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**‘Pen, Book, Soap, Good Food, and Encouragement’: Understandings of a Good Life for Children Among Parents and Children in Three Ethiopian Communities**

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**[A] Introduction**

Confronting the ‘universal’ with the ‘local’ has become an important theme within development, contesting growth-led development strategies and uniform approaches to policy and programming. From an empirical perspective, however, the local appears multiple and contested, and the universal equally local, given that all ways of thinking are specific to particular times, places, and purposes. This understanding presents a challenge to interventions to reduce child poverty, which are typically underpinned by models of good childhoods drawn from Euro-American contexts and may neglect crucial aspects of children’s experiences. This chapter contributes to this debate from the bottom-up by reporting the diverse opinions of Ethiopian children and their caregivers on what constitutes a good or bad life for children, elicited primarily through group interviews and activities.

Worldwide there have been many studies about understandings of well-being (reviewed in Alkire 2002: 203-6; Camfield 2006: 6–10; and Camfield et al. 2009). These represent a paradigm shift towards holistic, person-centred, and dynamic understandings of people's lives that are nonetheless embedded in particular sociocultural contexts. People's values, aspirations, and experiences of happiness or unhappiness are now measured directly within some large surveys of individuals and households (for example, South African Quality of Life Trends Study; see Moller 1987) rather than inferred from proxies such as income. These experiences are also explored in participatory studies that identify pathways to particular outcomes (for example, chronic poverty) and the perceived possibilities for change in the future.

The inclusion of subjective experiences and meanings is part of a move within international development and research on poverty from economic to multidimensional understandings of people's lives (Sumner 2007). However, multidimensional approaches can fail to acknowledge the interpersonal and recursive aspects of well-being such as the shaping of people's experiences and evaluations of their lives by their own perception of their environment and themselves, in the context of what they value and aspire to. Group exercises of the sort reported in this chapter can, through a process of collective reflection, shift the focus from what people have or are able to do to how they think, feel, locate themselves, and relate to others. This moves the discussion beyond the 'visible inventory of wants' often

elicited in Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) to explore ‘the “intermediate norms” that structure these particular wants through local ideas about arranged or love marriages; joint or nuclear family structures; honourable and dishonourable forms of work, and how these vary for men and women; and so on’ (White 2010: 162).

Previous research with children in Ethiopia, described later, demonstrates considerable diversity in understandings of well-being, and these differences may be more pronounced between adults and children. For this reason, the chapter contrasts qualitative data from different exercises involving children, caregivers, and community informants who explore what constitutes well-being or a good life for children in their community. It provides a brief overview of findings from previous studies of understandings of well-being among adults and children in Ethiopia and of aspects of children’s lives identified as central to their well-being. It then describes the methods used and reports differences in expressed understandings of a good life and what is needed to achieve this, primarily by location, gender, and age.

### **[A] Poverty and well-being in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is one the poorest and most donor-dependent countries in Africa, with a history of centralized and authoritarian rule dating back to the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie I (1917–74) (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003; Bevan and Pankhurst 2007). Poverty in Ethiopia has a complex socio-political history, which incorporates patron–client relationships and subordination of different forms. In Ethiopia, adult understandings of poverty and well-being have

typically been collected through PPAs (Rahmato and Kidanu 1999; Ellis and Woldehanna 2005), open-ended qualitative research (reviewed in Camfield 2006), and more recently using subjective measures such as the Global Person Generated Index (Ruta et al. 2004) and the WeD-QoL (Woodcock 2007).<sup>ii</sup> Although the different types of study show common elements (see Table 12.1) – health, economic independence, behaving well, having religious faith, and respectful and supportive relationships within family and community – they also demonstrate considerable diversity by location, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, and life stage. This is rarely captured in global summaries such as the ‘Consultations with the Poor’ series (critiqued by Cornwall and Fujita 2007). The diversity in understanding becomes more apparent when the data behind the headings are reported. For example, while well-being is almost always seen as involving the family, there may be different understandings of ‘good’ families in different contexts, or even of what counts as a family. Table 12.1 also shows a clear difference between the results of the PPAs and the two other studies in the other studies’ inclusion of (1) relationships (the only PPA heading connected to relationships is ‘lending money to the poor’); (2) personal characteristics in so far as they support good relationships; (3) religious faith; and (4) value contestation within communities where opposing models of a good life are presented.

[Table 12.1 here]

In relation to children the main areas identified by the studies in Table 12.1 are material security, schooling, appropriate work, and good family relationships. However, child-centred studies of children in Ethiopia (reviewed in Poluha 2007: 1–41; Tekola 2009: 28–31) also highlight the importance to children of health and access to healthcare, being able to fulfil basic needs without depending on others, and good behaviour as the key to respectful and supportive relationships. The Young Lives study has found that, for children in early adolescence, the age of the Older Cohort, the interrelated experiences of schooling, work, and for girls, an increasing sense of physical vulnerability in public spaces, have become more prominent. For example, despite high expectations of education and future employment reported by children and caregivers in Young Lives (74 per cent of caregivers want their children to complete university), less than 50 per cent of older children in rural areas are in the correct school grade for their age. Reasons for this include late enrolment, irregular attendance, brevity of the school day, and quality of schooling, including teacher absenteeism. The cost of schooling, including materials such as uniform and exercise books, presents a further barrier and this increases with children's age owing to the greater distance from second-cycle primary schools (grades 5 to 8) and secondary schools, which are usually located in urban centres.

In most Young Lives communities, children are expected to work according to their capacity from the age of five, and girls should be able to perform all household tasks by the age of 12. While there are a range of paid and unpaid activities in different communities, by the age of ten most children work to support their families in the family farm

or business, and provide for their own clothing, schooling, and occasionally leisure. Children and adults usually report that they consider work to be beneficial, unless it exposes children to physical or social risks (for example, ‘heavy’ labour such as quarrying, or working in bars). However, work may affect children’s schooling, particularly during key agricultural periods, and poorer children described being too tired to follow their lessons or missing school through work-related health problems. While marriage, often through abduction,<sup>iii</sup> is not yet a reality for children in this age group, it is a concern for parents and children and is starting to affect girls’ access to education, especially in rural areas.

Little research has been undertaken with children in Ethiopia on their understandings of well-being, relative to adults in Ethiopia or children in other countries, although two recent studies by Tekola et al. (2008) and Tafere (2007) produced interesting insights. Tafere’s comparative analysis of two urban communities from Young Lives demonstrated the perceived importance of social relationships, personal characteristics, engagement with environment, and spirituality, which reflect many of the themes that emerged from focus groups with adults (Table 12.1). Tekola’s use of community maps with children in Addis Ababa generated interesting information about well-being and ill-being in relation to education. For example, many children liked the school flag, which they described as a symbol of belonging, and the trees and flowers in the school compound. A nation-wide UNICEF study in 2005 on Ethiopian children’s understandings of well-being combined individuals’ written and pictorial responses to four

questions addressing ‘dreams in life for yourself, your community, and your country’ with task-based group responses on the same theme led by youth facilitators (Conticini et al. 2005). Education was the main ‘dream’ as it was seen as ‘key to having a better life, getting out of poverty, “becoming someone”, and being able to help other vulnerable children’ (ibid. p. 11), although respect, representation, and rights were also important. This brief review suggests that children’s understanding of what it means to live well shows many similarities to that of adults, as might be expected, given children’s early engagement with adult activities. For example, children and adults concur on the importance of relationships and the personal characteristics that support these, although adults place a greater emphasis on religious faith. However, the contexts of these understandings differ, with a stronger focus among children on school as a social space, location of work and pleasure, source of identity, and guarantor of the future. Children, especially in urban areas, also appeared to be more ready to challenge the views of other participants, which may indicate that they were less constrained than adults by norms of respect and politeness and an awareness of hierarchies within the groups.

## **[A] Research methods**

### *[B] Sites and sampling*

The data for this chapter come from three of the five sites chosen for longitudinal qualitative research: Atkilit tera (urban, Addis Ababa region), Leki (near-rural, Oromia), and Semhal (remote-rural, Tigray), which are described below (pseudonyms have been used throughout to protect the identities of children and their communities).

Atkilit tera, situated in the national capital, is a densely populated community (14,066 inhabitants), which is diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status. It is near the city's fruit and vegetable market, which provides economic opportunities for adults and children, but is dirty and unsafe for girls. With easy access to secondary and high schools, it has higher educational participation and a greater range schools than the other sites.

With a population of 2835, Leki is a comparatively small and ethnically homogenous community. It has good natural resources (including irrigated fields for growing vegetables to be sold in the markets of Addis Ababa and a lake for fishing, which provide economic opportunities for girls and boys respectively) and a temperate climate, but is nonetheless materially poor. The education provided within the community is of low quality: in the school year



2007/08 the school lacked three of the ten teachers it needed to function and it lost a further four during the year because of health problems.

Semhal is similar in size to Leki and is also ethnically homogenous; however, it is more remote: to reach the nearest town takes two to three hours on foot and the road is only usable in the 'dry season'. Respondents were materially poor and had limited access to electricity and piped water. While every hamlet had a school providing education up to Grade 4, children needed to walk for over an hour to access the higher levels of primary school.

Equal numbers of boys and girls were sampled in each site ( $n=20$ ): 12 children who became 'case studies' and participated in group and individual activities and eight children who acted as 'reserves' and were interviewed briefly in the first and second rounds of qualitative research to provide a baseline for future data collection if any of the case studies dropped out.

#### *[B] Methods and ethical considerations*

The qualitative research used a toolkit of methods developed for application in diverse cultural contexts, including methods based on conversation, drawing, and writing (Crivello et al. 2009). The data analysed in the following

section comes from two sources. First, separate group interviews were conducted with caregivers and male and female community informants (for example, government employees and elders) on understandings of well-being and transitions for children aged 11 to 13. These interviews used focusing questions such as, ‘How are children expected to spend their time?’ or, ‘Tell me some local sayings/ proverbs that relate to children.’

Second, a group activity called the Well-Being Exercise was conducted with children, in which they were asked to think about and draw ‘a girl or a boy of their age in the community and living a good or bad life’ (in translation, good life incorporated living well in a material and a moral sense). Children drew pictures individually and explained their meaning to the group, often eliciting critical or challenging responses (for example, debates over whether a 12-year-old child was too young to chew *chaat*, a mild narcotic). This was followed by a collective discussion with children’s suggestions written on a flip chart divided into columns for ‘good life’ and ‘bad life’: these could easily be turned into ‘indicators’, which the participants ranked. Individual children’s ideas and rankings were recorded and followed up in individual interviews (not reported here).

The exercise was conducted independently with five boys and five girls aged 11 to 13 in each site (six case studies and four reserves), typically in a meeting hall or space within the local administration’s offices or compound.

Fieldwork took place between September and November when children had returned to school, so activities were

scheduled around school and other commitments. Careful attention was paid to the composition of the research team and the nature and scheduling of activities to enable respondents to relax with the researchers. Informed consent was obtained from caregivers at the start of the project; however, the team regularly checked the willingness of participating adults and children and reminded them that they could refuse or stop whenever they wanted to, a right which was exercised on several occasions (see chapter 2 by Virginia Morrow for a discussion about informed consent in *Young Lives*).

The data reported in the next section address whether it is possible to identify cohesive and distinctive models of a good life that reflects the priorities identified in other Ethiopian studies, namely health, economic independence, behaving well, having religious faith, and respectful and supportive relationships within family and community. It asks whether children's understanding is the same as that of adults (for example, is education valued to the same extent and in the same way by children and adults), and identifies cross-cutting effects of gender and location. Finally, it provides evidence that group interviews capture relational aspects obscured by individual methods and enable the exploration of 'individual' values and frames of reference.

## **[A] Results**

### *[B] Group activities with children*

The analysis for this sub-section focuses on differences between the responses of groups of girls and boys, and groups taking place in rural and urban areas, using data from the Well-Being Exercise.

While this exercise raised common themes, such as education, these were specified differently in different sites and by different groups of respondents. In Semhal and Leki, the main concern was access to education, especially for girls (or boys with no younger siblings to herd cattle) and to a lesser extent educational materials. In Atkilit tera, however, the focus was on educational quality in many different dimensions (teaching, sanitation, class sizes, and so on). This led to a lively debate in the girls' group about the relative merits of private and government schools. One girl who had been removed from the private school she was attending after her mother lost her job ranked 'having to attend a government school' as the second most important indicator of ill-being, which is a poignant example of the influence of individual biographies on understandings of well-being. Educational materials were ranked second only to education and were seen as symbolizing parents' care for their children, similar to the perception of clean clothes and oiled hair in the rural sites (hair that has been oiled, and therefore is not 'big', 'dry', or 'dreadlocked', demonstrates that parents have either cattle for butter or cash income to purchase hair oil). Parents who made

sacrifices so children could have what they needed were greatly respected, including single mothers who washed clothes in order to pay for their children's school materials.

Children's behaviour was also a common theme, for example, being obedient, not fighting. Their comments were highly moral in tone, illustrated by the vivid description of the destitute child who has a bad life because he 'lives by wandering from house to house to steal' and after a period of imprisonment '[becomes] rich because of theft' (Afework, 12-year-old boy, Semhal). This perhaps reflects a need to bolster their own identities by distinguishing themselves from both poor people and from rich ones whose wealth had not been gained honestly. Comments from the urban site related mainly to how children's behaviour might affect their interactions with others. One boy described a child who had no one to buy him polish to shine shoes on the street (a popular way for children to earn money), or to vouch for his poverty status to the *Kebele* [local administrative unit] to ensure his access to government support as: 'He is not liked by his neighbours; he has no relatives, [and] he cannot keep his personal hygiene well, so that people ostracize him' (Addisu, 12-year-old boy, Atkilit tera). Another described how a boy who fought with his parents would not be supported in continuing his education, or even if he became sick: 'His parents do not pay school fees for him because they don't like him; it is not because they don't have the money but because of lack of good family relations' (Berhanu, 13-year-old boy, Atkilit tera). In Atkilit tera, relationships outside the family were considered important for social mobility. Many children emphasized the importance of having friends from school,

rather than the local residential area: ‘His friends are from his surroundings and have bad behaviour. His friends are not clever so he is not clever either ... He and his friends are lazy in their education’ (Bekele, 13-year-old boy, Atkilit tera).

Other common themes were work and its relation to education, food, shelter, access to healthcare, and having a good appearance (‘[having] no clothes means it becomes difficult to leave the house and you cannot go anywhere for work’ – Well-being indicator identified by boys from Leki). Having a biological relationship with your caregivers was also mentioned as this was seen as giving a child ‘[the] right to get what she wants from her guardians’ (Abebe, 13-year-old girl, Atkilit tera). Children’s material ambitions seemed to be higher in Atkilit tera than in the rural localities, which reflect its location at the centre of the Ethiopian capital. An example is ‘[having] a table full of a variety of food like a buffet’ rather than simply ‘sufficient food’. Goods such as cars and DVDs were also mentioned, which were not part of the aspirations of rural children or visible in the rural sites. The aspirations of respondents in rural areas related more to productive assets such as irrigated land or cattle, and in Leki, a boat for fishing. While all respondents were aware of status differentiation, children in Atkilit tera seemed to feel this more keenly and described experiences of inequality with great insight:

[The well-being girl] has a pen, an exercise book, good living conditions, a uniform, can get adequate food, and can attend a private school. Her parents can afford the school fees and can fulfil what she wants to have. However, the ill-being girl cannot get a pen, a pencil, a bag, clothes or food. She is attending a government school ... A girl who is not doing well may join the private school but she cannot get what she needs like her well-being friends since her family is poor economically but they can only afford her school fees. But the well-being girl can get what she wants to have [the same] as her friends. (Abebe, 13-year-old girl, Atkilit tera)

Once children had generated indicators of well-being or ill-being from the discussions, they were asked to rank these in order of importance. The recording researcher noted any differences in opinion (for example, in Atkilit tera, where respondents could agree on the five most important indicators, but not the order in which they should be placed).

Unlike the other two communities, in Leki education was only mentioned once as an indicator of well-being (by girls) and was ranked sixth. There were few differences between girls' and boys' indicators, although girls in Semhal mention having a separate kitchen (which would reduce eye irritation caused by cooking over wood in a poorly ventilated room), sufficient clothes, and access to means of communication such as television, radio, and the telephone.

Although girls and boys in Semhal agreed on the importance of good clothing, attending school, and cleanliness as indicators of well-being and ill-being, there was a greater divergence in their views of a good life than in other communities, suggesting differentiated trajectories for girls and boys with associated differences in concerns. Girls mention getting sufficient food (for example, not having to go to school without breakfast), being encouraged to study, having time to play, and being asked their opinion, and being shown respect as signs of a good life, which may indicate that these things are uncommon or absent from their lives. Boys are more concerned about good behaviour (for example, not stealing, fighting, being 'foolish', or disobedient), health, and having a loving and peaceful family.

Education appears to be a more important component of a good life in Atkilit tera than in the other localities since both boys and girls ranked it as the main indicator of well-being or ill-being. Older girls gave a detailed account of the experiences of girls whose parents either could not send them to school or could not afford to support them while they were there: 'Unable to get what her friends have, even if she learns, she doesn't understand properly.'

Consequently she feels she is falling behind her friends: 'When she is learning rather she thinks about her life. She faces different problems and her mind becomes full of tension.' The result of this is that she becomes pregnant at an early age and 'watches when other children are going to and from school', 'too fearful' to approach them.



Boys and girls mentioned having sufficient food and not being an orphan, which reflects the large number of orphans within Young Lives sites (25 per cent of the Older Cohort), and particularly in urban areas (all of the older children selected in Atkilit tera are orphans). Girls also mention shelter. As in Semhal, boys mention not getting advice or ‘follow up’ from their family which is implicitly linked to having good or bad behaviour.

*[B] Group interviews with adults*

The group interviews with adults explored understandings of well-being and ill-being for boys and girls aged 5 to 6 and 11 to 13. Valued dimensions of well-being in all sites for children of any age and gender were (1) having material security, specifically being able to satisfy basic needs such as food and clothes; (2) experiencing good and harmonious family relationships, characterized by love, affection, and care; (3) receiving advice and moral guidance; (4) having access to education and appropriate work that does not interfere with this; (5) living in a good physical environment (that is, clean and with plentiful natural resources); and (6) having personal characteristics, such as confidence, sociability, and cleanliness, that enable children to relate well to others.

Site-specific dimensions included the importance of clean water in the rural sites, having educated parents who can advise and teach their children in Atkilit tera, and divergent attitudes to early marriage<sup>iv</sup> for girls. In Semhal, early

marriage was characterized as becoming enlightened (*berhan*) and fruitful (*abebe*) and seen as a blessing only rich girls could enjoy because their families had the resources to arrange wedding ceremonies and attract good sons-in-law; in Leki, it was seen as a risk to health and education; and in Atkilit tera youth pregnancy outside marriage and illegal abortion were more pressing concerns. For example, when the researcher asked participants in Atkilit tera at what age children in this community married, the respondents laughingly replied, ‘These days we never see any wedding ceremony in the community. Girls may have love affairs with boys and start living together without having legal marriage.’ Despite this variation in attitudes towards early marriage, there was consensus among adults in rural and urban sites that marriages by abduction or pregnancy outside marriage were greater threats.

Gender differences in adult responses were few, and reflected different spheres of activity for males and females and expectations about how they would use their time (Table 12.2). Male respondents in all sites mentioned play – having materials, space, and time for recreation, which was not mentioned by women. Conversely, women highlighted the importance of access to healthcare while men mentioned health only in the sense of a resource to achieve goals, suggesting that they saw health as instrumentally rather than intrinsically valuable.

[Table 12.2 here]

Common understandings of ill-being included (1) the absence of the dimensions of well-being listed above (such as food and parental care); (2) ill-health or disability, which incurred large medical expenses; (3) feeling inferior to or resentful of others; (4) inability to learn because of poor-quality tuition, lack of time, or physical weakness through overwork or lack of food; (5) large, disharmonious families; (6) poor parenting leading to mutual disrespect between parents and children and a lack of role models; (7) living and working on the street, leading to exposure to drugs, crime, violence, prostitution, and so on (Atkilit tera only); and (8) corresponding risks of overwork, beating, and sexual abuse at home.

The differences between men and women (Table 12.3) were largely the converse of those described for well-being, with the addition of concerns relating to education among women in two of the three sites: whether religious education is a genuine alternative for girls in communities where there are no preschools (Semhal); how children have become distracted from education by new economic opportunities such as picking tomatoes and onions (Leki); and the high price of educational materials (all).

[Table 12.3 here]

The only dimension of well-being mentioned by an adult group that was not mentioned by children was having the opportunity to practise religion and attend religious education, something that came out strongly in earlier work by WeD (religious education was only mentioned by children as an inferior form of general schooling). Perhaps related to this, adult groups talked about the importance of maintaining a particular approach towards life; for example, having a peaceful mind or being broad and calm, which are characteristics that might develop with maturity. Children were also aware of the importance of personal characteristics such as confidence and sociability, but this was framed in terms of what it would help them to achieve, or how it would hinder achievement, in their social relationships (see also Tekola 2009).

## **[A] Discussion**

There was a high level of consensus between children and adults within particular communities (see also Tafere and Camfield 2009); differences by gender, cross-cut by differences across communities, were more pronounced. For example, girls and women in Atkilit tera and Semhal emphasized that girls needed time to study, which was not mentioned by respondents in Leki, suggesting that in Leki schooling is given a lower priority.

While the research described here supported dimensions found in earlier participatory assessments (Table 12.1), it found a stronger emphasis on parental provision of advice and moral guidance and children's personal

characteristics. Children and adults valued characteristics such as patience, confidence, and sociability because they enabled children to relate well to others. They also valued ‘good behaviour’, or ‘living in a good way’, which they attributed to teaching by parents or religious teachers (boys in Semhal). A similar emphasis on behaviour has been found by other qualitative studies in Ethiopia (for example, Tekola 2009), but not in Participatory Poverty Assessments. The omission of behaviour from PPAs may reflect the implicit focus of the participatory poverty assessments on material poverty and livelihoods and the expectations set up by the exercise of material assistance from outside. Appearance, for example, having good, clean clothes and shoes, and neat hair, was another aspect that is rarely included in international definitions of poverty. This was valued as a concrete expression of family prosperity and care; for example, dressing their hair. Similarly, although ‘material security’ emerges in all poverty assessments, its value is seen as self-evident. In this case respondents explained that it enabled children to appear or feel equal to others, and parents to express their care by buying them ‘everything they needed’.

While at the level of frameworks or summary tables, the qualitative data appear to do little more than underline the importance of relationships and the attitudes and behaviour that support these, closer investigation brings out the subtle, contextual and dynamic aspects of people’s understandings of well-being, particularly well illustrated in relation to early marriage. As both adults and children addressed good lives for boys and girls aged 11 to 13 in particular contexts, the data should not be read as a general prescription for the well-being of children in Ethiopia.

However, taking a specific and concrete focus has arguably produced data that is more reliable and useful than anything relating to an ageless and context-free ‘Ethiopian Child’. Although not the focus of this paper, there is a need to use group and individual methods to go beyond the a-contextual lists generated by PPAs and embed notions of well-being in the lives of individuals and communities. For this reason, I endorse the position of Stefan Dercon in chapter 4 of this volume in advocating not a single, static list of dimensions of poverty or well-being, which might form the basis of a measure, but a deliberative process that recognizes the importance of ‘identifying and prioritising the freedoms people value’ (Alkire 2007: 2). For example, Robeyns (2005: 198–9) warns that even ‘by engaging in appropriate cross-cultural dialogue ... it is very hard, and indeed often impossible, to truly understand people who live in a very different situation ... Instead, we need a process of genuine listening and deliberation until a list, which will necessarily be collective, can be constructed ... [Otherwise] even a good idea may in the end turn into a politically illegitimate proposal.’ This process should retain an awareness of questions such as which judgements are informed, how and by whom are values determined, and how conflicting value claims resolved (ibid.). It should also be sensitive to the material and political barriers to attaining well-being, even though the latter are rarely articulated in group settings. In Ethiopia the barriers reflect a history of centralized and authoritarian rule dating back to the time of the Ethiopian Empire, expressed through patron–client relationships and different forms of subordination (Bevan and Pankhurst 2007). These extend into everyday power relationships in homes and communities, impacting particularly strongly on children.

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**Table 12.1 Adults' understandings of a good life, elicited through participatory and qualitative research**

|              | <b>PPA 1999/00</b>   | <b>PPA 2004/05</b>   | <b>WeD-QoL*</b>   | <b>WeD exploratory</b>  |
|--------------|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Rural</b> | Size of farmland<br>Livestock, including oxen<br>Food security<br>Access to fertilizer and agricultural equipment<br>Lending money to the poor   | Land and labour for farming<br>Livestock holdings<br>Food security<br>Non-farm activities/ enterprises<br>Access to vocational training<br>Access to fertilizer, enabling on-farm diversification<br>Salaries/ remittances<br>Children's enrolment in school<br>Children working at an appropriate level for their age/ capabilities | <i>Considered 'very necessary' by &gt;70% of respondents, listed in rank order</i><br><br>Health<br>Economic independence<br>Peace of mind<br>Food<br>Behaving well<br>Room or house<br>Faith<br>Land<br>Community peace<br>Wealth<br>Good family relationships | Fertile land, livestock, including oxen<br>Modern agricultural equipment<br>Material sufficiency, especially food<br>Economic independence<br>Education and knowledge<br>Health<br>Housing<br>Marriage and children<br>Having a good appearance/ sociable & hospitable/ able to celebrate the holidays<br>Reciprocal relationships with family (including birth family) and friends<br>Religion |
| <b>Urban</b> | Food security ('able to eat as much as they want')<br>Own business and/or permanent, pensionable employment<br>'Living in good houses with good-quality furniture'<br>'Can afford to send their children to good schools'<br>Addis Ababa only: | Education & skills<br>Business or assets & credit to start businesses<br>Salaries and remittances, ideally international<br>Household assets, including house quality<br>Utilities & sanitation  | Personal progress<br>Good living environment  | Respectful, respected – seen as advice giver/ communicator/ altruist<br>Observes traditional cultural forms OR progressive, 'modern'<br>Practises conspicuous consumption OR moderation, temperance   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Owning commercial trucks, stores, hotels or bars  | Disciplined, hard-working, ethical & family-oriented |
| Running grain mills                               | Happy, satisfied, has peace of mind                  |
| ‘Living in nicely furnished houses that they own’ |  |

\* Conducted by the Well-being in Developing Countries ESRC Research Group (WeD) on people’s values and aspirations in the context of their understandings of a good life. [expand, e.g. The exploratory study does x and the quality of life study does y.]

**Table 12.2 Differences in adult understandings of children's well-being between male and female groups in different sites\***

|              | <b>Atkilit tera<br/>(urban)</b>                                     | <b>Semhal<br/>(remote rural)</b>   | <b>Leki<br/>(near rural)</b>   |
|--------------|---|--|--|
| <b>Men</b>   | Being calm and broad in their perspective<br>Time to study and play | Plays well with others<br>Good academic performance<br>Plump and physically mature (girls), physically strong (boys)<br>Boys should feel equal to peers, perhaps even start to feel 'proud' and 'look down on others' (enhanced confidence through starting to farm) | Local places and materials for recreation<br>Having well-behaved friends and learning from them<br>Early religious tuition and participation in church activities<br>Becoming a good citizen<br>Girls being supervised to avoid early intimacy with boys and having early marriage discouraged |
| <b>Women</b> | Not being an orphan<br>Healthcare                                   | Having both parents<br>Healthcare<br>Girls should be able to 1) keep clean during puberty and be prepared for menstruation; 2) marry and have children, even if this involves leaving school; 3) make choices in their lives and not be pressurized by parents       | Having both parents<br>Healthcare<br>Family wealth   |

\* Common understandings are given in the text

**Table 12.3 Differences in adult understandings of children's ill-being between male and female groups in different sites\***

|              | <b>Atkilit tera<br/>(urban)</b>  | <b>Semhal<br/>(remote rural)</b>   | <b>Leki<br/>(near rural)</b>   |
|--------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Men</b>   | No long-term support from govt. or community<br>Resentment at not having what their friends have   | No places for recreation<br>No kindergarten (women also identify lack of care as problem)<br>Preference for traditional medicine over modern (indicates poor parenting)<br>Husbands waste family resources | No recreational spaces   |
| <b>Women</b> | Parents separated or children orphaned by HIV/AIDS<br>Poor sanitation, difficult for girls to keep clean<br>Elderly household head<br>Unemployed adults setting bad example in household<br>No TV or money to watch TV<br>Education – no time to study, going to govt. rather than private school, no extra tuition<br>Limited access to healthcare, having to use traditional healers | No parents<br>Effect on education of burdensome work within and outside household, for example, young children herding instead of going to school, girls working too hard to study                         | Orphan or without a father<br>Shyness, difficulty relating to others<br>Effect of comparing self with rich children on subjective well-being |

\*Common understandings are given in the text



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<sup>i</sup> The author thanks Young Lives participants and researchers, in particular my colleague Yisak Tafere, who led the research in Ethiopia and shares an interest in understandings of well-being.

<sup>ii</sup> Conducted by the Well-being in Developing Countries ESRC Research Group (WeD) on people's values and aspirations in the context of their understandings of a good life; see [www.welldev.org.uk](http://www.welldev.org.uk) and [www.wed-ethiopia.org](http://www.wed-ethiopia.org). The findings of the exploratory study are reported in Camfield (2006) and the WeD-QoL in Woodcock (2007).

<sup>iii</sup> Abduction is the practice of taking a wife without the consent of her parents, either by force, for example, while she is on her way home from school, or through seduction ('voluntary abduction').

<sup>iv</sup> Early marriage is marriage below the customary age of 15, rather than below the statutory age of 18.