

# Daily Life of the Elderly in Rural Southwestern Ethiopia

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The presentation aims to present a study describing how the elderly make a living and organize their living arrangements in a rural setting in Ethiopia.

In Africa, as in other regions of the world, the number of people in old age has increased rapidly in recent years. The absolute number of older adults in Ethiopia increased fourfold between 1950 and 2005. The United Nations has estimated that the number of people aged older than 60 years in sub-Saharan Africa may quadruple by 2050 (UN 2012).

Many scholars insist that the extended family as “a traditional welfare system” has eroded, thereby leaving elderly people vulnerable. For example, rapid urbanization has influenced the young generation to move to cities, whereas the death of young people caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic has left only the elderly and children (Apt 1997, Eyasuu et al. 1987, Nyambedha et al. 2003). However, actual long-term investigations of these issues have not been conducted. Therefore, comparative long-term research in various areas is needed. This research offers basic data for the abovementioned purpose.

Research was conducted for a total of 20 months beginning in 2008, mainly among Aari people primarily living in one location in southwestern Ethiopia. Participatory observations and interviews were undertaken in this research.

Results showed 16 elders residing in the location, most of whom are very active. They do some arrangements in their residential pattern and livelihood activities to make a living. They manage their lives by reducing a part of their daily hard work, which they ensure by living near those who are related to them. Most of them, for example, live with their families, such as their spouse, children, and grandchildren. Younger family members, wives, or children often support the livelihood activities of these older adults. Sons help with farming activities, such as in handling the ox-plow. If the wife cannot work hard because of her advanced age, daughters, granddaughters, or sisters could help by cooking for them.

Some of the elderly live with those who are not related to them by blood; the study found two widows who live next to their ex-husband's relatives. In this case, communal association called *idir* also plays an important role in supporting the daily lives of elders.

In conclusion, after these results are taken into consideration, a possible scenario or way of reciprocal relationship building among the elderly and other members of the community is discussed.