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“Solidarity in a competing world —  
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## Area Closure Management in Ethiopia: Social and Socio-Economic Aspects of Common Pool Resource Activities

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### Abstract

Climate hazards, population growth and mismanagement accelerate the problem of natural resources degradation. To break the circle, actions are required that lead to positive ecological and socio-economic outcomes. Area closures (AC) as common pool resource activity ideally lead to environmental rehabilitation under community participation. Ethiopia has a long history of AC activities. Applied under different management and conditions their performances varies. This study aims to assess social and socio-economic factors contributing to efficient and sustainable AC management in Ethiopia. The objectives are to (1) determine the institutionalisation with relevant stakeholders, structures and processes, (2) investigate the level and motivation of community participation, (3) comparing the ACs' management performances and their potential contribution to local environment and livelihood. The explorative study was carried out in 2014/2015, following a multiple case design: five ACs in two districts in Amhara and Oromia Region. Data were collected by reviewing official documents, conducting semi-structured and key informant interviews with 112 local community members and 40 representatives from state and civic entities. Findings show that communities endorse the closed areas, based on observations of rehabilitated parts and water generation. Besides using grass in selective cases, benefits for livelihood support and knowledge about it are sparse. Existing income generating activities are externally induced and funded. Their effect is limited as they are not strongly linked with the AC and timely restricted. Continuous technical training and support is desired by the community. Experience sharing shows to be an efficient and appreciated method by the farmers taking up their way of learning. But benefits are not accessible for all. People are excluded through the incapability to financially contribute or being outside decision making bodies. The institutional collaboration on ACs is not clearly determined, impeding essential information flow and holistic implementation. Additionally, the performance of AC depends on the individual context of the located area: severity of environmental hazards, level of degradation and land pressure, traditional lifestyles and agricultural knowledge. To achieve rural development and environmental protection on a long term, individual conditions in a social-ecological system have to be pre-assessed, knowledge and responsibilities equally distributed and individual benefits balanced.

**Keywords:** Area closure management, common pool resources, Ethiopia, multiple case design, social-ecological system