

Medicinal and Edible Plants Used During the Siege of in the Highlands of Tigray, Ethiopia

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Abstract : Tigray highlands in northern Ethiopia are characterized by a wide range of ecological conditions and climate. We investigated edible and medicinal plants used during the siege of Tigray, which caused the deaths of nearly 600,000 civilians, mainly due to starvation and lack of medicine. We used semi-structured interviews, observation and guided field walks with 500 informants (300 males and 200 females) selected randomly from two districts. A total of 25 species of medicinal plants were collected and identified for treating 30 human ailments. Furthermore, a total of 21 edible plants were also collected and identified. Nearly 68.75% of these species were wild and harvested mainly for their leaves, and the remedies were administered through dermal, nasal and oral routes. Oral and dermal applications were the highest and most used route of application. Famen foods significantly saved thousands of human lives during the siege of Tigray, both in urban and rural communities. We suggest domestication of some of the wild medicinal plants for long term conservation of the species. Documentation of farmers' knowledge, attitudes and practices of ethnobotany would be very important before the indigenous knowledge is lost forever.

Keywords : siege, Tigray, medicinal plants, edible plants

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