundee, and Agri-Service Ethiopia), and 24 communities across the country.

Appendix C: What is ABCD?

ABCD is an approach that recognizes the strengths, talents, and resources of communities and their individual members, and helps communities to mobilize and build on these attributes to achieve sustainable development. By focusing on assets and capacities rather than needs and deficiencies, facilitating NGOs direct their energy towards identifying and making use of the local opportunities, at the same time envisaging how current policies could be changed to enhance the capacity of people at the grassroots to drive their own development. At the core of ABCD are the various assets (human, social, financial, natural, and physical) that already exist in the community, especially the formal and informal associations that mobilize these assets and strengthen the social relationships that are important for linking local initiatives to external opportunities.

Partners in this initiative define community-driven development as a process in which a group of people, motivated by an issue or opportunity, mobilizes to undertake an activity without any direction from an external organization. The group uses only its own resources (at least initially) and maintains control of its activities even when external actors become involved.

To put this overview of ABCD into context, it is worth mentioning that Ethiopia, while being one of the poorest countries in the world (in terms of GNP), also presents considerable opportunity for development. Ethiopia had the third fastest growing economy in Africa in 2011, and the IMF has predicted that it will have the third fastest growing economy in the world over the next five years, following China and India (The Economist online, 2011). This growth is driven by the service sector, followed by the industrial and agricultural sectors.

With 83% of Ethiopia's population residing in rural areas, most of its citizens are dependent on agriculture and livestock for their livelihood, and the country boasts the largest number of cattle in Africa and tenth largest in the world. Although only 25% of Ethiopia's arable land is currently under production, it is estimated that, with additional irrigation, the amount of cultivated land in the country could expand dramatically. Known for severe droughts, Ethiopia is, however, often referred to as the "water tower" of Africa since it boasts the largest water reserves on the continent, which include 14 major rivers. Over 85% of the Nile River waters originate in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia has recently seen significant improvements in the areas of infrastructure, health care, and education, and it has made among the most rapid improvements in these areas globally over the past five years. The only country in Africa that has never been colonized, Ethiopia boasts an exceptionally rich cultural legacy. At the community level, there is a long history of traditional or informal associations of mutual assistance that have helped people to collectively overcome crises and tap into opportunities.

These observations demonstrate that the situation in Ethiopia is complicated. It presents many paradoxes, similar to a number of developing and emerging countries, where wealth and opportunities exist side by side with challenges and poverty. The experience of using an ABCD approach over the last eight years provides an evidence of the rich culture and traditions, as well as an abundance of natural, social, and economic assets within communities in Ethiopia that offer strong building blocks for citizen-led development.

Appendix D: ABCD Process in Ethiopia

Three partner NGOs were originally selected by Oxfam Canada: REST, Hundee, and KMG. Since this initiative was a pilot project, these partners were chosen for their diversity in terms of size, mandate, and geographic focus in order to see how an ABCD approach would work in different contexts. After three years, the partnership with REST discontinued and a new local NGO, Agri-Service Ethiopia, joined the partnership. The three NGOs (Agri-Service Ethiopia, Hundee, and KMG) participated in a five-day ABCD training offered by the Coady Institute in Addis Ababa and then piloted an ABCD approach in five communities.

Introduction of ABCD to communities was an NGO-facilitated training process that brought together adults, elders, and youth for a series of meetings held over several days. At this phase, facilitators tried to be as inclusive as possible by inviting a diverse range of community members. Over time, a core group of motivated individuals usually emerged to take the process forward.

The process began with appreciative interviewing, which involved questions and story-telling about positive past changes that had occurred with little or no external assistance. This exercise served a number of purposes. First, it prompted community members to verbalize and celebrate their successes, which helped build their confidence and gave them an opportunity to highlight individual and collective skills and talents. This was especially important for marginalized populations whose skills had often been overlooked or undervalued. Second, it set the tone for the rest of the training: focus on assets and opportunities rather than problems and needs. Third, it presented the facilitator as a respectful inquirer and listener, who was not there to prescribe solutions. Finally, it helped participants identify the common threads coming out of their stories and to single out the factors that contributed to successful initiatives in their community.

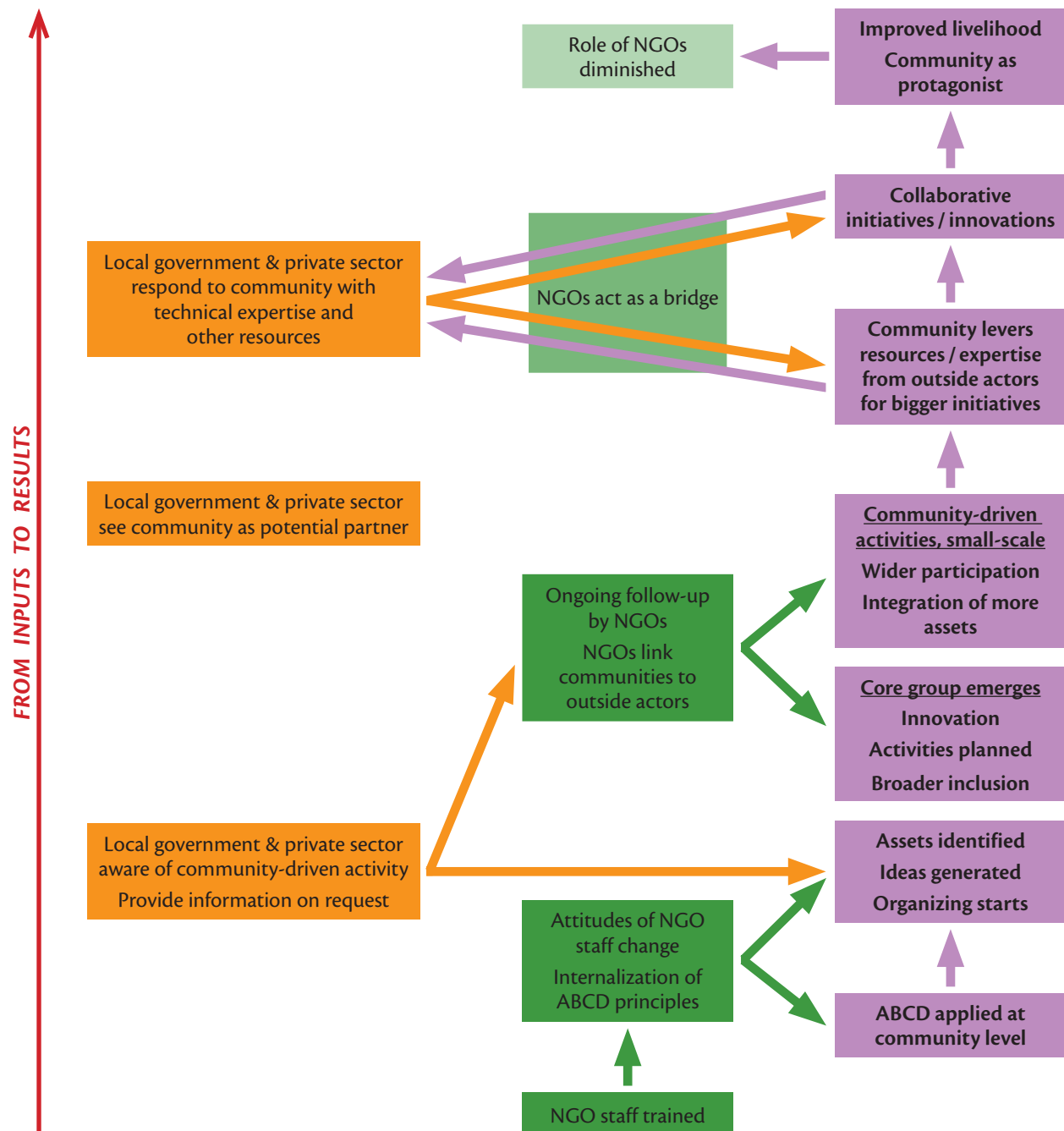
Following the interviews, participants were asked to identify and map various community assets: physical infrastructure, individual skills and strengths, natural resources, institutions, and associations. This activity drew attention to the range of resources people had within their own community that could be mustered to achieve a desired output. Asset mapping was not just an exercise in data gathering; these maps were used to inspire conversations about how people could mobilize their resources together. The group then listed its financial inflows and outflows using the “Leaky Bucket” tool to identify economic opportunities that could increase incomes or reduce expenditures. This exercise provoked animated discussions about the local economy. Many people also started using the “Leaky Bucket” at home to assess and improve their household economy.

The final, and perhaps the most important, stage was the translation of the identified assets into action. Based on discussions of locally available assets, opportunities, and possibilities, the group members envisioned the desired activities they could undertake using primarily their own resources. Then, they developed an action plan to achieve these tasks. Because the stage of articulating ideas for action *followed* (rather than preceded) asset mapping, it often yielded markedly innovative initiatives—a feature not typical of approaches that start with visioning exercises. Further discussions around community action plans led to prioritizing certain activities, building consensus, and organizing toward a common goal.

Appendix E: Theory of Change

An ABCD approach influences the manner in which NGOs, government, and donors engage with communities. The way this engagement unfolds has been a central focus of this initiative. At its very outset in 2003, representatives of Oxfam Canada and the Coady Institute proposed a theory of change to articulate their vision of how change would take place at the community level, at the level of partner NGOs, and within their own organizations if they used an ABCD approach.

Figure 27. Visual representation of the proposed theory of change



Appendix F: Summary of Mid-Term Evaluation Findings

Changes reported by ABCD groups during the mid-term evaluation fell into three broad categories: an improved capacity to organize and mobilize resources; changes in attitudes; and an improvement or expansion of the tangible asset base.

Of all the changes observed, an improved capacity to organize and mobilize resources was perceived to be the most important by five groups out of seven. It included an increased value placed on cooperative action—demonstrated by the growth of the group size and the emergence of new leaders to take charge of the expanding activities of the group. Groups were also observed to have become more diverse over time as a result of being able to engage community members who traditionally did not work together. Some groups reported that they were able to make more effective linkages with outside actors to support their action plans, which suggested an increased confidence of these groups in their ability to approach government and NGOs, as well as a greater willingness on the part of these actors to invest in community-led activities.

The ability of ABCD groups to organize and mobilize resources manifested itself through various improvements in community infrastructure resulting from the implementation of their action plans. Some of these improvements were achieved using community resources only and other were supported by funding from NGOs. Infrastructure improvements included:

- ◆ Upgraded, restored, or newly created road (4 groups)
- ◆ Newly created member-owned store (2 groups)
- ◆ Restored or newly established irrigation systems (2 groups)
- ◆ Newly created milk collection centre (1 group)
- ◆ Upgraded school facilities (1 group)
- ◆ Newly created veterinary clinic (1 group)

ABCD group members reported undertaking new or intensifying ongoing income-generating activities at both the household and group levels. The most commonly mentioned new or intensified activities at the group level included crop production and sales, poultry rearing, and live-stock fattening. In some cases, the emergence of new activities or the intensification of the ongoing ones led to group savings (reported by six groups). The introduction of the “Leaky Bucket” tool also highlighted various possibilities for reducing expenditures at the household and community levels, reportedly prompting group members to moderate their spending on “extravagant” items such as alcohol (observed by five groups) and to start producing certain items they had previously used to buy. Two common examples were the replacement of chemical fertilizers with compost made from locally available materials (such as cow dung) and the establishment of backyard gardens instead of continuing to buy produce on the market.

Men and women tended to emphasize different types of changes. Women focused more on the importance of tangible improvements such as the construction or upgrade of roads or school

facilities and often stressed their increased participation in economic activities. Men, on the other hand, tended to emphasize enhanced organizational capacity and attitude changes such as greater confidence and appreciation of assets. However, both men and women observed that they had become more appreciative of the work of their spouses, which led to improved family relationships.

ABCD group members observed a number of community-level challenges that impeded the progress of their action plans, including food shortage, crop failure, increase in food and land rental prices, and inflation.

Besides, the staff of participating NGOs reported several process-related challenges, including:

- ◆ Unpredictable nature of the ABCD process;
- ◆ Confusion that emerged at the community level when NGOs, which these communities had been previously engaged with on different terms, stopped paying daily honorariums to community members for their participation; and
- ◆ Development of community action plans that were too ambitious and relied heavily on outside resources and expertise

All these findings led to program adaptations and provided a baseline to inform the design of the final evaluation.

Appendix G: Program Adaptations Based on Lessons from the Mid-Term Evaluation

The mid-term evaluation led to a number of program changes:

1. A funding mechanism was introduced to help ABCD groups lever additional resources from external actors

In the early stages of the ABCD process, community groups and NGOs reported having difficulty in making linkages with external actors. In response, Oxfam Canada introduced a modest leverage fund to which ABCD groups could apply on a competitive basis for the implementation of their action plans after they had demonstrated their commitment to “picking low-hanging fruits” (activities they could complete using primarily their own resources) in the first place. It was hoped that this mechanism would help the groups lever other outside resources. The fund allowed a one-time investment that had to be repaid and was then revolved to other ABCD groups that had applied.

One NGO set up a multi-stakeholder partnership for the management of the leverage fund, which included community representatives, NGO personnel, members of local government, and a microfinance institution. Although the implementation of this mechanism somewhat delayed the distribution of funds, it did enhance the prospects for developing partnerships with other actors who could support community-driven action plans and added more transparency to the process. The following table (Figure 28) provides some information on the communities selected for leverage funding.

Figure 28. Leverage fund activities among ABCD groups in Ethiopia

Community	Previously undertaken activities (“low-hanging fruit”)	Purpose of leverage funding request	Amount granted (birr)*
Zato Shodera	Collective farming; poultry rearing; savings & credit	Credit for petty traders; oxen fattening	30,750
Gebre Fendide	Crop farming; livestock fattening; apple production	Sheep and oxen fattening; grain banking	29,000
Angacha	Fruit & vegetable production; poultry rearing; livestock fattening	Grain banking; oxen fattening	29,000
Derara Denbela	Production & sale of vegetables and other farm produce	Improvement of poultry production	15,890
Boricho	Sheep farming; vegetable & seedling production; savings & credit	Promotion of women’s engagement in business	24,000
Tebbo	Local seed production; farmers’ field school; road construction	Improvement of seed production; grain banking	42,600

* At the time of funds transfer, the exchange rate was approximately 12 birr per US Dollar.

An evaluation of the activities supported through the leverage fund (Oxfam Canada, 2010) revealed that ABCD groups were quite successful in completing their proposed initiatives, but there were some concerns among Oxfam staff about the amount of time it was taking for NGOs to release the funds. Oxfam staff also suspected that NGOs sometimes played a considerable role in influencing the content of the groups' proposals, which put into question the genuine community-driven nature of their plans. In addition, an internal evaluation of leverage fund activities (Oxfam Canada, 2010) raised concerns about the sustainability of leverage funding. Several new ABCD groups emerged after this mechanism had been launched, which requested to be included in the competition for leverage funding, while the original users had not always paid their loans back in time for the funds to be redistributed.

2. Support was provided to help ABCD groups scale up their activities

Annual review workshops were hosted by Oxfam Canada with the Coady Institute and facilitating NGOs to reflect on the ABCD process and provide the necessary support as requested by the NGOs. Since most of the ABCD groups' activities were focused on agricultural production and sale, Oxfam Canada hosted short trainings on value chains (provided by the Coady Institute) and community-based, savings-led microfinance schemes for local NGOs to help ABCD groups increase production and understand potential markets for their goods. Oxfam Canada also contracted an Ethiopian NGO (Organization for Women in Self Employment) to train 51 local farmers in business skills and entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, Oxfam Canada organized a farmer-to-farmer exchange visit to showcase innovative community activities that had benefited a large number of local residents. Forty farmers and staff of Hundee, Agri-Service Ethiopia, and KMG visited 10 sites (including both ABCD groups and other local groups that appeared to follow the principles of asset-based development without calling it "ABCD"). For other interested farmers and NGO staff who could not participate in person, a documentary of the visit was produced in Amharic and English. During subsequent follow-up visits to the participants' home communities, they explained that this exchange visit was a high point in the ABCD process. Replication of certain activities observed during the visit was apparent in their households and communities.

3. A strategy was designed to introduce an ABCD approach to government offices

Staff of facilitating NGO perceived possible partnerships with government departments to be an overlooked resource and opportunity in the ABCD initiative, especially in view of the compatibility between ABCD principles and the intentions behind the government-led agricultural extension and safety net programs focusing on community ownership, resilience, and sustainability. Following the mid-term evaluation, Oxfam Canada devised a strategy for introducing an ABCD approach to Ethiopian government agencies. An important component of this strategy is an ABCD manual adapted to the Ethiopian context, intended to introduce the principles and practices of ABCD to the country's government agencies and NGOs, which is currently under production.

4. Efforts were made to ensure inclusiveness of ABCD groups

In interviews conducted during the mid-term evaluation, some community members observed that there were more people who wanted to join ABCD groups or start one of their own. When funding support to community initiatives was made available following the mid-term evaluation, it was generally provided on the condition that the groups that received it would link with other community groups for sharing their experiences of the ABCD process.

5. Funds were established to help NGOs internalize ABCD principles

The mid-term evaluation focused primarily on community-level changes and less on those within facilitating NGOs. Small funds were subsequently set aside by Oxfam Canada to support local NGOs in integrating the principles of ABCD into their work. These funds, for example, enabled Agri-Service Ethiopia to bring its staff to a project site of KMG to see how ABCD worked on the ground in that particular context.

Appendix H: Adaptations of the Final Evaluation Design

The mid-term evaluation not only led to changes in the program, but it also influenced the final evaluation design in several ways. First, the internal evaluation team decided to include the findings of an external evaluator to obtain a more objective view to the process. Second, the final evaluation has involved more in-depth interviews with local facilitating partners than did the mid-term evaluation, to determine how their engagement with communities and with each other was influenced by their experience with ABCD over the past eight years. Third, staff of Oxfam Canada, the Coady Institute, and local NGOs spent 1.5 days in each community (whereas the mid-term evaluation involved three-day-long community visits). It was hoped that this would allow more community members to participate in discussing the ABCD process (because these discussions would keep them away from their daily occupations for much less time than did the mid-term evaluation) and also give the evaluation team enough time to analyze the common trends across the seven communities in a timely manner (one month) so that this analysis could feed into the decision-making of ABCD groups and NGOs. This feedback was provided in the form of a verification workshop with the staff of facilitating NGOs, hosted by Oxfam Canada and the Coady Institute. The workshop program included presentations of stories from the field, the general trends observed, as well as photo documentaries of NGO activities and photo albums of ABCD group members who took part in the evaluation. Staff of local NGOs then carried out a similar verification process with ABCD groups in their own communities.

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About Partner Institutions

The Coady International Institute is a world-class leader in community-based, citizen-led development education. Based on the campus of St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, Canada, the Coady Institute offers a wide range of educational programs dedicated to advancing community self-reliance, global security, social justice, and democratic participation. Thousands of Coady graduates and partners are working in 130 countries to build a fair, prosperous, and secure world.

Oxfam Canada, a member of the international Oxfam confederation comprising 17 organizations networked together in 92 countries, is part of a global movement for building a future free from the injustice of poverty. It works with partner organizations in developing countries to tackle the root causes of poverty and inequity and help local citizens create self-reliant communities.

The Comart Foundation is a Canadian family foundation that invests in individuals and communities with a passion for change. It is guided by the belief that enterprise can be a powerful tool for helping people out of poverty. The Comart Foundation has formed a strong relationship with the Coady Institute, supporting action research in ABCD, which promises to yield lessons that will have a global impact in bringing prosperity and dignity to millions.

Hundee is an NGO operating in Ethiopia's Oromia Region. Its work is based on the principle that rural communities should be responsible for their own development. Hundee acts as a facilitator in this process. Hundee's main areas of focus include community organizing, promotion of cereal banks and access to markets for local farmers, civic education, environmental rehabilitation, and provision of social and economic security to women and elderly people.

KMG, whose full name is Kembatti Mentti Gezzima-Tope (which means "Kembatta women standing together" in English), is an NGO based in the Southern Region of Ethiopia. Through a range of health, vocational, and environmental programs, KMG seeks to empower local citizens, especially women, to make informed decisions regarding their future. Its main focus is on promoting life-enhancing indigenous traditions such as *gezzima* ("self-help") and eliminating harmful customary practices such as female genital mutilation and other forms of gender-related violence.

Agri-Service Ethiopia is an NGO that helps rural communities across Ethiopia attain food security and adequate social services. Its core mission is to foster sustainable rural livelihoods through educational programs that provide smallholder farmers with the knowledge and skills to improve agricultural productivity and net returns without exhausting natural resources.

About the Compiler/Editor

Brianne Peters coordinates the Coady Institute's East Africa program in asset-based and citizen-led development. She also supports the Coady's ABCD work in a number of other countries, and teaches in its overseas and Canada-based educational programs. Brianne holds a Development Studies degree from St. Francis Xavier University and a Masters degree from the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University in Ottawa. Before joining the Coady Institute, Brianne worked for the Canadian International Development Agency in the Human Rights and Participation Division of Policy Branch and for Oxfam Canada in Ethiopia.

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