

Rural
Livelihoods in
Yemen before
the Crisis

Daniel Egel

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Resources

Women and
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Traditional
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May 18, 2011

Conditions in Rural Yemen

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- Goals of this talk are provide background on:
 - Economic dynamics
 - Key resource challenges
 - Social structures and dynamics

- Discussion draws on data collected during 2009-2010
 - Focus on rural areas only
 - Account for majority of population

- Aims to examine two questions:
 - 1 What are the key development challenges faced?
 - 2 What role can international development actors play?

Key Questions for Policymakers

- 1 Should the international community focus on welfare programs (in non-crisis areas)?
- 2 Is the focus on agriculture programs (e.g. crops, animals, and terraces) justified?
- 3 Is international community too focused on qat?
- 4 How can foreign development actors access women in rural areas?
- 5 How do social structures affect the type of development programs that are possible?
 - Social structures can affect programming
 - Development programming can affect social structures

Overview

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1 Economics

- Sources of Income
- Employment and Unemployment
- Food insecurity
- Debt and Borrowing
- Qat (and Healthcare)
- Inequality

2 Resources

- Water
- Land
- Terraces

3 Women and Gender Equity

4 Traditional Political and Social Structures

- Supporting individuals during crises
- Solving community problems
- Tribes

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Sources of Income

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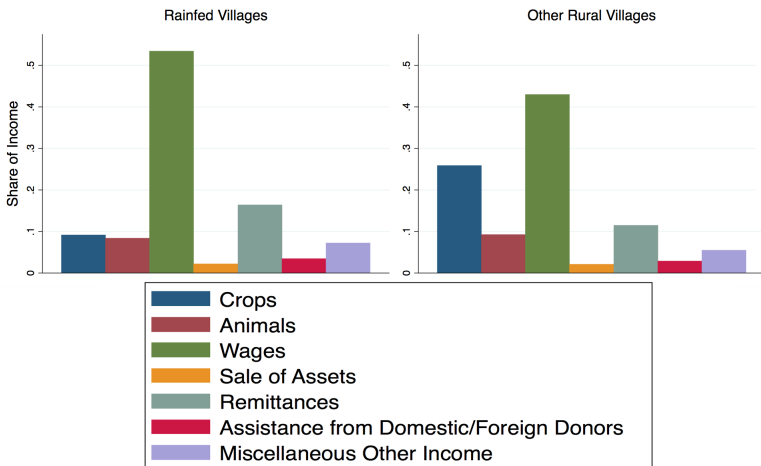
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Wages most important source of rural income

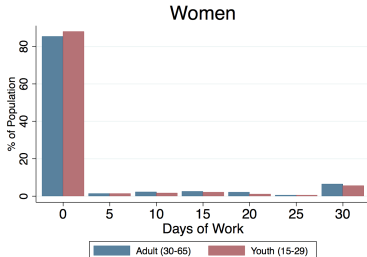
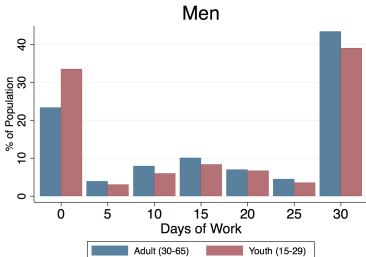
- Remittances: 2nd, Crops: 3rd
- 75% of rural villages depend on rainfall for agriculture



Employment

Rural Yemenis Face Significant Employment Shortages

- Adult Males (30+):
 - Unemployment: ~25%
 - Underemployment: ~35%
- Young Males (ages 15-29)
 - Unemployment: ~35%
 - Underemployment: ~25%



Employment

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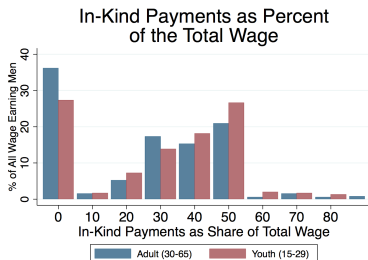
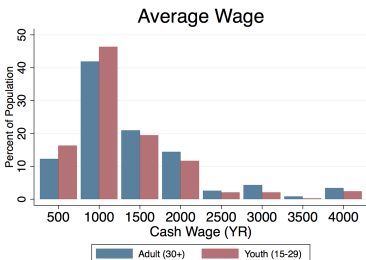
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Rural Wages are High

- Average daily cash wage is nearly 1500 YR (\$7.50)
- Wages are often supplemented with in-kind transfers of food, qat, or lodging
- More than half of male rural dwellers work outside the home village
 - Wages are higher outside the village



Food Insecurity

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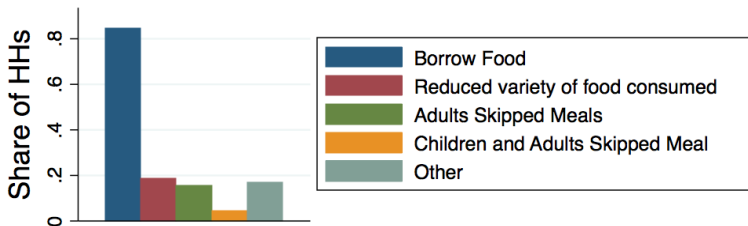
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Do rural households face significant caloric insecurity?

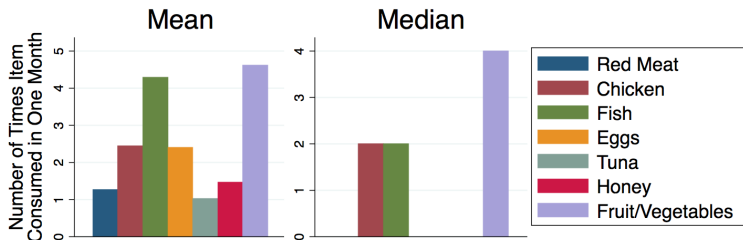
- Did 2008 food crisis significantly impact rural households?
 - 2006: 33% of rural households face caloric shortages
 - 2009: 35% of rural households face caloric shortages
- People meet food shortages through community borrowing



Food Insecurity

Do rural households face significant nutritional insecurity?

- 80% of children suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, e.g. iron (FAO/WFP 2009)
- Most households consume protein-rich and nutrient-rich foods infrequently



Debt and Borrowing

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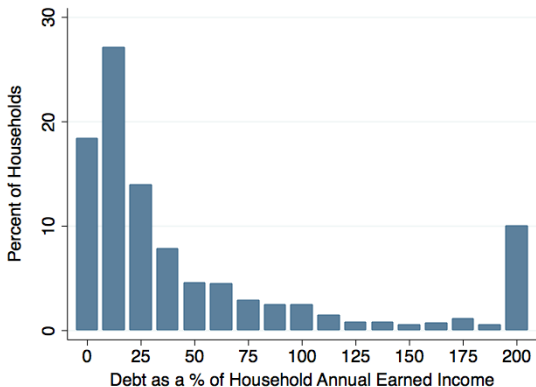
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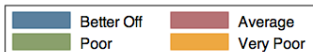
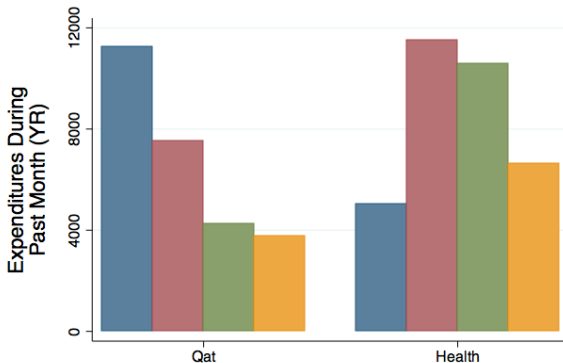
Most households have significant amounts of debt

- Most debt is interest free
- Few households actively paying off debt
- 18% of households reported pawning or selling some type of productive agricultural asset to pay debt



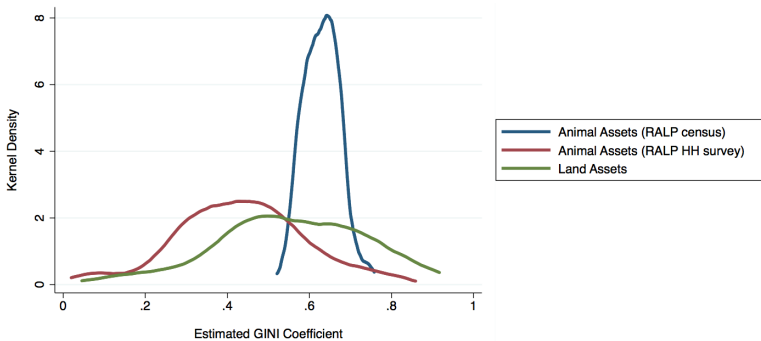
Qat consumption is high, but health care expenditures are higher

- Poor households spend more on medical care than qat
- Adult laborer earns 20-30,000 YR a month



Within-village inequality in rural Yemen is high

- Aggregate inequality:
 - Income GINI = 0.33-0.38 (UN, CIA)
 - Expenditure GINI = 0.44 (Egel and Yeslam 2011)
- Average within-village inequality:
 - Animal assets GINI = 0.46-0.63
 - Land assets GINI = 0.59



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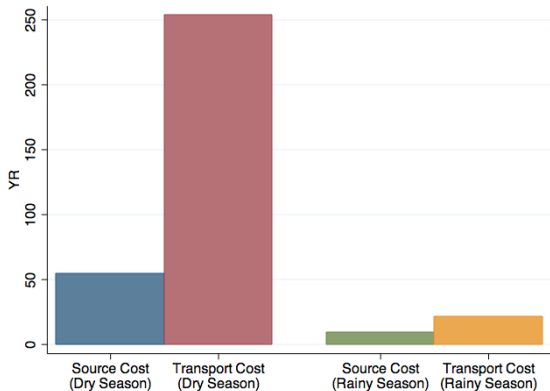
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Access to Water

Water is Very Expensive

- Accounts for ~10% of income during the dry season
 - Average monthly income 20-30,000 YR
- Transportation costs dominant factor in determining cost of water



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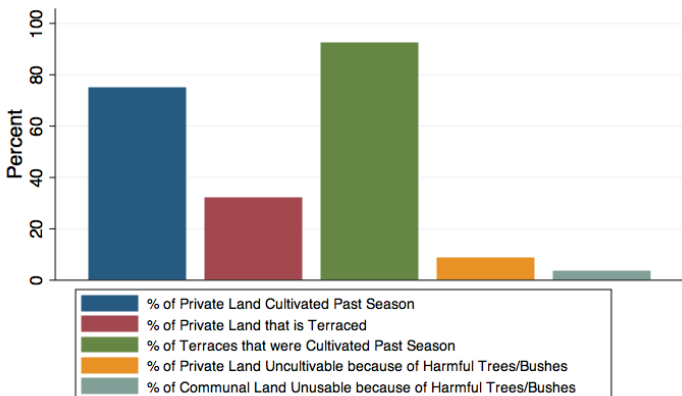
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Most Private Land is Under Cultivation

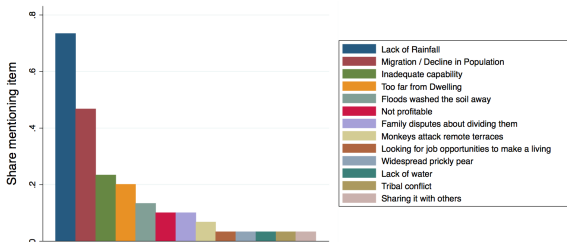
- 80% of all private land is cultivated
- Approximately one-third is terraced
 - Cultivation rates slightly higher for terraces
- 5-10% of land is uncultivable because of weed infestations



Terrace Abandonment is Less Severe than Many Believe

- ~20% of terraces are abandoned
- Things may be getting worse before they get better
- Lack of rainfall and opportunity cost of labor are dominant causes of abandonment

Leading Causes of Terrace Abandonment



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Women's Freedom of Movement

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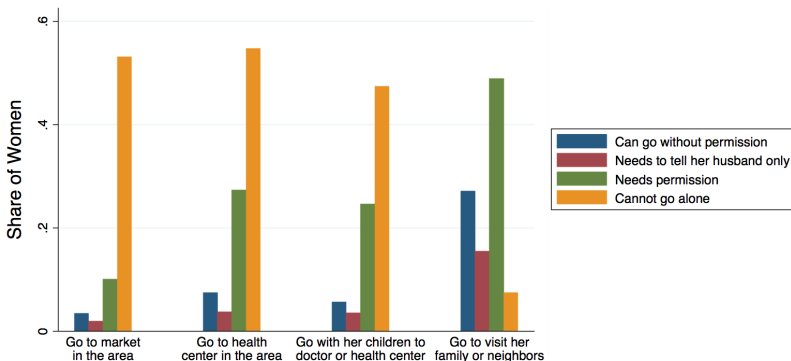
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Women's mobility is limited

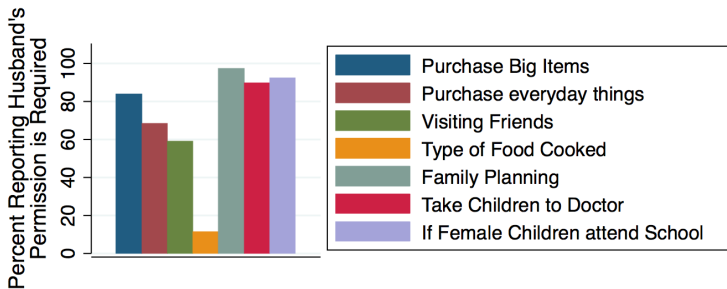
- Majority of women cannot travel to local market, health center, or take children to doctor
- 70% of women need to inform husband's if they want to visit friends



Women's Role in Decisionmaking

Women have a limited role in decisionmaking

- 97% require permission to use family planning
- 90% require permission to take children to doctor - even if the child is in critical condition
- < 10% can decide to send girls to school



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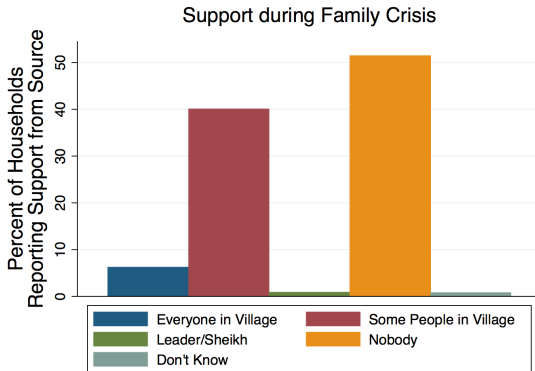
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Community's Role in Supporting Individuals

Role and meaning of community seem to be changing

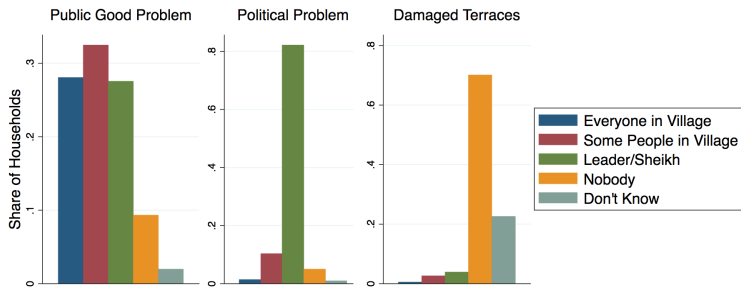
- Over 60% of rural communities reported the disappearance of mutual assistance customs
- Households no longer support each other
 - More than 50% reported no support during family crisis



Resolving Community Problems

Communities play role in solving some problems only

- Communities play role in public goods (e.g. schools)
- Political problems are left to local elite (i.e. sheikhs)
- No support for terrace problems despite previous prevalence of “Al-Jaysh”, etc.



Tribes continue to play a role in rural politics

- Tribes affect resource transfer from the central government
 - Tribe size affects the ability of communities to extract resources from central government
 - Tribal connections can affect availability of government resources
- Tribal structure affects ability of communities to provide public goods (e.g. schools)

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What Can the International Community Do?

- Focus on job creation and not welfare in rural areas
 - Create financing opportunities for non-agricultural enterprises in rural areas
 - Concentrate efforts in provincial and district centers
- Help rural markets work
 - Support improvements to key secondary road networks
- Support successful Yemeni programs - even if governmental
 - Focus on existing programs
 - e.g. Empowerment for Local Development