

begin clearing fields and to start planting when the rains come. Many of these migrants get jobs as construction workers in the cities like El Obeid or Khartoum, or they work as farm laborers on the mechanized agricultural schemes picking cotton or cutting sorghum. Although a few migrants are employed in skilled professions like tailoring or shoe manufacture and repair, most work as unskilled laborers.

In addition to gaining income, many farmers migrate because of severe water shortages in their villages. This is one of the key factors in farmers' decisions to migrate. Unable to afford the high costs of water during the dry season,⁵¹ farmers may take their entire family with them or go by themselves and make arrangements to supply water to those members who stay behind. This may involve sending money home periodically or leaving enough revenue behind to meet these expenses. Thus, water availability has a strong influence on migration patterns.

The income derived from migration is a valuable input into the household economy of many poor farmers. It helps supplement farm revenues, especially during years of poor crop production. Therefore, seasonal migration for employment plays an important role in the farming system of this region.

Monetary Gifts from Relatives Living Elsewhere

Another source of funds to supplement farm incomes is money sent home from relatives living in other places. About one-fourth of the farmers (9 of 40) in our sample received money in this fashion. The amount of money received varied from 30 L.S. to 450 L.S. a year. In about half the cases, sons sent money home to fathers, while the rest involved brothers sending money to brothers. Often the largest sum was sent during the rainy season to help pay for labor expenditures. Umm Ramad had the largest number of farmers receiving money from relatives (6 of 15 or 40%), followed by El Geifil (2 of 10 or 20%) and El Kharta (1 of 15 or 7%).

To implement this strategy, many farmers realize that well-paid relatives living elsewhere and education are closely linked. Many government jobs or other relatively high paying professions require some education; at least primary school. Therefore, if families wish to have one of their members in such a position they have to allow them to receive the necessary training. Once this member receives the appropriate training and secures a good job, he can start supplementing the family income through periodic monetary gifts.

It is perhaps with this strategy in mind that many of the farmers in our sample are encouraging some of their children to obtain an education. In most cases, they only send a couple of children to receive such training, while the rest contribute their labor to farm activities. Given their limited resources and dependency on family labor, the inability of poor farmers to educate more than one or two is understandable. But, such a strategy can pay off in the long run if these children can secure positions which enable them to give some financial assistance to the family.

⁵¹In El Kharta the price of water sold from private cisterns was 35 piasters a tin (about four gallons). This price was starting to force many farmers to migrate to El Obeid because they couldn't afford it.