

History of Kersa Demographic Surveillance and Health Research Center (KDS-HRC)

In Ethiopia, health related information is scarce, at best they are generated based on smaller studies, or data generated from the Health institutions. Such sources of information are biased. A community based study with a complete enumeration removes many of the biases introduced by selection of study subjects. Such practice is a common phenomenon in developed world using electronic registration system at every service delivery points which eventually linked to a central database.

This system of enumeration is a difficult task for many developing countries including Ethiopia. An alternative source of information is a community based study that is longitudinal by its nature. Many developing countries, especially in Africa have such registration system to counterbalance the deficit of information. In Ethiopia also, there were three DHS sites that started such registration earlier; Butajira Rural Health Project of Addis Ababa University in central Ethiopia in 1986, is the oldest one. After Butajira, Dabat Rural Health Project of Gondar University in northern Ethiopia was established in 1996, and eventually the Gilgel Gibe project of Jimma University in the Southwestern Ethiopia was initiated in 2005.

Learning from the three field research centers, four staff namely Nega Assefa (Ph.D), Zinabu Anamo, Lemessa Oljira (Ph.D candidate) and Tamirat Gebru (Ph.D candidate), in the then Haramaya University's Faculty of Health Sciences initiated the discussion among themselves and within the faculty in February 2007.



KDS-HRC initiators in action:

From left to right:
Tamirat Gebru,
Zinabu Anamo,
Nega Assefa,
Lemessa Oljira

The next issue was were to establish this research site, initially 14 districts were nominated, out of which 7 were shortlisted based on different criteria and the team make a visit to 7 of the shortlisted districts using a checklist. Finally two districts remained for final look. Eventually Kersa District was selected based on all its attributes plus the presence of high altitude places in the district.

Again there are 38 Kebeles in Kersa, but the research cannot afford to collect data from all the 38, hence, based on the composition of the Kebeles, the population size in each area and urban rural mix to represent Ethiopia, 12 Kebeles were selected for the initiation of the field research site, 2 highland, 2 low land and the remaining 8 midland and out of which two are towns Kersa and Weter and the remaining are rural Kebeles. All the Kebeles have road access and telephone connection.

Once everything was set, then the for member team make a visit to Gilgel Gibe field research center (GGFRC) and Butajira Rural Health Program (BRHP). During the visit the visiting team has shared in important information as to how to organize and lead such research projects.



A visit to Gilgel Gibe field research center data base unit.

From right to left:
Ato Fasil Tesema (GGFRC),
Lemessa Oljira



A visit to Butajira rural health program: professionals from BRHP giving explanation for the visiting team.

From left to right:
Dr. Alemayhu Worku (BRHP),
Dr. Wubegzer Mekonnen (BRHP)



A visit to BRHP: from left to right:

Nega Assefa
Tamirat Gebru
Negga Baraki
Melake Demena
Dr. Alemayhu Worku (BRHP),
Dr. Wubegzer Mekonnen (BRHP)
Lemessa Oljira

The official work of KDS-HRC was started after field workers were recruited and trained and a launching program was conducted. The launching session was held in Kersa town in the presence of district officials, University officials and field workers. Soon after the launching the first census was conducted in September 2007.



Training of field workers at: Lange health station



Training of field workers at: Weter town Administration Office



Dr. Tena Alamirew the then AVP giving speech for the participants.
Other people sitting in the front from right to left: Dr. Tadel (the then RPO), Ato Melke Demena (The then Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences), Ato Kedir (The then Kersa district administrator)



Some of the participants of the launching session



Participants of the launching program taking a photo in front of the KDS-HRC office which was temporarily given by the district