

Broken Promises

Food Security Interventions and Rural Livelihoods in Ethiopia



Aschale Dagnachew Siyoum

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Livelihoods in Ethiopia**

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Food Security Interventions and Rural Livelihoods in Ethiopia

Aschale Dagnachew Siyoum

Thesis

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Acronyms

ACSI	Amhara Credit and Saving Institute
ADLI	Agricultural Development Led Industrialization
CCI	Complementary Community Investment
CFI	Chronically Food Insecure
CSA	Central Statistics Authority
DA	Development Agents
DFID	Department for International Development
DPPC	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission
DS	Direct Support
EBSN	Employment Based Safety Nets
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
EEA	Ethiopian Economic Association
EEPRI	Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute
EGS	Employment Generation Scheme
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
FAD	Food Availability Decline
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FED	Food Entitlement Decline
FFSS	Federal Food Security Strategy
FFW	Food For Work
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHH	Female Headed Households
FSP	Food Security Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGN	Graduation Guidance Note
GOs	Governmental Organizations
HABP	Household Asset Building Programme
HH	Households
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group
HPN	Humanitarian Practice Network
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
NCFSE	New Coalition for Food Security in Ethiopia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPDPM	National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OFSP	Other Food Security Programmes
ORDA	Organization of Relief and Development of Amhara
OSSREA	Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa.
PA	Peasant Associations
PANE	Poverty Action Network Ethiopia
PIM	Programme Implementation Manual
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme

PW	Public Works
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
RRN	Relief and Rehabilitation Network
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SDPRP	Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States' Dollar
UN	United Nations
WARDO	Woreda Agriculture and Rural Development Office
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

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Chapter One

General introduction to the study

Introduction

This thesis is about rural livelihoods in Ebinat district – one of the chronically food insecure districts in Amhara region of Ethiopia. It analyses the situation of households' food insecurity and how the government's food security interventions shaped households' livelihoods and food security situations with a focus on the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and Other Food Security Programmes (OFSP) currently being implemented in the country.

Born in Ethiopia, I first learnt about food insecurity when I was a child. I remember watching the video footage in a television programme about food aid distributions to famine affected people in the northern parts of the country. At the time, I had no understanding of what famine and food shortages meant but the horrible images of malnourished children and famine affecting adults stuck to my memory. As years passed, I realised that the problem of food shortages is a chronic problem in the country and I began questioning myself why it is not possible for the government to feed the food insecure people while it appeared that there was plenty of food available in my home area. The quest to search for an answer triggered an interest in me to learn more about food insecurity in Ethiopia.

During my undergraduate study at Dilla University College, I took a course on Ethiopian History and I realised that food insecurity and famine was not a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia. In fact food shortages have been a problem in the country beginning from the middle ages. Knowing this fact even triggered me to know more about the problem. However, without having a reasonable answer to my question I graduated from my undergraduate studies and went to Norway for my Masters of Science degree. I did my masters in development studies which gave me the chance to get to know more about the issue of food crises in developing countries and helped me to broaden my understanding on the subject matter. As part of my masters thesis I also undertook three months of fieldwork in rural Ethiopia. The fieldwork gave me a first-hand experience about the food crisis and its impact at household level. This experience deepened my interest in how food crises impact on rural households and how the government and the international community intervene to contribute to food security.

In early 2007, after completing my master's study from Norway, I became involved in a USAID funded livelihood research project. As part of the research project, I had the opportunity to collect field data in two livelihood zones in the northern parts of Ethiopia particularly in Sekota, Farta and Ebinat districts. This research project gave me a chance to discuss issues of food insecurity and rural livelihoods with members of the community, Development Agents and local officials in those districts. Due to my involvement in this research project, I realised that despite the provision of food aid, millions of rural Ethiopians continue to suffer from chronic food shortages and I became even more interested to look at these issues in greater depth and to pursue a career in food security with a hope of contributing something. Later that year, I heard that Disaster Studies of Wageningen University was looking for an Ethiopian PhD candidate to undertake research on Ethiopia's food security programme. At that time I was a lecturer at Bahir Dar University, at the Department of Disaster Risk Management and Sustainable Development, and I decided to apply for the vacancy. When I heard that I was selected it was like a dream come true. This was my opportunity to study in greater depth the issue of food insecurity and, hopefully, to make a contribution in seeking a solution to address food insecurity in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is a drought prone country. The country ranks second in the world in terms of facing weather related disasters next to Bangladesh (Buys *et al.*, 2007:38). Drought induced famine

and food insecurity became a persistent problem in the country especially following the 1972-74 famine. Following that famine successive Ethiopian governments have implemented different food security strategies to address issues of drought and food shortage faced by millions of Ethiopians. Decades of food security programming have assisted many and have undoubtedly saved lives; however, interventions fall short of expectation to achieve the objective of improving household food security for the majority of poor and food insecure households and food insecurity has remained a persistent problem in the country.

The decades long quest for food security in Ethiopia has culminated in Ethiopia's current Food Security Programme with the adoption of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in 2005 which is by far the largest programme implemented in the country. It is, therefore, the intention of this research to look into the situation of household food insecurity from local people's perspective within the framework of the current food security interventions notably the PSNP and OFSP programmes. The research aims to understand the link between people's perceptions and practices to cope with food insecurity on one hand and food security interventions by the government and the international community on the other. Local people's insights, perceptions and experiences regarding the issue of food insecurity and how interventions affect their food security status and strategies in dealing with food insecurity adds to the existing knowledge. Studying food insecurity from the perspective of local communities and households will contribute to a better understanding of how recurrent crises and the interventions by the government and the international community shape people's response options which are crucial to improve the lives and livelihoods of the rural people in the long-run. The PSNP is analysed in relation to other surrounding food security programmes notably the OFSPs. Efforts are also made to explore earlier attempts to attain household food security since these are integrated in the present policy and because memories of these programmes shape people's responses to current interventions (Hilhorst, 2003).

Before presenting the objective and research questions, the next section of this chapter will introduce the problem of food insecurity from a global perspective and for Ethiopia in particular.

Background to the research

Global food insecurity

Despite significant economic and social progress in the second half of the 20th century, the number of undernourished people in the world remains unacceptably high (FAO, 2010; Asfaw et al., 2011). According to FAO's estimate there were more than a billion undernourished people in the world in 2009. About 98 percent of the world's food insecure and undernourished people live in developing countries. The region with the largest number of undernourished people is Asia and the Pacific. The highest proportion of undernourished people is, however, found in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2010 about 30 percent of the total population of Sub-Saharan Africa was reported to be undernourished (FAO, 2010).

Food insecurity in Africa

Over the last couple of decades, food security has become a key issue in the development debates in Africa. This is mainly because of the fact that food insecurity threatens a considerable proportion of the continent's population. This has resulted in a wide array of efforts to address food insecurity and to ensure access to food necessary for people to lead

active and healthy lives (ECA, 2009). Despite the intention and great emphasis on the food production sector very little progress has been made to reduce the number of hungry people. As a result, food insecurity remains a persistent problem in Africa, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (IFPRI, 2004; FAO, 2006; ECA, 2009).

Africa's per capita agricultural production decreased steadily in the period 1965-1994. Between the early 1970s and 1990s, the performance of Africa's food sector was marked by a declining trend in per capita production, resulting in a growing dependence on commercial imports (Sijm, 1997). During the 1990s, Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) produced less food per person than three decades earlier (FAO, 1998; 2006). The overall performance of SSA during the 1970-1990s was generally characterized by declining agricultural productivity, increasing dependence on imported food aid as well as increasing incidence of food insecurity and under nutrition (Sijm, 1997). Efforts to reduce hunger in the region have been hampered by natural and human-induced disasters, including conflicts and the spread of HIV/AIDS. As a result, Sub-Saharan Africa remains one of the most food insecure and undernourished regions in the world (FAO, 2008).

The causes of food crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa are various and complex. The principal factors contributing to the failure of Sub-Saharan African countries to sufficiently feed their own population include severe environmental degradation, rapid population growth, low productivity of the agricultural sector, absence of viable food security policies, limited access to infrastructure and basic services, civil war, unstable macroeconomic environment and inappropriate government policies. Recently, surges in the prices of staple foods and oil crops aggravated the situation (FAO, 2008; ECA, 2009; Tolossa, 2005).

Food insecurity in Ethiopia

Ethiopia, as part of Sub-Sahara Africa, is not different from other countries in the region in terms of facing serious challenges both from environmentally induced crises and demographic and socio-economic constraints which adversely affect peoples' production systems. The country is characterised by extreme poverty, high population growth rate, severe environmental degradation as well as frequent droughts. The Ethiopian economy is dependent on low input and low output rain fed agriculture and dominated by small holder farmers. Agriculture employs more than 80 % of the labour force and contributes for 41 % of the GDP and 70 % of the total export earnings (Diao et al., 2007). Despite its socio-economic importance, the performance of agriculture in the country is poor and characterised by low and declining productivity which is caused by a combination of both natural and human induced constraints. The productivity of the agricultural sector is among one of the lowest in the world with the country unable to adequately feed its population from domestic production (Devereux 2000; Del Ninno et al., 2005; MoFED, 2006). This has contributed to food insecurity, both chronic and transitory, and has become the defining characteristic of life for a significant proportion of the country's population.

Food insecurity in Ethiopia is a long-term phenomenon caused by a combination of multiple and intertwined factors. They involve both short-term and long-term structural factors which include population growth, land degradation, diminishing of land holdings, lack of non-farm technological innovations, lack of alternative income sources outside of agriculture, unreliable rainfall pattern, poor infrastructure and limited credit facilities in rural areas (Devereux, 2000; FAO, 2001; Wisner et al., 2004, Negatu, 2008). As a result, Ethiopia is characterised by large food self-sufficiency gap at national level and food insecurity at

household level (World Bank, 1992; Getachew, 1995; Markos, 1997; OSSREA, 2002; EEA/EEPRI, 2004; FAO/WFP, 2006; Negatu, 2008).

Food crises and famines, however, are not new to Ethiopia. According to historical documents, Ethiopia has faced more than forty severe famine disasters over the last century. Among these the ill-famous famine known as '*kifu ken*' (Evil Day) which took place between 1888 and 1892. '*Kifu ken*' affected almost all regions of Ethiopia and had a devastating effect. Based on some historical documents, the famine took the lives of one third of the total population and ninety percent of the cattle population (Pankhurst, 1985). There were also other severe famines that occurred in the country in the second half of the 20th century. The most notable ones are the 1972-74 and the 1984-85 famines in the northern parts of the country. Other recent food crises were recorded in 1999-2000, 2002-2003, 2008 and 2011 (Kehler, 2004; Lautze and Raven-Roberts, 2004; White, 2005; Devereux, 2009; OCHA, 2008, 2011).

According to Devereux (2000) Ethiopia has been structurally food deficit at least since the early 1980s. During the 1980s, around 52% of the Ethiopian population consumed less than the recommended daily food intake of 2,100 kcal (Clay et al., 1999: cited in Devereux, 2000). More than half of Ethiopia's farming households did not produce enough to satisfy their basic needs and lacked the means to purchase food at local markets if available. As a result, over 50 percent of the Ethiopians at national level (37 percent in urban areas and 52 percent in rural areas) were food insecure (Negatu, 2008).

People's responses to food insecurity

In Ethiopia, the frequency of environmentally induced crisis, mainly drought, has resulted in the erosion of households' productive assets. Moreover, it has undermined the vitality of production systems, hampered investments in agriculture and caused insecurity for millions of farmers (Negatu, 2008; Sharp et al., 2003; Webb and von Braun, 1994).

In such a disabling environment, poor people are forced to deploy multiple means to survive. This includes agricultural production, temporary employment, home industries, migration to urban areas, reliance on remittances and help from kin and neighbours. In addition to these activities, food insecure households also liquidate their productive assets compromising future well-being in order to survive the food scarcity problem (Barrett, 2006).

Food Aid in Ethiopia

Apart from household coping strategies, the government responds to food insecurity with the provision of food aid. In Ethiopia, food aid has been an important way of tackling food insecurity with food aid constituting about ten percent of the total annual food availability in the country (Negatu, 2008). Over the last three decades a large proportion of the Ethiopian population has been receiving imported food aid and relief support to cover part of their food shortages. Following the Great Ethiopian Famine of 1984-1985, for example, more than 5 million people have received food aid in the country on annual basis, indicating a situation of chronic food insecurity. Since 2009, it is also estimated that more than 8 million Ethiopians suffer from chronic food insecurity and are receiving safety net transfers to cover their food gaps (Tolossa, 2005; MoARD, 2009). This makes Ethiopia one of the highest food aid recipients in the world (Lentz and Barrett, 2004; Asfaw et al., 2011). Official statistics indicate that Ethiopia received 795 thousand metric tonnes of food aid annually between 1990 and 1999, and 997 thousand metric tonnes between 2002 and 2003 (MoARD, 2004; Samuel, 2006).

Structural responses to address food insecurity started in the mid-1970s when the northern part of the country was affected by severe famine. However, since the mid-1970s, Ethiopia's response to recurrent food crisis has conventionally been dominated by emergency food relief system based on annual appeal mechanisms. It is argued that responding to chronic needs with emergency assistance may have saved lives but failed to address the root causes of food insecurity (Raisin, 2002). Evidence over the last 30 years show that decades of interventions have not led to the creation of sustainable assets at household or community level to tackle the problem of food insecurity (Hoddinott et al., 2011; MoARD, 2009). Despite massive resources invested in the form of food aid or cash food insecurity has remained as a persistence problem in Ethiopia for several decades (Hoddinott et al., 2011). The country has remained among one of the most food-insecure in the world with nearly half of the population being undernourished (WFP, 2006; FAO, 2011). In the Ethiopian context, therefore, it was always questionable if the continuous boom in food aid (regardless of cash or food) was the solution for the long standing food insecurity and poverty crises in the country. In an attempt to move away from a system dominated by emergency relief to address chronic food needs, the Ethiopian government with the support of the international community and donor agencies introduced the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in 2005.

The Productive Safety Net Programme (the PSNP)

The PSNP is one of the main components of the Ethiopian government Food Security Programme (FSP), together with Other Food Security Programmes (OFSP) designed to achieve household food security. It has been designed to enable food security programming to protect chronically food insecure households from hunger and asset depletion. The aim of the programme is to lift households out of poverty and food insecurity as well as to break the cycle of dependence on food aid. The PSNP is an attempt to address the basic food needs of the chronically food insecure households in the longer term. The programme provide six months of food and/or cash transfer annually to chronically food insecure households in chronically food insecure districts. It is designed to prevent asset depletion at the household level and to create assets at the community level through shifting a system dominated by emergency humanitarian aid to a system based on multi-annual, predictable resources for a predictable period of time (MoARD, 2004). The purpose of the PSNP is to improve the effectiveness and productivity of transfers to food insecure households thereby reducing households' vulnerability, promoting sustainable community development and consequently addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity (De Gramont *et al.*, 2007).

As opposed to the previous food security strategies which were based on emergency annual appeal process, the PSNP is based on a predictable resource for a minimum of at least five years to make sure that resources are available to beneficiary households throughout the year. It has two main components. The first one is the labour intensive Public Works component which makes resource transfers available for able-bodied household members on the basis of their participation in public works. The second component is a Direct Support component for chronically food insecure and vulnerable households who have no labour or any other means of support and who therefore are not expected to participate in public works (MoARD, 2004). The PSNP initially started in 2005 by assisting five million chronic food insecure people living in 262 chronically food insecure districts. In 2009, the PSNP program has expanded to reach a total of about 8.3 million chronically food insecure people in eight regions. The total number of beneficiaries of the PSNP has increased partly because of the geographical expansion of the PSNP into pastoral areas previously not covered by the safety net

programme. However, this number was expected to decrease over the course of the program by assisting household to ‘graduate’ out of the PSNP programme - a term used to describe ‘the movement of households out of dependence on safety net support’. Graduation means that the household is no longer chronically food insecure and also has the economic resilience to resist from falling back into chronic food insecurity in the future. (MoARD, 2004, 2009; Devereux *et al.*, 2006; De Gramont *et al.*, 2007).

Another important feature of the Food Security Programme is that PSNP beneficiary households are expected to benefit from other complementary development interventions called the Other Food Security Programmes (OFSPs). This programme provides asset building support, mainly in the form of credit, that aim to lift households out of poverty and food insecurity and take households into successful ‘graduation’ (MoARD, 2006). The OFSPs aimed at building household productive assets while the PSNP intends to smooth household food consumption (MoARD, 2004).

When the PSNP was started in 2005, it was expected that chronically food insecure households who would benefit from both PSNP and OFSPs would have achieved food self-sufficiency (as defined by the government food security document as the ability to meet household food needs for all 12 months so that they are able to withstand modest shocks in the absence of external transfers (MoARD, 2007:1)) and could therefore graduate from the safety net (MoARD, 2004, 2009; Devereux *et al.*, 2006; De Gramont *et al.*, 2007). However, by the end of the first phase of the programme in 2009, the rate of graduation was very low with only 56,895 households having graduated from the safety net; a mere 9 percent of the total PSNP beneficiary households (MoARD, 2009). This low rate of graduation demonstrates the fact that graduating households into self-sufficiency is a longer-term and more complex process than it was anticipated at the beginning of the PSNP programme in 2005 (FAO/WFP, 2010). In 2009, therefore, the government renewed the food security programme for another five years period (2010-2014) with the aim of strengthening households’ capacity to generate income and increase asset holdings to enable households’ graduation from the programme by the year 2015. In the new phase, the PSNP programme remains the same while there is a slight modification on the OFSP programme. The OFSP is replaced by the Household Asset Building Programme (HABP) while a new programme called Complementary Community Investment (CCI) has been introduced (MoARD, 2009). However, as revealed by results of the first phase of the PSNP programme, short-term safety net programmes have only limited potential impacts given decades long persistence of poverty and food insecurity in the country. The issue of addressing food insecurity in the country, therefore, needs to place PSNP within a long-term social protection policy that can address the vulnerability and chronic food insecurity of a large number of the poor. (This will be elaborated further in chapter seven).

Objective

The overall objective of the research is to provide insights into how chronically food insecure households cope with food insecurity and build self-resilience at the household level within the framework of the government food security intervention.

More specifically the research explores the situation of households’ food insecurity within the framework of the PSNP and OFSP programmes for a better understanding of Ethiopia’s food crisis situations and analyse the impact of the PSNP and OFSP programmes on household food security.

Credit is an important aspect of the OFSP programme and it is often assumed that credit is essential for dealing with poverty and food insecurity. For this reason the research explores the potential role of credit and analyses the role of credit in rural livelihoods. In doing so the research explores how the food security programme affects the role of credit in rural livelihoods.

The research also deals with the issue of the dependency syndrome. In Ethiopia, because of decade's long availability of food aid in the country, there is a tendency to attribute a dependency syndrome to people as one of the reasons explaining the persistence of poverty and food insecurity. By analysing local people's strategies and attitudes in an integrated manner, and by exploring the impact of long-term provision of food aid on peoples' lives and livelihoods, this study contributes to a better understanding of the contradictory understandings of dependency and the so-called dependency syndrome.

Research Question

The research tries to answer the question why households are food insecure despite the implementation of different food security interventions designed to achieve household food security.

More specifically, the research tries to answer the following questions:

1. What is the contribution of the PSNP and OFSP programmes to household food security and in building household capacities for self-resilience to future shocks?
2. What role does microcredit plays in terms of improving the livelihoods of poor households within the framework of the Ethiopian Food Security Programme?
3. How do people perceive the role of food aid in their livelihoods and how does this relate to notions of dependency syndrome?

The study area

This section introduces the study area in terms of its geographic location, climate, agro-ecological zonation and cropping pattern as well as its main socio-demographic characteristics. The section also provides the justification for the selection of the study area for this research.

The Study Area

The study was undertaken in Ebinat district, South Gondar administrative zone of Amhara region. Ebinat district is one of the 12 districts of South Gondar administrative zone of Amhara region with an estimated area of 2494.27 square kilometres divided over 35 rural and 2 town Kebele administrations. A Kebele is the smallest administrative structure in Ethiopia below the district. The district is located some 714 km north from Addis Ababa, the national capital, and 122 km from the regional capital Bahir Dar. Ebinat district borders Dahina, Bugna and Lay Gayint districts to the East, Libo Kemkem district to the West, East Belesa district to the North and Northeast and Farta district to the South and South West (see figure 1 below).

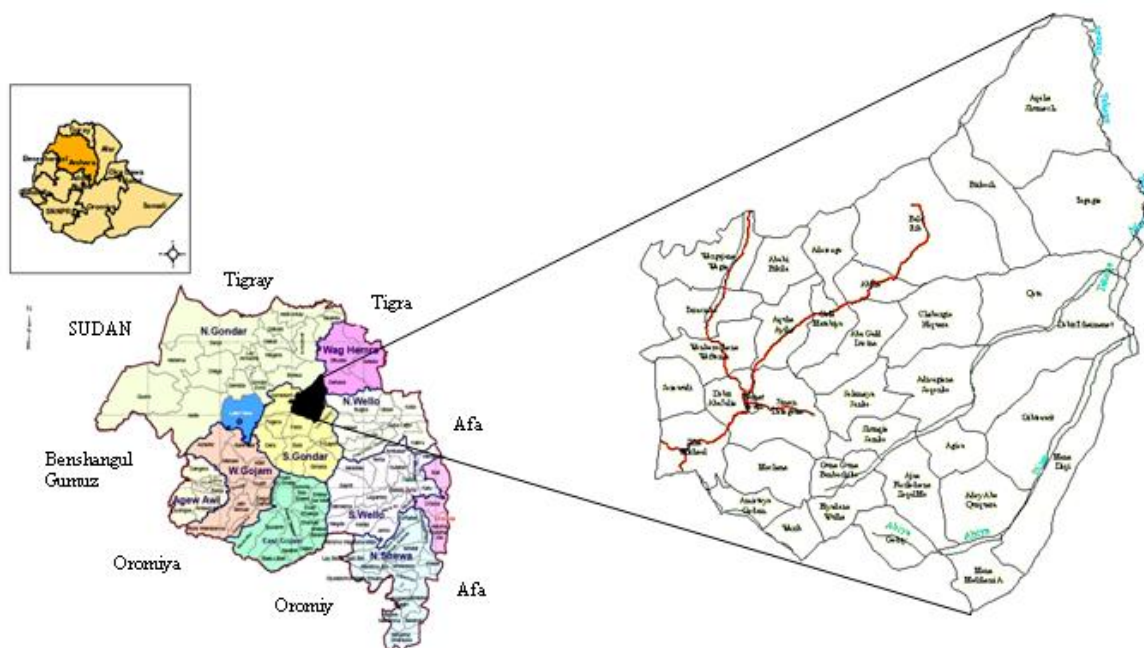


Figure 1: Location of the Study District

Climate and Topography

The district is characterised by a rugged topography interrupted by plains. The altitude ranges from 1500 to 2150 meter above sea level. The district comprises of three agro climatic zones which includes highland (dega), midland (weyna dega) and lowland (kola) and these account for 15%, 50% and 35% of the area respectively. The district surface configuration is composed of four different types of landforms and consists of mountains, rugged area, plains and deep valleys representing 45%, 30%, 15% and 10 % respectively¹.

Rainfall data from the district metrological stations shows that the district receives an annual average rainfall between 500 and 600 mm per annum. The average annual temperature ranges from 10 °C in the coldest season to 30 °C in the dry season.

Like other parts of Northern Ethiopia, the district has seen extensive deforestation. The remaining woodlands are characterised by mixed vegetation types consisting of Podocarpus, Juniperus and Acacia wood lands. The vegetation cover has been cleared for different purposes including for farming, fire- and construction-wood collection. According to the district, District Agricultural and Rural Development Office (WARDO), the soil types of the district can be broadly classified in to two major soil types, 65 % of the soil is classified as sandy and 35 % as clay.

Demography and Economy

According to the 2007 Population and Housing Census report, the district has a total population of around 221,000 accounting for about 1.3 percent of the population of the Amhara Region. The male and female population composition of the district was 112,552 and 108,403 respectively giving a sex ratio of 103.8 (CSA, 2007). Over ninety percent of the district's population lives in the rural area. The overall population density is 89 persons per square kilometre. According to records kept by the district's Agricultural and Rural Development Office, the average family size of the district is amongst one of the highest in the region with an average of 5.5 persons per household.

¹ Woreda Agricultural and Rural Development Office report, 2001 E.C.

The majority of the population of the district belongs to the Amhara ethnic group (about 95 percent), followed by the Agaw. The majority of the people are Orthodox Christians (85.5 %) followed by Muslims (12.2 %) and Protestant (2.2%) and others account for about 0.1 % of the population of the district².

The average landholding size per household is 0.90 ha which is not enough to adequately feed an average household size of 5.5. The district is one of the major chronically food insecure districts of Amhara region. Food insecurity in the study area is generally a long-term phenomenon caused by a combination of both natural and man-made factors which includes lack of alternative income sources outside agriculture, unreliable rainfall pattern, land degradation, lack of modern agricultural inputs and limited credit facilities. The vulnerability of the district is further increased by environmental degradation, frequent droughts, dependence on unpredictable weather conditions, poor soil fertility, fragmentation of land and population pressure. As a result, the district experiences both chronic and acute food insecurity problems since the early 1980s. From the mid-1980s onwards a large number of people in the district are dependent on food aid to cover part of their household food gaps.

The farming system is characterised by sedentary mixed farming with crop production and animal rearing. The main annual crops in the lowlands include *Teff* (*Eragrostis tef*), peas, sesame, lentil and barley. The major crops in the high land areas include beans, peas, lentils, wheat and barley. Coffee, chat (*Catha edulis*; a narcotic plant), onion and fruit are the major cash crops of the district and contribute to household income. The dominant types of livestock found in the highland areas include cattle, sheep and horses as compared to goats and cattle in the lowlands. A large number of the population of the district is also engaged in non-farm activities including wage labour in the nearby towns. However, food production and farm and non-farm income earning opportunities are found to be insufficient to attain household food security for the majority of the population. As a result, large number of the population is food insecure and is depending on government and non-governmental resource transfers to cover annual household food shortages. According to information obtained from the WARDO about one-fourth of the population of the district received aid from the government during the 1980s and 1990s. Official documents also show that since the introduction of the PSNP programme in 2005 on average about 34 percent of the rural population of the district received PSNP transfers (about 74,400 people).

The Selection of the District

The selection of the study district for this particular research derives from a number of reasons. First and foremost is the researcher's interest to work in an area where chronic food insecurity has been prevalent. Second, the area has a very long history of aid where people have been provided with relief food for long period of time beginning from the mid-1980s. Third, unlike the drought prone areas in the Northern part of the country (like Wollo) which attracted a large number of foreign and domestic researchers, there was no similar academic research undertaken in the study area in the food security domain. Therefore, it is the researcher's hope that undertaking this kind of research in the area will contribute in bridging the knowledge gap in food aid and food insecurity literature in Ethiopia and will be instrumental in contributing for a better understanding of the Ethiopian food crisis situation.

² Woreda Information Office report, 2001 E.C

Selection of Study Kebeles and Communities

This research is interested in an in-depth analysis and understanding of how the food insecurity situation affects the livelihoods of the rural poor and how food security programming is designed to take households out of poverty and food insecurity.

The study focuses on two Kebeles out of a total of 32 rural Kebeles of Ebinat district. The main criterion for selecting these two Kebeles has been the joined implementation of the PSNP and the OFSP programmes in order to explore their interrelated nature and planned positive food security outcomes. The district Agricultural and Rural Development Office has been consulted to identify the two Kebeles. Selection criteria also took into account a number of other factors including accessibility of the Kebeles, agro-ecologic conditions and the level of food insecurity. Accordingly, Worgaja and Mecheda Kebeles were selected (see figure 2 below). Two Kebeles have been selected for the study in order to avoid making very locally specific explanations of the issue under investigation.

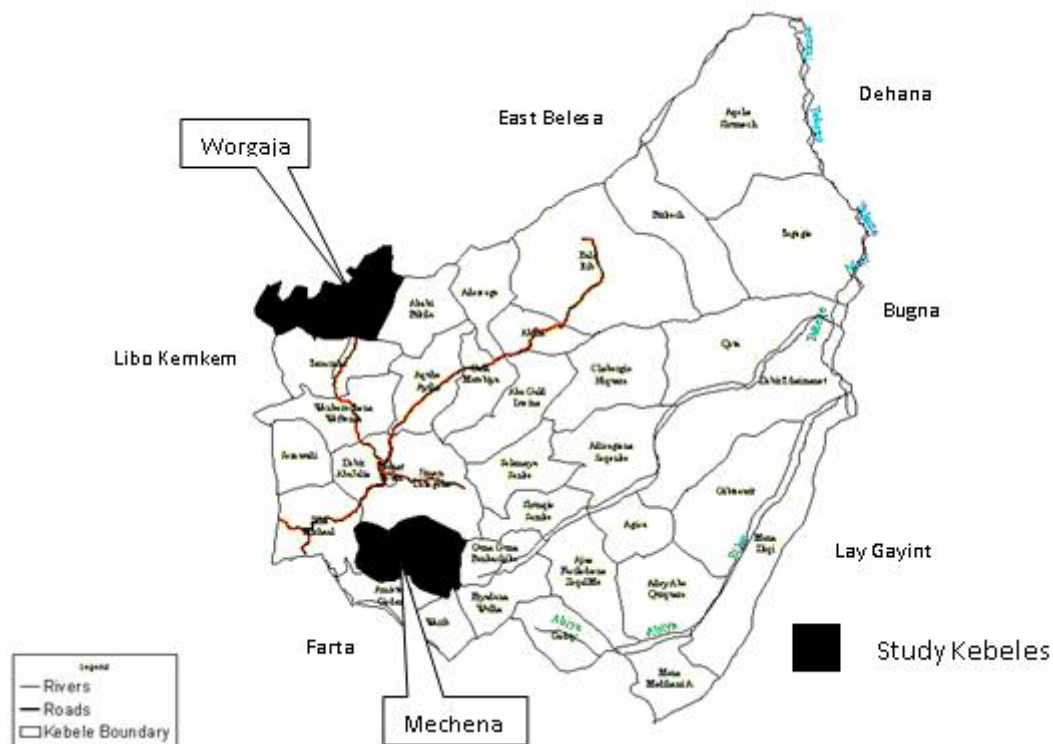


Figure 2: Location of Study Kebeles

A Kebele typically comprises of several communities. The intention of the research is to understand the situation of households' food insecurity; the livelihood strategies households adopt to offset the problem of food shortage and the contribution of the country's food security interventions. Therefore, considering the whole Kebele for in-depth investigation was impossible given the time and resources available and the geographical extent of a Kebele. As a result, from each Kebele, one village has been selected for in-depth investigation. Preliminary visit of the selected Kebeles have been undertaken before selecting the case study communities. Discussions with the community elders, Development Agents (DAs) and Kebele administrators of the respective Kebeles have been conducted to help select the case study villages. A rapid rural appraisal (RRA) has been conducted to get acquainted with the area and to have a better understanding of the community to help guide

the village selection process. In the RRA, apart from direct observation undertaken by the researcher, people from different groups of the community were invited to come together for a discussion about the situation of food insecurity and regarding people's livelihoods. In selecting the village, the main consideration was the *gott* (the smallest community group) where the largest number of poor people is living and where food insecurity is believed to be more prevalent based on the results of the discussion. This has been undertaken during the first phase of the research. Accordingly, *Begemidroch* village in *Mechena* Kebele and *Faresgie* village in *Worgaja* Kebele have been selected for in-depth investigation.

Set-up of the research

In this section the research methodology is introduced, in particular the household selection criteria, the data collection methods and the analysis of the data.

Research design and Pilot Study

This study adopted ethnographic research and was carried out over a period of 18 months. Ethnography aims to study social processes in everyday settings by depicting the activities and perspectives of actors in that setting (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 23-24). Ethnography is mainly known for its key method of participant observation (Geertz, 1983). However, it can also be used in combination with other techniques to collect relevant data (Riemer, 2009). Generally, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gain a good understanding of the people's livelihoods, their food insecurity situation and people's livelihood strategies and how they made use of available food security interventions. Secondary data were collected from regional and district agricultural bureaus and other relevant offices to support the primary data.

Prior to the start of the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the food security situation of the people and to have general understanding about the area. The pilot study was also helpful to identify key resource persons and to guide the criteria for selecting the study villages, and for logistical planning purposes. During the pilot phase of the research, research assistants were selected and trained on how to administer interviews. Research assistants were selected based on their familiarity of the study area and good reputation with members of the community. The pilot study was also useful in testing the survey instruments and to refine the interview questions. The pilot study was also instrumental to establish contact with the people and develop some initial trust. This is important as the local population is known to distrust newcomers. During the initial stages of the research, particular attention was therefore given to develop good relations with the villagers as this is an important pre-condition for conducting an ethnographic research. Trust allows for better interaction between the researcher and the community and enhances the quality and credibility of information collected from the respondents.

The research findings are mainly based on information obtained from the local population. Therefore, adequate attention was given to make sure that people were telling their whole story and not only particular parts of it. In this regard, the researcher's in-depth knowledge of the local language and culture was an important asset. The research was also designed in a systematic way. An important aspect of the methodology was to interview a selected group of households on a monthly basis to gain in-depth understanding of their livelihoods. These monthly visits were also instrumental to further strengthen trust.

In order to get reliable information, villagers were informed about the purpose of the research and the origin and background of the researcher. To ensure the independence of the research all participants were assured that their information would be treated confidentially. The day to day presence of the research team also helped to become fully accepted by the community which, no doubt, helped in obtaining credible information.

The actual research consisted of in-depth interviews (both recurring and thematic), key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observation. The research furthermore consisted of household surveys, with all households in the selected villages being asked an identical set of questions on a wide variety of topics.

Since the household is the main unit of analysis in this research, primary data were collected from household heads. Spouses and young adult household members were also included in the qualitative data collection process. While administering the monthly interviews and the household survey, direct observation was important to develop a deeper understanding of people's lives and their livelihoods.

Data Collection

Studying food insecurity and livelihoods in an integrated manner requires the use of different research methodologies to obtain different types of data at various levels. Primary data collection in particular requires a variety of research techniques designed to obtain complementary information. Accordingly, four main techniques of data collection were used for the collection of primary data: in-depth and key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observation and the use of structured household surveys.

Interviews

Both monthly in-depth interviews with selected households and key informant interviews were undertaken. These formed the main methods to collect qualitative data for in-depth understanding of people's livelihood and food insecurity situation. Peoples' knowledge, experiences and perceptions were discussed in individual interviews as well as in focus groups. Monthly interviews were held with the selected case study households over an 18-month period from February 2009 to July 2010. The monthly interviews consisted of two parts: a recurrent part on livelihoods and a thematic part.

Recurrent interviews

The recurrent interview deals with aspects of rural livelihoods. It repeated the same type of question every month and was designed to solicit information regarding basic household characteristics such as crop production, sources of income and gifts, expenditure, health situation as well as social interaction and participation in local organisations and religious and ritual activities. The information obtained through the recurrent interview was used to understand the nature and dynamics of livelihoods throughout the fieldwork period.

Thematic interviews

The thematic part of the interview, on the other hand, was undertaken in the form of in-depth interviews. The thematic interview was designed to collect information on a wide variety of topics that included household assets, food security situation and coping mechanisms. But also on government interventions, in particular the PSNP and OFSP programmes, the impact of credit and issues related to food aid and dependency syndrome. Interviews were conducted

by using interview guides. Some interviews were also tape recorded with the permission of the interviewees.

The qualitative data-base that was collected by employing both recurrent and thematic interviews was not used for statistical analysis. The selection of sample households was not done on the basis of their statistical representativeness. The sample size was small as the emphasis was on the collection of in-depth information to explore the diversity of livelihood patterns and dynamics at the household level. This was because it was only through such an approach that in-depth investigation of complex dynamics and interrelations could be understood and interpreted adequately, particularly when dealing with peoples' perceptions. The case description of such an approach is often more telling, insightful and convincing than statistical associations as one deal with perceptions reflecting personal opinions, attitudes and assumptions.

The selection of sample households for the monthly interview has been done as follows. Households were first categorised into two groups based on their PSNP status; that is PSNP beneficiary households and non-beneficiary households. Each category was further subdivided into three groups based on their wealth status, determined on the basis of discussions with community members, and classified as poor, middle or better-off households. Livestock ownership, land size and labour availability were found to be the key features of wealth in the district and thus used as the main criteria for determining a household's wealth status. The actual ranking of the households was done through a wealth ranking exercise by a group of community representatives. PSNP beneficiary households receiving Direct Support were treated as a separate household category in order to study the differential impact of the PSNP on Public Works beneficiary households. The research thus distinguished four groups of safety net beneficiary households and three groups of non-beneficiary households. From each of these seven groups a sample of four households were selected at random by making an alphabetical list and using a lottery system to select the study households. Each household in a category had, therefore, an equal probability of being selected. The total sample size was thus fifty-six households. These fifty-six households were studied in-depth to explore their livelihoods and the impact of the food security interventions on the household's food security status.

Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted with community leaders, development agents, health workers and Kebele administrators as well as with the district safety net coordinator, head of the agricultural office and administrator of the district. Apart from these, other knowledgeable people were interviewed at the district and regional level. In total about twenty one key informant interviews were conducted throughout the fieldwork period. Moreover, in order to assess the way people perceive aid and the way aid has influenced peoples' lives, life histories were recorded to gain a better understanding of how food aid has influenced households through time.

Focus Group Discussion

During the course of the field work, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted to explore peasants' perception of their livelihood, food security situation and impact of past and present food security programmes. In total eighteen focus group discussions were held with selected male and female headed case study households, Kebele administrators, and the Kebele and village food security task forces, village elders and with representatives of the local communities.

Participants of the FGDs were purposely selected on the basis of their knowledge of the study area and attention was paid for these groups to be representative for the local institutions and the community. Various topics were raised for discussion including people's perceptions, attitudes and practices with regard to the food security situation, coping mechanisms, dependence on food aid, the role of the safety net and other food security interventions including the provision of credit. Clear difference in opinion, experiences and knowledge amongst focus group participants were observed and this helped to explore particular issues as relevant to the research. In particular, discussions relating to agricultural productivity, wealth status of households, food aid dependency and the impact of the food security programme were key issues of debate.

Household Survey

The household survey was used to generate quantitative data regarding household characteristics and provided important insights into people's livelihoods, food security status, and coping strategies as well as about the government food security interventions. The general household survey was instrumental in providing insight into the livelihoods of the case study households in the two research villages.

The survey questions were designed to solicit for different types of information including on demography, household characteristics, socio-economic status, household assets, household production and consumption and the PSNP and OFSPs. Part of this information was used in the focus group discussions to validate the findings and contrast these across different household categories and stakeholders.

The structured survey questionnaires included open-ended questions to enable respondents to express their opinions and views in a comprehensive manner with an attempt to collect adequate information. The closed-ended questions, on the other hand, were designed to obtain factual information as relevant to the objectives of the study and the research questions.

The respondents of the questionnaire were the household heads, spouses and other adult members of the household. All 163 households living in the two selected villages were included in the survey. The survey was conducted from May to June 2009.

The questionnaire was initially prepared in English. Selected research assistants were briefed on the objectives of the research and the instruments used. During the briefing, all the questions were explained one by one so as to ensure that all research assistants had a clear understanding of each of the questions. The questionnaire was then translated into Amharic (the local language) by the researcher and two research assistants. Differential interpretations of the questions and un-clarities were discussed till common agreement was reached. Answers were documented in writing or taped and translated back into English for data entry and analysis.

After translating the questions into Amharic, training was given to the research assistants on how to administer the question to the local population. During the training, the assistants were strictly informed to take care not to misinterpret the questions while administering the questionnaire. Assistants were trained how to introduce themselves, ask the selected case study households for their participation in the research and explained that the data collected would be used in a strictly confidential matter for the purpose of research only. In this regard

the use of assistants knowing the local language and culture of the area has contributed to the collection of credible information.

Both male and female research assistants were used to administer the survey and household interviews. Accordingly, household interviews were undertaken by one male and one female assistant. Research assistants were trained to undertake the interviews by first observing and discussing how the main researcher conducted the interviews. With the research assistants having gained confidence, they undertook a number of interviews under the supervision of the main researcher. Then the research assistants continued to conduct interviews on their own with the main researcher monitoring the quality of the interview and the interview process at regular times.

Observation

Observation was conducted to supplement the data acquired by in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and household surveys. Direct observation was done while administering the in-depth interviews and household survey. Data collected through observation was used to better understand and be able to explain what is happening socially, environmentally, culturally and economically among the households and communities in the study area. Observation was particularly important as it provided a chance to observe important community based activities and issues under research in their natural setting that cannot be captured by interviews and household surveys.

Generally, observation in the field can be categorised into two types. The first one was general observation conducted by walking around the village, and observing people's daily practices and their interactions. This was particularly useful in observing things like the biophysical environment, peoples' life style and community relations. The second type was the observation of special events in particular those related to tradition, religion and culture. This kind of observation provides in-depth understanding of the cultural and social aspects of the community.

Secondary sources of data

Secondary sources of data were collected at various international institutions, the Forum for Social Studies in Addis Ababa and government offices in Ebinat district and Bahir Dar. Moreover, books, official published and unpublished documents, PSNP manuals, reports and policy papers were used as a source of information. Published census reports from the Central Statistical Authority were helpful to access data on the demographic characteristics of the population. Unpublished reports and other archival documents from the district and regional offices provided interesting background information on issues of food insecurity and important government initiatives including on its food security programmes.

Data entry and analysis

This research combines qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. The focus was clearly on qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to enable for in-depth analysis of complex situations and systems, in particular peoples' food insecurity situation and livelihoods at the local level. Data collected by using both qualitative and quantitative methods were checked for consistency through crosschecking the findings from different data collection methods.

The qualitative data collected by the in-depth household interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observations were transcribed, coded and entered into a computer. With the use of the MAXQDA programme, outputs were generated to facilitate data analysis. Outputs generated in this way were used to describe the food insecurity and livelihood situation of the people as well as their perceptions about the recurrent situation of food insecurity and the impact of the food security interventions on household food security. The quantitative survey data was also coded and entered into a computer using SPSS for data analysis. With the research being exploratory by nature, data analysis and presentation of the research results is mainly based on descriptive approaches.

In general, the process of data entry and analysis included the coding of the interview responses and observations, tabulation of the data and utilising the MAXQDA and SPSS data analysis techniques. Moreover, selected anecdotes which have been recorded during the interview process and focus group discussions were also presented in different parts of the analysis whenever deemed necessary.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is composed of seven chapters. Chapter two presents an overview of the main concepts and theories that are central to this research. It starts with the definition of the concept of food security followed by a discussion of the major paradigm shifts in the thinking on food security since the first World Food Conference of 1974. The major factors explaining the persistence of food crisis and famine in developing countries are introduced followed by a discussion on livelihoods and the livelihoods framework. In this research livelihoods are seen as comprising a set of assets, activities and the access to these assets and activities that determine individuals or households means of making a living (Ellis, 2000). The last section of the chapter presents a discussion on household livelihood strategies with the aim of guiding the main discussion of the thesis. The chapter argues that, in uncertain environments, better understanding of household livelihood strategies are important to understand how people respond to risks and uncertainties affecting their livelihood.

The role of the PSNP programme in household food security is presented in chapter three. This is done in the context of household labour availability. This chapter challenges the popular notion of development projects or safety net programme that demand labour contribution as a requirement for households' eligibility to resource transfers. To analyse the impact of the PSNP, the differential impact of the programme was studied by looking at different household categories based on their labour availability. The chapter analyses the labour absorption effect of the PSNP and OFSP programmes. The chapter shows how the labour absorption effect of the PSNP public works can force a particular group of households to abandon their own farm activities in favour of public works to secure short-term relief transfers which contributes to increase households' vulnerability.

In chapter four, the role of the PSNP and OFSP programmes in taking households out of dependence on external support is presented. The chapter starts with the conceptual definition of the concept of graduation. The chapter describes the rate of graduation in Amhara region in general and in the study area in particular. It shows that, rates of safety net graduations fell short of expectations during the first phase of the PSNP programme (2005-2009). Generally, the chapter describes the practice of graduation and shows some of the challenges of programme implementation as experienced at local level.

Chapter five looks at the role of credit in rural livelihoods; in particular in relation to asset building, agricultural productivity and household food security within the context of the Ethiopian government food security programmes. The chapter outlines the major types of credits available to households in the study area and shows how these different types of credit work at local level. The chapter reveals how credit falls short of enabling poor households to move out of poverty and food insecurity and how better-off and labour rich households used credit to improve their livelihoods. The chapter highlights that for poor households, rather than achieving long-term livelihood improvements, access to credit only means short-term consumption smoothing with a risk of being trapped into cycle of indebtedness. The chapter ends with outlining the effect of the government safety net programme on patterns of household's credit utilization.

Chapter six addresses the contradictory notion of dependency syndrome attached to long-term beneficiaries of food aid. This chapter explores the activities of food aid beneficiary households in an attempt to understand whether or not people modify their behaviour in anticipation of external aid. The chapter also shows how the dependency syndrome discussion has influenced the Ethiopian government food aid policy directions since the mid-1980s. The chapter focuses on the views and perceptions of food aid beneficiary households and analyses people's view vis-a-vis their activities in order to understand the extent of people's dependency on food aid. The chapter generally shows that food aid constitutes a very small amount as a share of households' overall food needs and reveals that food aid is just one of the many types of livelihood portfolio options utilised by poor and food insecure households to cover their food gaps.

Finally chapter seven presents the summary of the major results as well as a reflection of the methodology used in the research. This chapter also provides the general conclusions of this research and suggest recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two

Conceptual and theoretical framework

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the theories and conceptual discussions that are central to this research. The chapter elaborates the concept of food security and discusses the major paradigm shifts in the thinking on food security over the last three decades. The chapter especially gives emphasis to the major factors explaining the persistence of famine and food insecurity at household level. In addition to the decades long emphasis on the Food Availability and Entitlement Decline approaches as an explanation of the prevalence of famine, this chapter discusses a concept that Devereux (2009) explains as ‘response failure’. The discussion on response failure introduces an important dimension with regard to analysing why famine is still a threat in some countries. In the Ethiopian context a focus on response failure provides important insights for the analysis of households’ food security situation where the government is trying to address the decade’s long persistence of food crisis with its food security interventions that have been implemented since 2005.

The chapter also presents a discussion on livelihoods. Improving peoples’ livelihoods has been a major aim of development interventions over the last couple of decades and seen as essential to improve people’s capacity to deal with the threat of food insecurity. However, in many Sub Saharan African countries government policies have failed to effectively address the vulnerabilities of people’s livelihood system which led many countries to experience repeated shocks and forced them to appeal for humanitarian interventions (Devereux, 2009). A better understanding of rural livelihood systems and household strategies must be seen as crucial for interventions, designed to address livelihood vulnerabilities, to be effective in achieving their objectives. A livelihood is understood as comprising a set of assets, activities and the access to these assets and activities that determine an individual or household means of making a living (Ellis, 2000:10). The chapter also presents a discussion on the Sustainable Livelihood Framework. It highlights the major components of the livelihood framework and the factors that influence the functioning of a livelihood system in a given context. This is followed by a discussion of the shortcomings of the livelihood framework as an analytical tool to explore the complex realities of people’s livelihoods. Finally the chapter provides a closer look at households and household livelihood strategies in uncertain environments that forces households to employ diversified livelihood strategies to maintain and enhance their livelihood system. The chapter argues that for interventions to be successful in building people’s livelihoods an improved understanding of a household livelihood including its strategies and activities are crucial and that these need to be taken into account to effectively address the vulnerabilities within such systems.

Before presenting the discussion on livelihoods and livelihood framework, the following section of the chapter presents the concept of food security. This is followed by discussion of the major paradigm shifts in the thinking about food security since the mid-1970s. The last section presents the discussion on household livelihood strategies to guide the major discussion of the thesis.

The concept of food security

Food security as a concept was introduced in the 1970s as a result of the emerging international debate on food problems at a time of a global crisis which saw the proportion of malnourished population increasing throughout the world. By the early 1970s the number of undernourished people was estimated at 918 million (Cohen, 1997). This resulted in the First World Food Conference in 1974 which was convened by the General Assembly of the United Nations with the aim of finding ways for the international community to take action in

resolving the world food problem. The conference led to the adoption of the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition adopted on the 16th of November 1974. This declaration proclaims that “Every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop fully and maintain their physical and mental faculties” (UN, 1975).

During the mid-1970s the emphasis was placed on enabling every country to become self-sufficient in food to adequately feed its own population. The initial focus of attention was thus primarily on food supply problems, and more specifically on assuring the availability of basic food at the national level. As a result, the 1974 World Food Summit defined food security as: *“availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices”* (UN, 1975).

In the mid-1980s, however, the issue of entitlement was included in the food security concept following Sen’s (1981) theory on entitlement. Sen argued that sufficient availability of food in the market on an aggregate level in a country does not guarantee food security for all groups of people. The shift of focus of the concept of food security from inadequate supply of food at aggregate level to inadequate access to food at disaggregate level led to the emergence of a range of new definitions of food security. FAO, for example, adopted a new and broader concept of food security, which gave prominence to access, alongside production and stability of food supply and defines food security as: *“ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need”* (FAO, 2003).

In 1986 the World Bank in its report “Poverty and Hunger”³ elaborated the concept of food security further by defining it in terms of: *“access of all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life”*. Although occasionally slightly modified, this World Bank definition of food security has been widely accepted by many scholars as capturing the key aspects of food security. For example, in 1992 Maxwell and Frankenberger introduced a similar definition of food security as *“access by all people at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life”* (Maxwell and Frankenberger, 1992).

The 1996 World Food Summit also adopted a more complex definition of food security as: *“a situation in which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”*⁴. This definition is again refined further in The State of Food Insecurity 2001 which defines food security as: *“a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”*⁵.

In general there are as many as 200 different definitions of food security introduced by various scholars and organizations. However, for the purpose of this research the 1996 World Food Summit’s definition of food security is used.

³ World Bank 1986. Poverty and Hunger: Issues and Options for Food Security in Developing Countries. Washington DC.

⁴ FAO 1996. Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action. World Food Summit 13-17 November 1996. Rome.

⁵ FAO 2002. The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001. Rome.

The World Bank's definition includes four key dimensions of food security: availability, accessibility, safety and reliability. First it entails the availability of food (either through domestic production, storage or imports). The definition also emphasizes the importance of assessing food security at a disaggregate level of individuals or households i.e. accessibility by focusing on the achievement of food security by all people. Moreover, the definition also emphasizes the need to assess food security at all times that is both short- and long-term. Finally the phrase 'sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life' focuses both on the quantity, quality, reliability and stability aspect of food security issues (Sijm, 1997).

At the household level food security refers to the ability of a household to secure adequate food to meet the dietary needs of its members, either from its own production or purchase on the market using cash that might be earned from the exchange of self-endowments (Maxwell and Frankenberger, 1992). Households can also attain their food security on the basis of food or cash transfers from different sources. Benson and his colleagues (cited in Negash, 2001) define household food security as "*a household having assured sets of entitlements from food production, cash income, reserve of food or assets and/or government assistance programmes, such that in times of need the household will be able to secure sufficient nutritional intake for the physical well-being of its members*" (Benson *et al.*, 1986).

Food security: paradigm shifts

As mentioned above, food security as a concept originated in the 1974 First World Food Conference convened by the General Assembly of the United Nations. During that time the emphasis was on how to enable every country to become self-sufficient in food to adequately feed their population. This issue attracted the attention of a large body of scholars to identify and understand the factors responsible for the low productivity of agriculture in the developing countries and suggest ways on how to increase productivity at country level so that each individual can have adequate access to food. Beginning from the early 1970s the issue of famine, food crises and hunger became an important theme in academic research. This resulted in a large number of studies on food security and in particular on understanding and explaining the persistence of food insecurity in different parts of the world where food shortage was prevalent. This has contributed to the formulation of different food security approaches to the study of food insecurity.

According to Devereux and Maxwell, the thinking about food security since the World Food Conference in 1974 can be conceptualised as consisting of three important and overlapping paradigm shifts (Devereux and Maxwell, 2001; Devereux, 2009). These three paradigms shifts are:

- Shift from food availability decline to entitlement decline and to response failure;
- Shift from a 'food-first' perspective to a livelihood perspective; and
- Shift from objective indicators to subjective perception.

1. Shift from food availability decline to food entitlement decline and to response failure

Following the First World Food Conference in 1974 the initial focus reflected a pre-occupation with food supply problems and to some degree with price stability of basic food stuffs at the international and national levels. The emphasis was on increasing the volume of food availability at national level either through domestic production or through import to bridge the food gap. As a result the aforementioned 1974 World Food Summit defined food

security as “*availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic food stuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices*” (UN, 1975).

This definition clearly indicates that for a country to be food secure a nation needs to have sufficient food available for consumption either from domestic production or through imports from outside. Research during that period focused on understanding why agricultural productivity is slow and how to increase food productivity to assure food availability at the national level. This effort, therefore, leads to the emergence of the Food Availability Decline (FAD) approach.

Food Availability Decline (FAD)

According to the Food Availability Decline approach, food insecurity and famine are caused by declines or failures of aggregate food availability at either the local, regional or national level (Sijm, 1997). This approach is based on the assumption that food availability is primarily a factor of productivity which in turn is attributed to a number of factors like rapid population growth and the resultant land fragmentation as well as natural hazards (such as drought, flood, pest infestation, crop and livestock diseases).

This approach is useful in analysing famine as a consequence of production failure. As the population keeps increasing, agricultural production also need to increase to meet the increasing demand for food. A decline in food availability can lead to food crises and a food crisis can result into famine. For example, the 2001-2002 famine in Malawi was partly explained by the production failure of maize that occurred following erratic weather during the 2000-2001 farming season (Devereux, 2009). Therefore, the FAD approach provides an important insight with regard to the causal analysis of food crises and the occurrence of famine and thus provides a starting point for the emergence of the food security approach.

However, this approach has been criticised for a number of reasons. From the outset it was clear that widespread hunger could, and often did, co-exist with adequate food supply at the national and international levels. Food production on its own did not assure consumption, and that people need access to food (Devereux and Maxwell, 2001; Devereux, 2009). Critics argued that the FAD approach deals only with the supply factor, i.e. the availability of food. Sen (1981) argued that food shortage can occur without food availability decline at the national level, since the market demand can sharply rise over time (Sen, 1981). The FAD approach says nothing about people’s income and purchasing power that would be affected very much by fluctuations in market prices of food (Tolossa, 2005). The FAD approach has also been criticised for focusing on aggregate food availability at the national or global level and not at household level. These critiques led to the emergence of the Food Entitlement Decline (FED) approach as discussed below.

Food Entitlement Decline (FED)

The Food Entitlement Decline (FAD) approach was originally introduced by Amartya Sen to analyse the causes of food shortage and famine in developing countries. The FED approach is proposed as an alternative approach to the FAD approach. Soon after the World Food Conference in 1974, the global food situation changed remarkably and world cereal production increased considerably (Tolossa, 2005). However, despite these increases in supply the incidence of hunger and under nutrition remained high particularly in the developing countries. This situation led to the understanding that hunger and food security may not only result from a transitory lack of sufficient food supply at national or international

level but rather as a chronic lack of access to enough food by poor and vulnerable groups of people (Sijm, 1997). The FED approach assumes that, adequate food availability at global or national levels does not necessarily imply food security for all.

The FED approach, therefore, stressed the importance of the incidence of poverty in explaining why certain groups of people are hungry or undernourished. The FED approach, therefore, brought about a shift in famine analysis from the national to individual or household level. The entitlement approach states that, famine and other less acute food shortages are not necessarily caused by a lack of food supply, but that certain people suffer from hunger, under nutrition and starvation due to a lack of 'entitlement' or access to food (Sijm, 1997:88, Devereux, 2009). The FED approach suggests that aggregate food availability in the market does not ensure a person to consume enough food and that famine can occur even without aggregate availability decline (Sen, 1981) such as the Bangladesh famine of 1974, the Bengal famine of 1943 and the Ethiopian famine of 1973. Sen argues that households become food insecure because of entitlement failures rather than because of decline in food availability (Sen, 1981).

According to Sen, (cited in Sijm 1997: 89) the entitlement of a person can be regarded as the set of all alternative bundles of commodities that a person can obtain legally by using his or her endowments. These endowments can include both tangible assets like land, livestock or equipment and intangible assets like labour, knowledge or rights and duties due to being member of a particular community. Sen argues that, there are four possible sources of entitlements. These includes: own production (production based), exchange (trade based), own-labour, and transfer and inheritance (Sen 1981). A central concept in Sen's approach is the 'food entitlement failure', which refers to a situation in which the entitlement set of a person does not enable this person to avoid hunger and starvation (Sen, 1981). According to Osmani, (cited in Sijm 1997: 90) *"a famine occurs when a large number of people within a community suffer from such entitlement failures at the same time"* (Osmani, 1993).

Sen's FED approach is strong in its potential to identify which groups of people will be affected by declining availability or lack of access to food based on their degree of vulnerability. This aspect of the approach also makes it unique from the FAD approach which focuses on aggregate availability of food at the national level (Maxwell and Smith, 1992).

Like the FAD approach the FED approach has also been criticised. For example, it has been criticised for its failure to take into account intra-household food distribution and for excluding relief as a source of entitlement. Some criticise the approach for underestimating the importance of supply factor while others argue that Sen's approach neglects the importance of supply factors like poor infrastructure, poorly integrated food markets and high transportation costs. Others criticized the approach as having potentially dangerous policy implications because of its one sided diagnosis of food deprivation. Sijm for example fears that by focusing the attention on entitlement failure policy intervention may prioritise strengthening only the demand side through improving the food distribution system. However, this demand oriented intervention might result in neglecting the attention of improving the supply side which might have a serious implication especially for countries in Sub-Saharan African where per capita food supply is still low (De Waal, 1990; Maxwell and Smith, 1992; Devereux, 1993; Nolan, 1993; Sijm, 1997; Tolossa, 2005).

Apart from these criticisms, the entitlement approach still provides a good concept to analyse food insecurity as it helps to differentiate food entitlement failure across different socio-economic groups.

More recently Devereux (2009) also introduced another concept in the thinking of food security. He emphasises a shift to focus on 'response failure' as an explanation for the persistence of food insecurity and famine, particularly in Sub Sahara African countries. Response failure refers to a failure on the part of national governments and the international community in covering people's basic needs when affected by external shocks such as drought. The following section will elaborate this in brief.

Response Failure

The main argument behind the introduction of the concept of 'response failure' stems from the understanding that food insecurity and famines are a result of a complex web of factors. Devereux (2009) argues that a single factor explanation of famine is not adequate to understand the persistence of famine and food crisis in the twenty-first century. He argued that both the FAD and FED approaches explained above don't provide sufficient explanations as to why famine persists in the 21st Century. He argues that 'response failure, the failure to provide food or cash transfers to vulnerable people when exposed to shocks to cover their food gaps provides an additional explanation as to why famine and food insecurity still persists in some countries.

Response failure as an explanation for famine prevalence can be a result of different factors which include: lack of accurate and timely information, inadequate humanitarian response, political unwillingness of governments to protect vulnerable citizens and lack of or insufficient response from donors (Devereux, 2009: 28).

Lack of accurate and timely information mainly relates to problems of data accuracy and reliability while reporting potential impacts of a threat which is attributed to the absence of, or weakness in, early warning systems. This results in under-estimation of a potential crisis and the number of people affected by it which ultimately can lead to a miss-match between resource allocation and actual needs. Inadequate humanitarian response, on the other hand, takes the form of either very late or inappropriate forms of humanitarian responses which fall short of meeting the basic needs of victims (Devereux, 2009).

Political unwillingness of governments is a reflection of absence of democratic institutions. It is argued that fully functioning democracies protect citizens against famine and food insecurity. Amartya Sen, in his 1999 book entitled 'Development as Freedom', states the importance of democracy in the fight against famine and food insecurity. He argued that in a functioning multi-party democracy a famine has never occurred (Sen, 1999). In a functioning democracy it is every citizen's right to be protected from hunger and starvation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁶ (UDHR) of the United Nations also declared the right to food for everyone in its article 25 (1) which states that 'everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food'. According to Devereux (2009) the absence of a functioning democracy and lack of accountability on the part of national governments is a major reason for the failure of governments to prevent famine and explains why it still persists in some countries.

⁶ UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948.

Another dimension of response failure is the lack of, or inadequate, response from donors to help countries in crisis to address the threat of famine. In countries where governments have limited resources to deal with food crisis, the donor community is expected to play a major role in providing the necessary resources. However, availability of donor resources depends on the working relationship between donors and a national government. As indicated in Devereux (2009: 32), different studies show that donor's attention to particular crisis depends to a large extent on their own strategic interests (Darcy and Hofmann, 2003; Olsen *et al.*, 2003; Watson, 2007; Devereux, 2009). When there is no such interest or lack of a good working relationship donors' response to famine threats may be slow leaving poor countries to manage their problems with their own limited resource. For instance, the suspension of both emergency and development assistance to Ethiopia during the 2000 food crisis as a result of Ethiopia's decision to go to war with Eritrea in 1998 as opposed to donors' interest can be a good example to show how lack of good working relationship between national governments and donor agencies affect emergency responses (Devereux, 2009).

Devereux argues that a need to address issues of food insecurity and eradicate famine requires interventions that are designed not only to address vulnerabilities of people associated with production failure (as discussed in the FAD approach) and exchange failures (as proposed by the FED approach), but also a concerted effort to strengthen responses whenever the production and exchange entitlements are unable to provide for people's basic needs (Devereux, 2009).

In this thesis, therefore, since the aim of the research is to analyse household's situation of food insecurity within the framework of the Ethiopian government's Food Security Programmes notably the PSNP and OFSPs, the concept of response failure can provide significant insights to analyse whether or not the government's response in dealing with chronic food insecurity is sufficient enough to effectively address the decades long persistence of food crisis in the country.

2. Shift from a 'Food First' Perspective to a Livelihood Perspective

The shift from a 'Food First' perspective to a livelihood perspective is the second paradigm shift in the thinking of food security. The main reason for this shift of thinking are the empirical findings on food security, which shows that the response of the food insecure people to the problem of food shortage focuses on the long-term objectives of livelihoods rather than focusing on satisfying the short-term food needs. The conventional view of food security was mainly on food as a primary need. As Hopkins (cited in Devereux and Maxwell 2001: 18) argued that: *"food security stands as a fundamental need, basic to all human needs and the organisation of social life. Access to necessary nutrient is fundamental not only to life per se, but also to stable and enduring social order"* (Hopkins, 1986:4).

The assumption that people consider food as a primary need has been challenged by many scholars based on the recognition that food security is constituting part of peoples' wider livelihoods systems (Oshaug, 1985; Chambers, 1989; De Waal, 1991; Devereux and Maxwell, 2001). A well-known example of this has been provided by de Waal. In his study of the 1984-85 famine in Darfur, de Waal showed how Sudanese people chose to go to hungry to preserve assets and future livelihoods. As cited in Devereux and Maxwell (2001:18), de Waal explained that *"people are quite prepared to put up with considerable degrees of hunger, in order to preserve seed for planting, cultivate their own fields, or avoid having to sell an animal"* (De Waal, 1991:68). Many argue that people prefer to go to hungry

now, in order to avoid going more hungry in the future. However, Chambers and Davies argue that there is a broader issue of livelihood at stake, in which the objective is beyond satisfying nutritional adequacy (Chambers, 1988a; Davies, 1996). For example, Davies (1996:18) has pointed out the difference between the ‘food-first’ and ‘livelihood’ perspective approaches as shown in table 2.1 below. In the ‘livelihood approach’, as opposed to the ‘food first’ approach the objective is the management of risk and vulnerability, as people try to achieve secure and sustainable livelihoods (Chambers, 1988b; Chambers, 1997).

In the words of Oshaug (cited in Devereux and Maxwell 2001) *“a society which can be said to enjoy food security is not only one which has reached [a] food norm.....but which has also developed the internal structures that will enable it to sustain the norm in the face of crisis threatening to lower the achieved level of food consumption”* (Oshaug, 1985:5-13).

Table 2.1. Differences between a narrow ‘food-first’ approach and a wide ‘sustainable livelihood’ approach to household food security

	‘Food-first’ approach	‘Sustainable livelihood’ approach
Objective	Access to food	Secure and sustainable livelihood
Points of departure	Failure to subsist	Success in feeding, living
Priorities	Food at the top of the hierarchy of needs	Food one part of a jigsaw of livelihood needs
Time preference	Food needs met before and in preference to all others	Food needs met to the extent possible given immediate and future livelihood needs
Entitlements	Narrow entitlement base (current and past consumption; household defined)	Broad entitlement base (includes future claims, access to common property resources, etc); defined at household and community level.
Vulnerability	Lack or want of food	Defencelessness, insecurity, exposure to risk, shocks and stress
Security	Opposite of vulnerability is enough food, irrespective of the terms and conditions on which it is acquired	Opposite of vulnerability is security
Vulnerable groups	Based on social, medical criteria	Also based on economic and cultural criteria
Coping strategies	Designed to maximize immediate consumption	Designed to preserve livelihoods
Measuring and monitoring	Present and past consumption	Livelihood security and sustainability
Relationship to food security and environment	Degrade environment to meet immediate food needs	Preserve environment to secure future

Source: Davies 1996:19

As indicated by Devereux and Maxwell (2001:20), the result of this paradigm shift from a 'food-first' approach to a 'livelihood' approach, therefore, views livelihood security as a necessary and often sufficient condition for food security. This shift also emphasises the long-term viability of the household as a productive and reproductive unit (Maxwell, 1988; Frankenberger and Goldstein, 1990; Maxwell, 1991: 2). This study follows this argument and makes livelihoods a central aspect of the research (see below).

3. Shift from Objective Indicator to Subjective Perception

The third paradigm shift is from an objective indicator of food security to a subjective perception of food security approach. Before the emergence of the subjective approaches to the thinking of food security, the conventional approaches relied on objective measurements like levels of consumption, average required daily calorie intake or more generally a timely, reliable and nutritionally adequate supply of food (Siamwalla and Valdes, 1980; Reardon and Matlon, 1989; Staatz, 1990). However, a number of scholars state that these kinds of approaches to food security have problems for at least two different reasons.

The first reason is that most scholars argue that the notion of nutritional adequacy is problematic by itself. As explained by Payne and his colleagues (cited in Devereux and Maxwell 2001:20) any individual nutritional requirement is a function of age, health, size, workload, environment and behaviour (Payne and Lipton, 1994). Payne also argues that, estimates of calorie requirements for average adults and children with average activity patterns in average years are subject to constant revision (Payne, 1990). Therefore, estimating precise calorie needs for different groups in the population is difficult.

The second problem with regard to the objective measurement of food security results from omitting qualitative aspects of food security from the quantitative measurements. Important qualitative issues in food security include: technical food quality, consistency with local food habits, cultural acceptability and human dignity, and autonomy and self-determination (Oshaug, 1985; Barraclough and Utting, 1987; Oomen, 1988; Bryceson, 1990; Barraclough, 1991). The implication of considering these qualitative aspects of food security, according to Devereux and Maxwell is that nutritional adequacy is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for food security. Therefore, the idea of including qualitative aspects of food security suggests that, "it is not just the quantity of food entitlement that matters, but also its quality" (Devereux and Maxwell 2001: 21)

The absence of these qualitative aspects of food security in the conventional approaches thus led some scholars to stress the importance of the subjective dimension of food security. As a result, Maxwell defines the concept of food security by including the subjective perception as follows:

A country and a people are food secure when their food system operates in such a way as to remove the fear that there will not be enough to eat. In particular, food security will be achieved when the poor and vulnerable, particularly women and children and those living in marginal areas, have secure access to the food they want (Maxwell, 1988:10).

The meaning of household food security as perceived by the local people will, therefore, be explained further in the qualitative part of the research. In this regard the use of in-depth ethnographic research provides a unique advantage to capture people's perceptions. Sometimes, the feeling of being either food secure or otherwise is largely a matter of a household's own perception of fear of encountering food shortage.

In conclusion the aggregate effect of these three major paradigm shifts in the thinking of food security is, according to Devereux and Maxwell, a significant change in the food security agenda since the First World Food Conference in 1974. As a result of these paradigm shifts, the complexities of livelihood strategies in difficult and uncertain environments and the understanding of how people themselves respond to perceived risks and uncertainties gained much more emphasis in the food security agenda way beyond the narrowly defined concept of food availability decline in explaining food crises and famine as in the mid-1970s (Devereux and Maxwell 2001: 21). The following section provides a closer look at livelihoods and gives a detailed analysis of how people respond to risks and uncertainties affecting their livelihood and household food security.

Livelihoods

This section introduces the concept of livelihood and the livelihood framework as used in this research. The section also highlights the major limitations and constraints of the livelihood framework and explains why the livelihood framework remains relevant to explore and understand the complex nature of rural livelihoods. This is followed by a discussion on household and household livelihood strategies to better understand rural livelihoods (particularly activities and strategies households pursue to make a living) and how this is affected by the government's food security interventions.

The Concept of Livelihood

The concept of livelihood has been widely used in development literature over the last two decades. The Oxford English dictionary defines livelihood as 'a means of securing the necessities of life'. This definition by itself makes livelihood more than merely synonymous with income. Livelihood is not necessarily the same as having a job and does not necessarily even have anything to do with working. There is a general consensus that livelihood is about the ways and means of 'making a living'. De Haan argues that, obtaining a monetary income is an important part of livelihood, but it is not the only aspect that determines a livelihood (De Haan, 2000).

One of the most commonly used definition of livelihood stems from the work of Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway. For them, livelihood "comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living" (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Carney (1998) based on the work of Chambers and Conway presents another definition of livelihood as: "*A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base*" (Carney, 1998:4). For Ellis livelihood "comprises the assets, the activities and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social capital) that together determine the living gained by the individual or the household" (Ellis, 2000:10). All these definitions have in common that 'livelihood' deals with peoples, their resources, their activities and what they do with these.

This study adopts Ellis's definition of livelihood. This is because Ellis's definition emphasizes the notion of access and focuses on the institutions and social relations that determine people's access to assets and activities that constitute their livelihoods (Van Dijkhorst, 2011). In the Ethiopian context, and more specifically in the study area, the notion of access is one of the key determinants of household's food security. As opposed to Ellis's

definition of livelihood, this thesis will not adopt the pre-defined labelling of assets as 'capitals', which is more of an economic oriented approach, but focuses on aspects of access to assets and resources which determines the way people's livelihoods operates in a given context.

The Livelihood Framework

Livelihood as analytical framework to study and understand people's poverty and food security emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In 1998, Scoones expanded the livelihood concept to develop the Sustainable Rural Livelihood Framework to understand and analyse poor people's livelihoods (Scoones, 1998). After its introduction, many development institutions started use the livelihood approach as central to their programming (Scoones, 2009). In this regard, one of the most prominent advocates of the livelihood approach is the Department for International Development (DFID) which adopted the framework in 1999. Since then, the livelihood framework has been applied by many researchers to understand and study the complexity of rural livelihoods and household's status of food insecurity. The livelihoods framework adopts a broad view of the term livelihood as: "comprises the assets, the activities and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social capital) that together determine the living gained by the individual or the household" (Ellis, 2000:10).

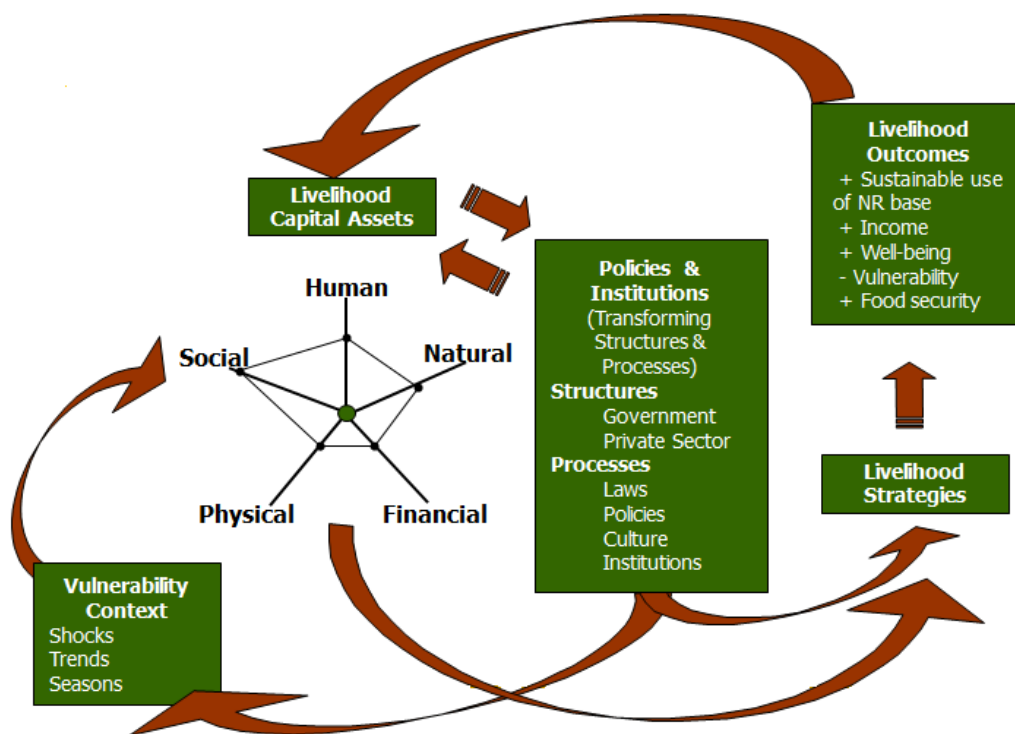
The DFID livelihood framework (see figure 2.1. below) emphasises that the starting point of the livelihood framework is people's vulnerability context. Shocks and trends are the main aspects of the vulnerability context as they directly impact on people's assets and their livelihood options. Shocks and trends are exogenous to households and local circumstances and directly affect the decision making environment and the outcomes of livelihoods (Ellis, 2000). The vulnerability context is followed by the livelihood assets that people possess to pursue different livelihood strategies. According to the livelihood framework, a household's livelihood strategy depends on the assets or resources it has access to. Assets are the basic units used by households to undertake different livelihood activities. In this regard, assets may be described as "*stocks of capital that can be utilised directly, or indirectly, to generate the means of survival of the household or to sustain its material well-being at different levels above survival*" (Ellis, 2000: 31). The framework then looks at the processes and structures that influence the use of the livelihood assets to generate livelihood strategies that finally results in particular livelihood outcomes (Twigg, 2001).

The livelihood framework approach recognizes human agency and examines the way in which household livelihood strategies are built (Hulme and Shepherd, 2003). The approach generally puts people at the centre of development. It is a holistic approach which recognizes the multiplicity of actors influencing livelihood strategy and outcomes. It also recognizes the fact that livelihoods and the forces that influence them are dynamic (Twigg, 2001).

The conceptual framework presented below generally seeks to capture the main components of rural livelihoods and attempts to explore and understand the many factors influencing people's choices of livelihood strategies. It is an appropriate model for observing livelihoods in all their aspects as it allows depicting the consequences of specific livelihood changes. However, it is difficult to capture all the dynamics of the livelihood system as it occurs in practice in such a diagram. This framework, therefore, cannot be said to be exhaustive: any conceptual framework is an oversimplification of the complex reality of the world we are

living in and should only be seen as a tool to view and understand part of the world (Rakodi, 2002).

Figure 2.1: The Sustainable Livelihood Framework



Source: DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Presentation (<http://www.livelihoods.org/info/Tools/SL-Proj1b.ppt>).

Though the DFID livelihood framework has been very popular, it has also been criticised for its shortcomings. One of the first critics of the livelihood framework comes from the use of the concept of assets which is labelled as capitals. It is argued that the definition of the capitals as used in the framework excludes cultural assets which are context based assets referring to non-productive assets that can enable or hinder households to pursue a certain type of livelihood or livelihood option. The way the capitals are defined stem from an economic perspective and ignores the non-economic aspects of livelihoods (Bebbington, 1999; Scoones, 2009). In line with this, for example, De Haan and Zoomers (2005), argue that livelihood is not only limited to material well-being but also encompasses non-material aspects of well-being. Bebbington has also summarised the holistic understanding of livelihood as:

A person's assets, such as land, are not merely means with which he or she makes a living: they also give meaning to that person's world. Assets are not simply resources that people use in building livelihoods: they are assets that give them the capability to be and to act. Assets should not be understood only as things that allow survival, adaptation and poverty eradication: they are also the basis of agents' power to act and to reproduce, challenge or change the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources (Bebbington, 1999:2022).

Another criticism to the livelihood approach comes from Kaag et al. (2004, quoted in Van Dijkhorst, 2011: 39) who argued that the livelihood framework ignores the complex dynamics of livelihoods and tries to capture social reality in an economic centred pre-defined scheme and diagram which could lead to ignoring risks, opportunities and constraints that can arise within a certain livelihoods system. Others argue that the framework doesn't give attention to politics and power relationships at the household level. Moreover, the framework's lack of rigorous attempts to deal with the challenges of climate change that increasingly affect livelihoods especially in developing countries became another point of criticism of the livelihood framework (De Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Scoones, 2009). The framework has furthermore been criticised for its assumption that livelihoods outcomes are always positive. In practice, however, the livelihood outcome can be either positive or negative (that is either sustainable or unsustainable). For example, household food insecurity is one of the unsustainable (negative) outcomes of a livelihood system. A livelihood is said to be sustainable if it is adequate for the satisfaction of self-defined basic needs and proof against shocks and stress (De Haan, 2000).

Though these criticisms of the livelihood framework seems to have reduced the value and application of the concept of livelihood as an analytical framework, I believe that the use of the concept of livelihoods and the livelihood framework in studying and understanding rural livelihoods, as well as in analysing household activities and strategies to determine the way people make a living, is still relevant and can provide meaningful insights in scientific livelihood studies. As it will be shown later in the empirical chapters, this is because the livelihood lens can also be used to understand the effect of policies and institutions that affect people's access to assets and resources that they use to make a living. In doing so, it is instrumental to explore how policies and institutions can determine livelihoods and livelihood strategies that households pursue to make a living (Majale, 2002).

This study is concerned with rural livelihoods. The livelihood framework explains that a household's livelihood is primarily determined by the household's vulnerability to crisis, shocks and stresses the available assets, the external environment (policies, institutions and processes) and available livelihood opportunities. To counter the crisis, shocks and trends, rural households pursue different livelihood strategies. Moreover, in addition to their main livelihood strategies, households also develop a mix of other livelihood sources called coping strategies. In this regard, households livelihood sources may include own food production (farming), diversification and multiple sources of cash incomes (non-farm income generating activities). In addition to these activities, government interventions can also make important contributions in support of people's livelihood strategies although this has not been elaborated as part of the DFID framework presented above. Through these livelihood sources, households generate a flow of food, income or other benefits that contribute to livelihood outcomes which is either sustainable or unsustainable.

One of the characteristics of a sustainable livelihood is long-term food security. In such a case a household meets its food requirements and other basic needs, through own production or by exploiting opportunities to run own non-farm ventures or work with somebody else. This capacity to sufficiently feed household members results in food security. Conversely, food insecurity is a result of unsustainable livelihoods and refers to a situation whereby a household is not capable to sufficiently feed its members from either its own production or purchase on the market.

It is possible to divide households who live with the anxiety of food shortage into two broad categories. Households that always face food shortages and subsequently face the threat of hunger are classified as chronically food insecure. The other group comprises households that face food shortages only when hit by shocks and disasters. These households are referred as acute or transitory food insecure. In this regard the difference among households can be explained by the difference in their degree of vulnerability to different types of shocks. Vulnerability in this sense refers to *“the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard. It involves a combination of factors that determine the degree to which someone’s life and livelihood is put at risk by a discrete and identifiable event in nature or in society”* (Wisner et al., 1994:9). This thesis, however, specifically focuses on chronic food insecurity as it deals with households supported by the Productive Safety Net Programme which exclusively targets chronically food insecure households.

In this thesis, the livelihood concept is adopted to help understand and identify the changes in a household’s livelihoods mainly as a result of the government’s food security interventions, in particular the PSNP and OFSP programmes. Understanding the livelihood framework is, therefore, crucial in analysing the livelihoods of the rural poor people and the interplay between their livelihood strategy and the government’s food security interventions. The concept of livelihood is adopted as constituting a set of assets and activities (including food and/or cash transfer as part of the PSNP programme) that people employ to make a living. Access to these assets and activities are influenced by the policies and institutions that influence the way people make a living. The challenge is, therefore, to understand how government interventions affect a households’ access to assets and activities and how this influences the household’s food security status.

Households and Household livelihood strategy

Households

In livelihood studies, a household has been taken as the unit of analysis as it is central in generating livelihoods for its members. A household is regarded as *“a site in which particularly intense social and economic interdependencies occur between a group of individuals”* (Ellis, 2000: 18). According to Moser (cited in Ali, 2005), a household serves as a buffer for members against individual vulnerability and is a key to the security of its members when external resources deteriorate (Moser, 1996).

The concept of household is rather complicated and is, therefore, defined in many different ways in the literature. In sociological research, for example, the household is seen as a social unit with complex dynamics (Mogey and Bachmann, 1986). A household is not a static unit but an entity restructured over time due to both internal and external factors like births, deaths, marriage, divorce, education, income, health care opportunities and housing problems. There is no universal definition of a households, Van Vuuren, for example, argues that a household contains many aspects that are difficult to combine in one clear definition and therefore, in defining a household the context in which the household operates should be taken into account (Van Vuuren, 2003:16). According to Beall and his colleagues the term “household” covers a wide range of residential forms and groupings of people, which makes a universal definition of “households” difficult (Beall *et al.*, 1999).

Among the many definitions given in the literature, a household, for example, is defined as “*a co-residential unit, usually family-based in some way, which takes care of resource management and the primary needs of its members*” (Rudie, 1995:228). For De Vries a household is “*a unit of co-residence and reproduction, of production and labour power, of consumption and distribution among its members, and of transmission across generations*” (De Vries,1994).

In the Ethiopian context, for example, according to the Ethiopian Statistical Office cited in (Negash, 2001:52), a household is defined as “*a group of two or more persons, who live together and make common provision of food or other essentials for living. The person in the group may pool their incomes and have a common budget to a greater or lesser extent. They may be related or unrelated persons or a combination of both*”. Although the functioning of the household is dependent on the patterns of sharing resources and expenses between the household members in order to fulfil the needs of the members, kinship also plays a major role in the formation and composition of households.

Generally speaking, though the term household is used to refer to all members of a household, the term has been criticised for neglecting intra-household differences as well as power relations (Niehof, 2004; Kaag et al., 2004, De Haan and Zoomers, 2005). I understand the critique that intra-household analysis is overlooked by household studies and it is also one of the limitations of this thesis. However, in this study I do take a household as the main unit of analysis as the emphasis of the study is on a household’s food security situation in terms of the provision of a household’s food requirement and other essentials to make a living. Households are also considered a convenient unit for the collection of empirical data.

In household studies, increased attention has been given to household activities and strategies as a means of capturing the behaviour of people (De Haan and Zoomers, 2005). The following section, therefore, discusses what household livelihood strategies mean at household level, the significance of livelihood strategies and how these strategies affect household’s status of food security.

Household Livelihood Strategies

Generally household livelihood strategies consist of different activities (crop production, livestock rearing, engaging in non-farm activities or migrating) that generate the means of household’s survival (Ellis, 2000:40). The choices and implementation of these livelihood activities depends on a number of factors including the vulnerability context within which they are operating, the degree to which an enabling or facilitating environment is in place and the availability and accessibility of household assets. Livelihood strategies, however, are not static and can vary according to time, season of the year and context. Ellis, for example, argues that, livelihood strategies are often complex and dynamic and may change rapidly in response to the changing pressures and opportunities (Ellis, 2000).

In order to maintain and enhance their livelihoods, households generally undertake a bundle of activities which they implement through different livelihood strategies. Strategy is defined as “*the overall way in which individuals, and possible collectivities, consciously seek to structure, in a coherent way, actions with in a relatively long-term perspective*” (Anderson et al., 1994:20).

Livelihood strategy as a concept is defined by various authors. For example Painter defined livelihood strategies as “how individuals, households or others corporate groups gain access

to, use and exercise control over any number of resources that they identify as important for their well-being” (Painter, 1996:79-80). Livelihood strategy is also defined as “the activities that people undertake and the choices they make to achieve their livelihood goals” (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003; Kaag et al., 2004).

A livelihood strategy is a realistic recognition of the multiple activities households undertake to insure their survival and improve their well-being (Rakodi, 2002). For De Haan, livelihood strategies are not singular activities, they comprise a large number of production and labour activities. De Haan argues that the poor in particular undertake multiple activities which provide them food, housing and a monetary income. These include production of crops, livestock, clothing and housing for self-consumption; the production of crops and livestock for sale; trade; handcrafts; seasonal or permanent wage labours; remittances by kin who have emigrated; loans and gifts (De Haan, 2000).

There is a large body of literature documenting the wide range of livelihood strategies implemented by the rural poor especially in times of crisis. In conditions where household food and income sources are under repeated threat, households do not respond arbitrarily to the variability of food supply they face. Depending on their wealth status and access to resource, households develop various ways of coping with temporary or permanent food shortages. Farm households develop different strategies to cope with the changing situation through time. Watts, for example, developed a model that shows how households respond to food shortages, the sequence of their response when they are faced with severe food shortages and the level of commitment of the household resources (Watts, 1988). In this regard Watts and others who argue that coping strategies are practiced in sequence agree on the following order moving from one to the other: adjustments in crop and livestock production, change in diet, use of famine foods, taking grain loans, labour migration, sale of livestock, sale of productive asset, pledging farmland, the sale of farmland and out migration (Corbett, 1988; Watts, 1988). However, Chambers, for example argues, that people’s response varies by region, community, social group, gender, age and season (Chambers, 1989). Still others disagree with the notion of sequence and argue that the mechanisms by which poor people respond to food insecurity is diverse and complex. It is also argued that, the type and pattern of livelihood strategies employed by households depends on the intensity and duration of the food shortage they faced (Davies, 1996; Yared, 1999).

Swift and Hamilton identified four major types of livelihood strategies practiced in rural households commonly. These are: livelihood intensification whereby production per hectare of land or animal production is increased through investing more labour, capital or technology; livelihood extensification where by production is increased by utilizing additional land or animals into the production system while keeping labour, capital or technology unchanged; livelihood diversification, in which households try to broaden their activities through a wider range of opportunities; and migration where people migrate temporarily or permanently in seeking of livelihood opportunity (Swift and Hamilton, 2001:86).

Intensification is a livelihood strategy that can be pursued by those farmers who have access to agricultural land as well as the means to put it to productive use such as labour and the resources to purchase essential inputs. Poor people who don’t own or have access to farm land, or who own a small plot of land, depend mainly on non-farm income earning opportunities (Niehof, 2004). Extensification is another livelihood strategy employed by peasant farmers. However, given the land holding size of most farmers in developing

countries especially in Sun Sahara Africa, extensification is only possible for a relative few households who have the opportunity to cultivate additional land.

Diversification is another important source of livelihood strategy for households to decrease livelihood vulnerability. It is becoming less common for people to earn their livelihoods from only one source. Livelihood diversification is defined as “*the process by which rural households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive and to improve their standard of living*” (Ellis, 2000:15). Since farming by its own does not provide a sufficient means of survival for many rural households, they are forced to depend on a diverse portfolio of activities and income sources. However, people diversify their livelihoods not only to cope with shocks and stress but also to maintain and enhance their livelihoods (Niehof, 2004).

Migration is another strategy pursued by the poor as part of their livelihood strategy and sometimes as a means of diversifying their livelihood sources. In situations where a household's production capacity is not sufficient to feed its household members and in the absence of government assistance or when the assistance is not enough to provide for a household needs, households are forced to migrate for wage labour. In this regard Ellis (2000) identifies four different categories of migration. The first category refers to seasonal migration, which is a temporary migration that occurs following the agricultural calendar. This kind of migration usually occurs during off-farm seasons. The second category is circular migration, which refers to temporary migration which is not related to seasonal factors but depends on the opportunity of cyclical needs in labour markets. The third one is permanent migration, which refers to the migration of the whole family or members of a family on a permanent basis looking for better opportunities outside their place of origin. In this regard, rural-urban migration is an example of permanent migration whereby the whole family or members of a family migrate from rural areas to urban centre. The last category is international migration that is when member of the family or the whole family migrate out of the country of origin on temporary or permanent basis (Ellis, 2000; Ali, 2005:56).

Survival, coping and adaptation strategies

From the rural livelihood strategy perspective, a number of concepts have also been used to understand how people, both in the short-term and long-term respond to the food crisis they face. The most important of these are *survival strategies, coping strategies, and adaptation strategies*.

In this regard, Griep argues that during normal times, people's activities are called livelihood strategies, but during times of crisis livelihood strategies temporarily take the shape of safety mechanism referred to as survival strategies (Griep, 2001). In times of crises, due to the increasing pressure from external sources, households develop additional sources of livelihood activities known as coping strategies. These are short-term or temporary responses to secure livelihood in periods of shocks and stress. Households do not respond arbitrary to variability in food supply; people whose main sources of income (and food) are at risk develop strategies to minimize that risk (Frankenberger and Goldstein, 1990:1). According to Davis, interest in coping strategy began particularly in the aftermath of the mid-1980s famines as a means of understanding why some people survived periods of famine, while others did not (Davies, 1996:46). According to De Haan, coping strategies are specific manifestation of the people livelihood (De Haan, 2000). Davies argued that, “*coping strategies are employed once the principal sources of production have failed to meet*

expected levels and producers have literally to 'cope' until the next harvest" (Davies, 1996:48).

Depending on the severity and length of the shocks and stresses, coping strategies later on fade away and are replaced by normal livelihood strategies. However, many researchers argue that because of the increased incidence of shocks and stresses and the continuing impact of climatic change one can no longer talk about "normal situations" and they therefore conclude that temporary or short-term coping strategies have become part of the daily life of people and have developed into more permanent adaptive strategies (De Haan, 2000; Griep, 2001). In this regard, Davies makes an important distinction between coping and adapting strategies:

Coping strategies are the bundle of producer response to declining food availability and entitlements in abnormal seasons or years, while adapting strategies involve a permanent change in the mix of ways in which food is acquired, irrespective of the year in question (Davies, 1996:55). Gore cited in Davies (1996:55) also argued that "*coping essentially means acting to survive with in the prevailing rule systems while adaptation refers to the change in the rule system itself*" (Gore, 1992:16).

However, some scholars argue that in the long run, the idea of adaptation disappears and the adaptive strategy is considered to be a normal livelihood strategy. In this regard, De Haan explains this concept of coping and adaptation as follows:

Because of the contextual shocks and stresses, livelihood strategies temporarily take the shape of safety mechanisms called "coping strategies". These are short-term responses to secure livelihood in periods of shocks and stress. However, because shocks and stresses appear more frequently, the temporary coping mechanisms developed in to more permanent "adaptive strategies", which is, in the long-run, considered to be a normal livelihood strategy. (De Haan, 2000:347-348).

In the Ethiopian context, it is argued that, under normal circumstances rural farmers depend on crop production, livestock rearing and on a variety of non-farm activities including migration. Most households in rural Ethiopia rely on diversified sets of activities to survive. In this regard, the major types of livelihood activities in rural Ethiopia can be categorised into four as: sedentary farming, agro-pastoralism, livelihoods largely dependent on non-farm activities and livelihoods that depend on different kinds of transfers including the government PSNP programme (Tolossa, 2005). It is possible to associate these major livelihood types with the four different types of livelihood strategies discussed earlier in this section, which includes: intensification, extensification, diversification and migration.

In most chronically food insecure areas of Ethiopia agricultural extensification is not an option because there is a lack of farmland with per capita land holding still falling as the population increases. Extensification is pursued by the relatively few better-off households where they can do so by ploughing other people's lands on the basis of sharecropping arrangements. For poor farmers intensification is possible only by investing more labour instead of investing in capital and technology as they lack the means to do so. However, in the study area many poor households are not able to intensify their livelihoods, as they lack labour for investing in the production system.

In Ethiopia diversification is an important strategy to decrease livelihood vulnerability and to enhance livelihood opportunities. Tolossa (2005) explains that the driving force behind Ethiopian peasants pursuing diversification is motivated by ‘necessity’ rather than ‘choices’. This is because of the fact that people, whether they rely on their own productive activities or on transfers, cannot survive on a single type of livelihood (Tolossa, 2005).

Migration is another important source of livelihood whereby households receive remittances from members of their households who migrated temporarily or permanently in search of additional income. In the study area, temporary seasonal migration is also part of the process of livelihood diversification used by households to survive.

In conclusion, the choice and implementation of household livelihood strategies, therefore, generate livelihood outcomes in the form of foods, goods, services, or direct cash that can be used for different purposes. However, in situations of chronic food insecurity these are used primarily to meet the household’s basic needs. The outcome of a household’s livelihood strategy may lead to food security or insecurity depending on the type of resources the household has access to, the degree of vulnerability, and the extent of influence by policies and institutions that affect household’s choices of livelihood strategies. The outcome either leads to the improvement of household’s asset base or further exploitation of these assets.

In the study area, the outcome for the majority of the households results in further over-exploitation of the natural resource base and depletion of household assets. Evidence from the field suggests that only the more affluent and asset rich households have more options to withstand shocks and stresses and are in a position to develop sustainable livelihoods and attain food self-sufficiency. The livelihood of the majority of the peasants, however, is characterised by vulnerability with severe chronic food insecurity and extreme poverty. Livelihood strategies of the majority of the households are not sustainable because if they were “...*they should improve incomes, increase well-being, reduce vulnerability, improve food security and make more sustainable use of natural resources*” (Rakodi, 2002:16).

This chapter, in general, makes clear that a better understanding of household’s livelihood strategies and the associated opportunities and constraints are crucial in order to understand local people’s livelihoods, particularly in situations characterised by repeated external shocks and stresses. This research, therefore, uses the concept of livelihood and livelihood strategies to analyse the possible outcomes of the government food security intervention on households’ livelihoods as well as the resultant situation of household’s food security.

Chapter Three

Labour for development: compulsory public works' contributions to the Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Programme

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Abstract

Interventions that link welfare programmes with labour investment require beneficiary households to participate by contributing labour. This labour requirement, however, often ignores the effect of such requirements on labour-poor households. This paper explores the role of household labour availability in household food security in the context of the Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). By employing ethnographic fieldwork, this paper investigates a group of 80 PSNP beneficiary households over a period of a year in a chronically food insecure district in Northern Ethiopia. The paper finds that in subsistence agricultural livelihood systems, where production is mainly dependent on household labour, the PSNP results in labour competition between farm work and public works. Results show that, since available household labour is absorbed by public works activities, labour-poor households are likely to remain poor and food insecure without improving their livelihoods and food security situations.

Keywords: *labour, household, safety net, public works, food security, Ethiopia*

Introduction

Development interventions, including safety net provisions, often build on the notion that local people provide a counterpart contribution by providing labour, either for the implementation of the programme or for public works. The idea of a counterpart contribution is a response to the fear that people that are given transfers for free will develop a dependency attitude and lack the motivation to follow up on the initiated activities. As poor people have no capital assets to provide, their contribution usually consist of labour (Grosh *et al.*, 2008; Zoomers, 1999). The question, however, is whether the labour demands are realistic and how they affect the outcomes of the intervention. This paper seeks to respond to this question for the Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Programme.

The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is one of the main components of the Ethiopian Government Food Security Programme. In combination with the Other Food Security Programme (OFSP) and broader development interventions, it is designed to achieve household food security. Persistent food insecurity is a major problem in many parts of Ethiopia resulting from several interacting factors including drought, poor soil fertility, environmental degradation, population pressure, land scarcity and lack of employment (Hoddinott *et al.*, 2011). The response of the Ethiopian government to the prevailing food security problem was, until 2005, dominated by emergency relief supported by an annual appeal mechanism (MoARD, 2009). However, after years of receiving emergency aid, the majority of the recipient households remained chronically food insecure and experienced significant food gaps even in good years (Hoddinott *et al.*, 2011). This situation motivated the Ethiopian government and its international partners to introduce a change in the policy approach with the aim of resolving the food insecurity problem permanently. A social policy was introduced shifting away from ad hoc annual emergency relief programmes to multi-annual support in the form of the PSNP. Safety net programmes are generally intended to protect the poorest people in society or those who find themselves temporarily below a given welfare level (Tagel, 2008). In Ethiopia, the PSNP programme was launched in 2005 with the aim of protecting chronically food insecure households from hunger and asset depletion and to lift them out of poverty and food insecurity in the long term (MoARD, 2006).

The PSNP provides six months of food and/or cash transfer annually to chronically food insecure households in selected food insecure districts. It aims to protect the poor from depleting their assets through providing a predictable, guaranteed and timely transfer (Bishop and Hilhorst, 2010) while at the same time creating assets at the community level (MoARD, 2004). Central to the success of the programme is the reliability, timeliness and productivity of the transfers (de Gramont *et al.*, 2007; Devereux *et al.*, 2006; Slater *et al.*, 2006). The programme consists of two main components. The first one is a labour intensive public works component for able-bodied household members who receive resource transfers on the basis of their participation in public works. The second one is a direct support component for chronically food insecure and vulnerable households who have no labour or any other means of support. PSNP public works beneficiary households are expected to work in public works for at least five days per month per household member in order to be eligible for safety net transfers (MoARD, 2004).

Public works programmes, which usually target poor households, are based on the assumption that poor farmers lack capital to invest in community development activities but have enough labour to contribute to development projects (Zoomers, 1999). However, in developing countries where agricultural activities are labour intensive, poor households are characterised by labour scarcity. When required to contribute labour to public works as a

condition for eligibility to transfers, households participate in public works or in community developments at the expense of other activities. Labour requirements by development interventions or safety nets usually overlook the labour dynamics of poor households. Especially in rural Ethiopia, where agricultural activities are labour intensive, the labour implications of the PSNP public works programme are not well understood. This paper is, therefore, an attempt to contribute to an understanding of these implications for poor households by looking at ways in which availability of household labour affects the PSNP outcomes.

The paper will first describe the link between labour and public works in development programmes, followed by sections on the study area, the methodology of the research and an introduction to the PSNP in Ebinat District. We will then analyse the effects of the PSNP for three types of households: labour-poor, labour-sufficient and labour-rich. We will show that the impact of the PSNP and OFSP programmes varies from one household to another, mainly based on the availability of household labour. Irrespective of land ownership, labour-poor households were found to be more vulnerable than labour-rich households who managed to increase their household productivity even without owning enough land to feed themselves. The paper invites redesigning the labour component of the PSNP, especially for labour-poor households, because this component risks compromising the overall objective of the programme.

Labour and public works programmes

Public works programmes that require labour inputs from beneficiary households have been important safety net interventions in the West since the beginning of the 19th century, especially following the 1817 famine in England. Several other Western countries also adopted different types of public works programmes during the great depression in the early 1930s and in the post-war years to provide income transfers to selected groups of people (Dejardin, 1996; Webb, 2002; Grosh *et al.*, 2008). In the developing countries, especially in Asia and Africa, these kinds of public works programmes were introduced in the early 20th century. They were further expanded during the second half of the century in the form of food-for-work programmes in which participants were paid in food in exchange for their labour in public works. This kind of public works programme typically revolves around labour intensive public works. They require beneficiary households to carry out activities with the aim of building public assets that can help communities in their effort to create self-sustaining livelihoods (Humphrey, 2002; Grosh *et al.*, 2008).

In Ethiopia similar programmes requiring labour inputs from beneficiary households started after the country was hit hard by a devastating famine in 1974-75. From the late 1970s onwards different types of food security interventions with a public works component were implemented in the country in the form of food-for-work (FFW) programmes. The largest FFW programme in Ethiopia, and in Africa, was Project 2488 implemented by the World Food Programme (WFP). Similar programmes were also implemented in the country during the 1990s and early 2000s including the Employment Based Safety Nets (EBSN) and the Employment Generation Scheme (EGS) (Humphrey, 2002). In 2005, the Ethiopian government introduced the PSNP programme following on from the earlier FFW programmes that had been implemented in the country since the 1970s. All these programmes require beneficiary households to invest labour in order to be eligible for resource transfers. In rural Ethiopia, where agricultural activities are labour intensive, interventions which require labour inputs from beneficiary households can have serious implication for household

food security. Those households that are labour-poor, can be affected severely as such programmes can affect the labour input into their own farm activities.

Several studies have examined the relationship between labour availability and food security in Ethiopia. Kidane *et al.* (2005), for example, argued that, in rural Ethiopia, where subsistence agricultural activity is the dominant form of the economy, availability of household labour is an important determinant of household productivity and food security. Subsistence agricultural systems are characterised by heavy reliance on farm labour (Topouzis, 1999). In this kind of subsistence farming, labour shortage is a typical characteristic of poor households. Labour shortage restricts households' ability to undertake labour intensive agricultural activities (Getaneh, 2004; Pankhurst and Bevan, 2004). On the other hand, households with abundant labour are better positioned to increase the productivity of their land and are therefore more likely to achieve household food security. Availability of a large household labour force is also an advantage in ensuring household food security, mainly through investing the available labour force in non-farm income earning activities (Hofferth, 2004, Kidane *et al.*, 2005). As indicated in Devereux (2000), the 'Food economy baseline studies' conducted by Save the Children UK in rural Ethiopia have also showed that availability of household labour is one of the major factors that determines relative wealth and household food security status, in combination with farm size and access to draught power (Boudreau, 1998; Chapman and Haile Kiros, 1999; Haile Kiros *et al.*, 2000).

While labour is such a crucial factor in food security, it is remarkable that the effects of public works as part of the PSNP have not received much attention. An exception is the study conducted by Slater *et al.* (2006) who examined the differential impact of the PSNP at its early stages of implementation. They found out that labour affects the benefits that households can derive from the PSNP programme. This paper takes up this theme with an in-depth study at household level of the labour aspects of the PSNP. It examines the differential impacts of the PSNP and OFSP programmes for different categories of households, grouped in terms of household labour availability in a drought-prone, chronically food-insecure district in the northern highlands of Ethiopia. The results of this study will contribute to the debate regarding the role of safety net programmes on household food security in chronic food-insecurity situations. The paper also aims to contribute to the discussion about poor people being required to contribute to public works as part of development programming.

The Study Area

This study was undertaken in Ebinat District, one of the chronically food-insecure districts of Amhara region. The District has a total population of about 221,000 people (CSA, 2007). Of the total population, 94 percent live in rural areas and 95 percent of that rural population is dependent on rain fed subsistence agricultural production, directly or indirectly. Mixed farming is typical of the area with a combination of crop production, livestock rearing and agricultural labour. Crop production is dependent on *meher* rain, the main rainy season which lasts from June to September and which provides ideal growing conditions for longer maturing crops. Wheat, barley, sorghum and *teff* are the main crops cultivated for consumption while lentils, beans and oil seeds are the main cash crops. Average production of cereal is very low which makes the district more dependent on government transfers to feed the chronically food insecure households.

A large number of rural households experience severe food shortages of more than six months during the year. According to information obtained from the District Agricultural and

Rural Development Office, the District has experienced both chronic and acute food insecurity since the mid-1980s caused by insufficient agricultural productivity. This has been mainly attributed to small land holdings per household, severe land degradation and poor soil fertility, erratic and unpredictable rainfall, lack of alternative off-farm income earning opportunities, absence of proper agricultural extension programmes, and increased population pressures. A large number of rural households are, therefore, food insecure and depend on government and non-governmental transfers to cover annual household food shortages. Since 2005, about one-third of the rural population received safety net transfers to cover food gaps.

In the study area, food insecurity is a year-round phenomenon which reaches its peak usually from June to August, the main hunger season. In terms of households' self-reported status of food security, survey results show that, out of interviewed households from the two villages, about 47 percent of the households experienced permanent food insecurity throughout the year and they are depending on government transfers and other social support. About 28 percent of the respondents revealed that their situation varies from season to season depending on the frequency and distribution of rainfall whereas 25 percent of the respondents reported short-term food insecurity. Interview results also showed that female-headed and households headed by elderly people tend to be more food insecure than male-headed and younger households.

Methodology

The paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken from February 2009 to July 2010 in two drought-affected, chronically food-insecure highland villages of Northern Ethiopia. Ethnographic fieldwork involves studying people's practices from their own perspectives in their own setting. It provides researchers an opportunity to study people's beliefs and actions on a daily basis. Observation is the key method in ethnography research and is the main tool for collecting data (Geertz, 1983; Riemer, 2009). However, other methods of data collection including life histories and in-depth interviews can also be part of the ethnographic approach to fieldwork. The diversity of research methods used to collect data allows an ethnographer to cross check the accuracy of the information collected and is vital in validating the findings (Riemer, 2009).

This research used a combination of survey, in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions to collect data. The research is based on 80 PSNP beneficiary households living in the two selected villages. All PSNP beneficiary households were interviewed using a survey questionnaire to collect general household data. Survey data and focus group discussions were used to classify households into different categories on the basis of labour availability. Of the total 80 households, 20 households were also selected for in-depth interviews throughout the fieldwork period in order to explore the role of labour in household food security under the PSNP programme. Selected households were interviewed on a monthly basis. These interviews provided detailed information that helped understanding the role of labour in household livelihoods within the safety net framework.

In addition to the household survey and in-depth household interviews, seven key informant interviews were also undertaken with village level elders, Kebele⁷ administrators and development agents in both villages as well as with the PSNP coordinator at the District Agricultural Office. PSNP manuals, reports and other secondary materials were also used as sources of data.

⁷ Lowest tier of administration next to the district composed of groups of villages

The study aims to reveal the labour implications of the PSNP programme by looking at the day-to-day experiences of PSNP beneficiary households in achieving household food security on the basis of their labour availability.

Table 1: Categorisation of households into four groups

	Direct Support HHs	Public works beneficiary households		
		Labour poor	Labour sufficient	Labour rich
Number of HHs	7	32	23	18
Proportion of HHs (percent)	8.8	40.0	28.7	22.5
Working member of a HH	0	1-2	2-3	4-6
Household size	1-3	3-6	4-6	5-8
Land holding size(Ha)	0-0.5	0.0-0.75	0.5-1.0	0.5-2.0
Food gaps (in months)	9-10	6-9	5-6	3-5

Source: Field Survey, January 2010

In order to understand clearly the role of labour in rural livelihoods, households were divided into three groups based on labour availability. These categories are used throughout the paper. Direct support beneficiary households are excluded from the analysis since those households do not have any labour and therefore discussions on labour availability are not relevant within the scope of this study. The analysis is, therefore, based only on the PSNP public works beneficiary households which are required to contribute labour in the public works activities. PSNP public works households were classified into three categories based on the availability of able-bodied household members compared with the total household family size (Table 1): 1. Labour-poor PSNP public works beneficiary households 2. Labour-sufficient PSNP public works beneficiary households and 3. Labour-rich PSNP public works beneficiary households.

PSNP transfers and household food security

Since the beginning of the PSNP programme in 2005, about 37 percent of the rural population in the study area (around 76,000 people) received support from the PSNP programme in the form of food and/or cash transfer. Of the total PSNP beneficiary households, 91 percent were public works participants while the remaining nine per cent were direct support beneficiaries. Of the total beneficiary households in the district, according to survey results, about 60 percent acknowledged that the PSNP has helped them to smooth consumption. However, despite the large number of PSNP beneficiary households in the district, only few households reported a positive impact in terms of livelihood improvement and long-term household food security (Table 2).

Table 2 Households which reported positive impact of PSNP programme

Impact	No of HHs	Percentage
Consumption smoothing	48	60
Asset protection	24	30
Ensuring household food security	12	15

Source: Compiled by the author from field survey, February 2010

The limited impact of the PSNP and OFSP programmes in terms of long-term food security is also illustrated by the low number and rate of households who graduated from the PSNP by the end of the first phase of the programme in 2009. Contrary to government expectations, just nine per cent of the total PSNP public works beneficiary households ‘graduated’- meaning that they become food self-sufficient and are no longer eligible for safety net transfers. In the study area, about five per cent of the public works beneficiary households graduated by the end of the first phase of the PSNP programme. Moreover, most of these considered they had been prematurely graduated and were in fact still food-insecure (Siyoun *et al.*, forthcoming, b).

Our survey data show that the PSNP is instrumental in smoothing food consumption for 60 percent of households. However, respondents also reported that the PSNP resource transfers are not sufficient to cover their entire food gap. More than half of the interviewed beneficiary households argued that, apart from receiving PSNP transfers, they were still forced to sell their productive assets and take on credit to cover their food shortages (see Table 3). A limited number of households were able to use PSNP transfer not only to cover their food shortages but also to protect their assets and improve their risk-taking behaviour through investing PSNP cash transfer in other income-earning activities.

The impact of PSNP and OFSP programmes on household food security and long-term livelihoods differs according to the nature and type of households participating in the PSNP. Slater *et al.* (2006) argued in their research that rural households in Ethiopia are not all the same. Households differ in many ways, including in terms of their resources, their objectives, the strategies they adopt, the problems they encounter, and the success they have at making a living. As illustrated below, our results show that the impact of the PSNP and OFSP programmes are different across different categories of households. These differences are mainly based on the availability of household labour. The following section of the paper discusses ways in which the PSNP and OFSP programmes affect the three major categories of public works beneficiary households.

Table 3 Additional mechanisms devised by PSNP beneficiaries to cover food shortages

Household mechanisms	No.	Percentages
Sale of household assets	37	46.3
Off-farm activities	29	36.3
Use of credit	26	32.5

Source: Field Survey, May 2010

Labour-poor public works beneficiary households

This group is composed of 32 public works beneficiary households who are labour poor. These are households that typically have one or two adults that can provide labour, but cannot meet the labour demand imposed by the PSNP on the basis of the number of family members. These include mainly male-headed poor households without sufficient labour, female-headed households with young children and households headed by elderly people with under age dependents (mainly below 12 years of age). This group of households account for about 40 percent of the total number of beneficiary households. Some households are landless; most have a plot of land ranging from 0.25 to 0.75 hectare. Household size ranges from three to six and households experience a food gap of six to nine months. Although most of the households have access to land, the majority reported that they are not able to plough their land and are forced to rent it out due to lack of labour. Under current sharecropping

arrangements, they receive a quarter to half of the production and therefore increasingly depend on PSNP transfers. This kind of land rent is not an indication of labour shortages alone. Households sometimes rent their land due to shortage of animal traction. However, interviews showed that labour was the crucial factor, because if they had more labour they could have exchanged labour for the use of an ox to plough their land. The community has an informal arrangement in which a farmer can work on another farmer's land for two days in return for using an ox to plough his own land for one day.

Households in this group expressed concern that due to their involvement in public works, they face competing labour claims between public works and their own agricultural activities. In such conditions of competing labour claims, therefore, poor households' uncertainty about securing sufficient production forced them to subcontract their land and invest their limited labour in the PSNP public works to secure their transfers. Such decisions of securing short-term survival at the expense of long-term preservation is what Wood (2003) called the 'Faustian bargain'.

PSNP officials claim that no PSNP labour is required during the peak agricultural season from January to June. However, it seems that government officials consider seeding, weeding and harvesting as the main agricultural activities. For farmers, however, the main labour intensive agricultural activity is land preparation and that coincides with PSNP public works activities. Brown *et al.* (1994), for example, argued that factors which diminish labour quantity and/or quality will increase the incidence and depth of household vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity. In this regard, poor households in the study area are characterised by an overwhelming reliance on labour as their single most important factor of production and income generation. Participation in PSNP public works reduces their available labour for both their farming and off-farm activities. This is contradictory to the findings of the World Bank which argues that in developing countries safety net programmes do not often reduce labour efforts substantially (Grosh *et al.*, 2008). The following account of one labour-poor household illustrates the labour implication of the PSNP programme clearly.

'In my household I am the only one who can work in the safety net. I work throughout the month and therefore I don't have the time to plough my land though I own an ox. If there were no public works I would plough my land myself through Mekenajo [a term to denote ox sharing arrangements where two farmers pair up their oxen to plough their land in turn] to increase my benefit rather than renting out my land. Unfortunately I do not have enough labour in my household and, therefore, I am forced to rent out my land to another farmer for the last three years to receive only one-third of the harvest.'

In environmentally degraded areas, like the study area, diversification of income sources helps households to protect their income and food consumption levels. In sub-Saharan Africa where agriculture is more risky, non-farm activities have a greater role in stabilising household consumption providing on average almost 60 percent of rural household income (Brown *et al.*, 1994). For labour-poor households, however, participation in PSNP public works limits households' opportunities to engage in non-farm activities which affect household food security. Some of the households in this group can sometimes engage in daily labour, mainly weeding and harvesting, on other people's farms to supplement their income in a very small way. Labour absorption by the safety net public works activities, therefore, affects not only households' farm activities but also limits the possibility of labour-poor households' income diversification. This is illustrated by a household interview:

'I have five family members and I am the only one who can work in the safety net since my children are not yet ready to work and my wife is breast feeding a new born child. I am working in the safety net programme throughout the month to get the safety net transfer for all my family and therefore I do not have time to work on my land or in other income-generating activities. The safety net transfer, however, is not enough to cover our food shortage and we always face food gaps even with the safety net support. If there were no public works requirements I could have used my labour to plough my land or to engage in other activities to earn more income to cover our food gaps.'

For this group of households, PSNP transfers are utilised as a key resource to smooth food consumption. For some households, part of the PSNP transfer is used to cover other household expenditures and to pay back loans, especially when the PSNP payment was made in cash. This further reduces the consumption smoothing role of the PSNP transfer (Table 4) and makes households more vulnerable to falling back into destitution rather than improving their livelihoods.

Table 4 Use of PSNP transfers by labour-poor households

Use	No.	Percentage
Consumption smoothing	18	56.2
Consumption smoothing and debt repayment	8	25.0
Consumption smoothing and other expenditure	6	18.8
Total	32	100.0

Source: Field Survey, March 2010

A number of households in this group also depend on credit from the Church and other social organisations including credit from the Amhara Credit and Saving Institute (ACSI). Although credit is provided for productive investment, households divert the credit to smooth food consumption during periods of shortage. This risks further impoverishment due to their inability to repay their loans from loan-financed business activities. Some of the households used the PSNP cash transfer for debt repayment while at the same time taking another loan for consumption purposes thus entering a vicious cycle of indebtedness (Siyoun *et al*, forthcoming, a). This is illustrated by the following example:

'Last year I took credit for livestock fattening but since I do not have many people in the house to help me in this activity I used the money to purchase fertiliser. However, due to the drought last year part of the harvest was lost and I was unable to repay the loan. So I was forced to sell my ox in order to pay back my loan. Failing to repay my loan would mean that I will not receive a loan again and that means I will face a serious problem. After repaying my loan I am now planning to take another loan so that I can buy an ox and plough my land.'

The problems encountered by this group of households are aggravated by operational problems within the PSNP, in particular the lack of full-family targeting and the timing of transfers. Full-family targeting refers to the provision of sufficient resources to households to meet all family members' consumption needs in order to help households avoid the sale of their productive assets to compensate for partial transfers. Lack of full-family targeting, however, forces households to sell their productive assets to meet consumption needs at the risk of increasing their vulnerability. The absence of a tailored approach to PSNP transfer is also another major issue. PSNP transfers are provided for a maximum of six months. Therefore, households facing food gaps of more than six months are forced to sell the

productive assets they own to cover their food needs. This makes households more vulnerable to falling back into destitution rather than improving their livelihoods.

For most households in this group PSNP has no impact on household asset protection or on long-term household food security. In fact, about 81 percent of the interviewed households in this category reported that they have been forced to sell their assets, in particular their livestock. This happened even in normal years in order to buy food to cover household food shortages. Labour-poor households utilise most of their labour for public works activities; this offers only a limited effect in terms of smoothing consumption, let alone protecting their asset base and ensuring long-term food security.

Labour-sufficient households

This group includes 23 households from our sample that are largely dependent on agriculture but do not produce enough food due to factors including small land holdings, land degradation and lack of financial capital. These households account for about 28.7 percent of the total PSNP beneficiary households in the two research villages. Household size ranges from four to six household members and households typically face a food gap of between five to six months. Household landholding is reported to be between 0.5 and 1.0 hectare of land. This group of households utilise PSNP transfers primarily for consumption smoothing (Table 5 below). However, in addition to consumption smoothing, for about 55 percent of the households in the group, resource transfers also contribute to protecting household assets. The majority of the households disclosed that, when paid on time, PSNP transfers were instrumental in reducing the sale of their productive assets for consumption smoothing.

Table 5 Use of PSNP transfer by labour sufficient households

Use	No.	Percentage
Consumption smoothing	14	60.9
Consumption smoothing and debt repayment	5	21.7
Consumption smoothing and other expenditure	4	17.4
Total	23	100.0

Source: Field Survey, March 2010

Labour-sufficient households, nonetheless, reported a conflict of interest between the labour demands of the PSNP and their agricultural practices. Households disclosed that, though they have a plot of agricultural land, their production falls short of producing enough food to feed their household throughout the year, and they depend on the PSNP transfers to cover their food shortages. Due to insufficient production, about 48 percent of the households in this group also report their dependence on credit for consumption, especially during critical periods. PSNP transfers make a relatively small contribution to their livelihood which is partly due to the lack of full-family targeting, as illustrated by the following example:

‘We do have sufficient labour in the household and we are using our labour both to participate in the safety net and work on our own land. But production falls short of what we need and therefore we depend on the safety net transfer for half of the year. However, we are not getting safety net transfer for all our household members and, therefore, we sometimes take credit from ACSI and other sources to cover our food shortages. If all household members received safety net transfers we could have used the credit for other purposes.’

Households in this group also mentioned that they do not have confidence in the PSNP programme and are anxious that they will not get the same transfer for next year. Although

the programme promises a multi-annual contribution, the frequent re-targeting exercises and the implementation of graduation in recent years makes them doubtful about the future. This undermines households' ability to utilise credit for productive investment. The following account from a farmer shows this clearly:

'We are now getting the safety net but we are not sure whether we will get the same transfer for next year. If we knew for sure that we will continue to receive the safety net transfers we could have taken a large amount of credit to buy agricultural inputs to increase our productivity. However if we do not receive safety net transfers and if we don't get good production how can we repay the credit? Therefore, instead of putting ourselves in debt which we might not be able to pay, we decided not to take a loan as we are not sure if we will still get the PSNP transfer for next year or not.'

About 51 percent of the households in this group explained that PSNP also helped them to retain their household labour to work on their farm land, instead of migrating to seek wage labour in other areas. This situation also enabled some of the households to use the OFSP credit packages to increase their productive assets to a certain extent. However, access to OFSP loans was not easy and most of the households were not successful in securing credit, despite their interest in doing so. Of the total households in the group, 50 percent reported access to an OFSP loan. It was also reported that, of those households who have taken OFSP loans, not all of the households in the group used the loan entirely for the intended purpose which is to increase household productive assets, mainly livestock. This is because of the need to cover other household expenses as well as to spread risks. Out of the interviewed households in this group who received an OFSP loan, about 78 percent diverted a certain amount of the loan to meet other household needs including loan repayment and consumption smoothing (see Table 6 below).

Table 6. Use of OFSP loan by labour sufficient households

Use	No.	Percentage
Livestock purchase	7	50.0
Loan repayment	6	42.8
Consumption smoothing and other expenses	5	35.7

Source: Field Survey, March 2010

In general, results of the study revealed that, for this group of households, given the limited household labour availability together with small land holdings and meagre amount of safety net transfer, PSNP has a limited impact in terms of achieving long-term household food security. The major impact of PSNP for this group of households is consumption smoothing. It also enabled a significant number of households in this group to reduce distress asset sales though a large number of them still depend on credit to cover part of their food shortages.

Labour-rich households

This group of households, constituting around 23 percent of all PSNP beneficiary households, are labour-rich public works participant households who largely depend on agriculture but nonetheless experience food gaps, even in good years. Households' food gaps range from three to six months. These are households with five to eight household members and with a land holding size from 0.5 to 2.0 hectares, including the land they rent. For this group of households, PSNP transfers are an important source of food or cash and are said to be instrumental in smoothing consumption and protecting assets (Table 7).

Table 7 Use of PSNP transfer by labour rich households

Use	No.	Percentage
Consumption smoothing and asset protection	11	66.7
Consumption smoothing and asset building	4	22.2
Consumption smoothing and other expenditure	2	11.1
Total	18	100.0

Source: Field Survey, March 2010

In some cases, the transfers also helped households to build assets. Some households, for example, reported the use of PSNP cash transfers for purchasing livestock (mainly goats and sheep) as illustrated in the following example:

‘The safety net is helping us as we used some of the money to buy livestock. We do have enough labour and we use our labour to rent additional farm land to farm more land and therefore, we used part of the cash transfers to buy livestock. This year, for example, we bought two goats using the money we received from the safety net transfer.’

As they do have enough labour, most of the households reported that they have rented additional farmland from labour-constrained households, in order to maximise their agricultural income. Some of the households in this group also try to increase their income through small-scale irrigation using motor pumps to increase productivity. Some also used the PSNP payment to cover other household necessities thereby avoiding the sale of crops for other expenditures (Table 7). An interviewed household exemplifies this as follows:

‘Before the safety net, we were sometimes forced to sell part of the crops that we have in order to cover other expenditures like clothing, sugar, coffee and to buy stationary for children to go to school. Now, thanks to the safety net programme, we are not selling crops any more to cover such expenditures. We are using part of the safety net cash transfers to buy such items and preserve our harvest for our consumption.’

Households also use PSNP transfers to purchase food crops in times of need thereby avoiding the sale of productive assets like livestock for consumption purposes. This group of households are also the ones who make the most use out of OFSP loans. Households reported that the predictability of income through the PSNP enabled them to take loans enabling them to engage in other income generating activities. About 72 percent of the households reported having access to OFSP loans. Of these households, the majority of them (about 69 percent) reported that they have at least bought one productive asset using an OFSP loan. About 35 percent of the households also engaged in other income-earning activities to supplement their household income.

In agriculturally risky environments, households with more diversified income sources are considered to be less vulnerable to food insecurity (Reardon *et. al.*, 1992) and diversification of income sources generally protects household incomes and consumptions levels (Brown *et al.*, 1994). As compared to other groups, therefore, this group of households reported a relatively diversified income base as a result of available labour and access to loans. Nevertheless, it remains true that not all of the households used the OFSP loan fully for the intended purpose. They usually use part of the money to cover other expenditures. The following account of a household shows how households use part of the credit for unintended purposes:

'We took credit from the food security programme last year to engage in petty trading. However, we did not use all the money for trading purpose. We used half of the loan to prepare a wedding ceremony for our son. The loan provided us with the money to arrange the wedding and enabled us not to sell our livestock.'

Information gathered from household group discussions, development agents and Kebele administrators showed that most of the 'graduated' households in the district originated from this group. However, the majority of the graduated households did not agree that they are food self-sufficient and are not happy with their graduation. In one of the study villages, for example, graduated households were found to participate in other FFW projects implemented by the Red Cross indicating that they are still in need of support, even after graduation. In this regard, even labour-rich households who have increased their asset base and improved their food security as a result of the PSNP and OFSP programmes, may eventually be forced to sell the assets they have been building up to cover their food gaps. In line with this, Sharp *et al.* (2006) warned that premature removal of households from safety nets may endanger the gains of the PSNP and will put households at risk of falling back into poverty and food insecurity. We may conclude, then, that the PSNP and OFSP programmes have most impact on labour-rich households, yet even for this relatively successful group, they fall short of ensuring sustainable food security.

Conclusion

The Ethiopian PSNP is an attempt by the government and its international donors to permanently resolve the decades long food insecurity problems in the country. It has assisted millions of chronically food-insecure households in chronically food-insecure districts since it was launched in 2005. The programme aims to reduce household vulnerability through providing transfers to cover household food gaps and promoting sustainable community development to address the underlying causes of food insecurity. Though the PSNP and OFSP programmes have contributed to smoothing household food consumption gaps, their impact in terms of long-term household food security remains low and well below the expected impact. In rural Ethiopia, where subsistence agriculture is the dominant form of household economy and is characterised by heavy dependence on farm labour, the PSNP programme has resulted in labour competition between the PSNP public works and people's own agricultural activities.

The impact of the PSNP and OFSP programmes, however, varies from household to household mainly according to labour availability. In situations where there are competing labour claims, availability of household labour is crucial in ensuring household food security and in enabling the household to benefit from other related food security interventions. Labour availability provides an opportunity for income diversification and the generation of additional income to support household food security. Labour-poor households are found to be more vulnerable and at risk of becoming trapped into poverty and food insecurity as opposed to labour-rich households which showed relative improvement in household food security. Labour is an indispensable resource and a major determinant of the impact of the PSNP and other related food security programmes on long-term household food security.

The paper also revealed additional reasons why the PSNP and other related food security programmes fall short in enabling labour-poor households to improve their food security status, despite the government's intention to lift these households out of poverty and food insecurity. One of the additional concerns is the small amount of transfers provided to households and the dilution of resources which forces beneficiary households to sell productive assets or to take

loans to cover food shortages. Such activities put households at risk of being trapped in a vicious circle of indebtedness and poverty. Delays and unpredictability in resource transfers received by households are reported as additional reasons and have a similar effect on labour-poor households. In particular, the unpredictability of transfers undermines household risk strategies and their productive investment which could contribute to reducing household vulnerability. In this regard, not only the frequent retargeting of the PSNP programme but also the premature graduation implemented recently tends to undermine households' confidence in the PSNP programme.

Our data show that the majority of the PSNP participants continue to be poor and food insecure even though they received safety net transfers and have had access to OFSP loans over the last five years. Apart from consumption smoothing, positive impacts on asset protection and asset building are limited to a few labour-rich PSNP beneficiary households. The competing labour claims, limited value of resource transfers and absence of full family targeting reduce the effectiveness of the integrated programmes on labour-poor households. Given the fact that many of the households are labour-poor, this raises serious questions about the feasibility of the PSNP and its complementary OFSP in achieving their intended objectives.

The paper indicates that the PSNP and other related food security programmes did not result in a significant improvement in food security status for the large majority of labour-poor households in the study area. Due to their inability to afford the labour requirement for the PSNP and their own agricultural activities, labour-poor households are forced to spend their available labour on the public works and to rent out their own land to another farmer. This raises questions about demanding a labour contribution to public works from poor people engaged in development or safety net programmes. Poor people are characterised by labour shortages. However, requirements to participate in public works tend to overlook the fact that such households engage in public works at the expense of other activities that can have a positive impact in their livelihood. The design of such interventions, therefore, needs to take into account the living reality of poor households to provide them an opportunity to effectively use their labour for sustained growth. This calls for rethinking of the popular notion of development interventions demanding labour from beneficiary households.

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Chapter Four

Escaping poverty or re-allocating dependency? ‘Graduation’ from the Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Programme

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Abstract

Beneficiaries of Ethiopia's food security programme, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and the Other Food Security Programmes (OFSP), are expected to 'graduate' out of dependency on aid, meaning that they become food-secure and no longer need social protection. This paper examines the experience of graduation during the first phase of the PSNP programme (2005-2009) and its contribution to household food security. It focuses on 16 graduated households in Ebinat district, as part of a large ethnographic research programme. Results show that the PSNP and OFSP programmes have contributed to smooth household consumption gaps. However, their impact in taking households out of dependence on aid has been minimal. The majority of graduated households continue to be food insecure for a large part of the year and are dependent on livestock sales to cover food shortages. Rather than achieving sustainable food security, for most households, graduation from the PSNP means a re-allocation of household dependency: from dependency on food aid to dependency on safety nets and to depleting livestock assets, with a high risk of returning to dependency on food aid.

Keywords: *Ethiopia, food security, PSNP, graduation, social protection, dependency*

Introduction

Food insecurity resulting from poverty and recurrent droughts continues to be a major challenge in sub-Saharan African countries (Nigussa and Mberengwa, 2009: 249). This has led to a shift in policy approaches where initiatives to sustainably resolve food insecurity are combined with social protection measures that aim to alleviate the impact of food insecurity. Social protection refers to “*all initiatives that provide income (cash) or consumption (food) transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance social status and rights of the excluded and marginalized*” (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004: 9). Social protection programmes are similar to welfare programmes in developed nations. They are institutionalized mechanisms (departing from the ad-hoc provision of humanitarian aid) providing safety nets for people who cannot survive by their own means and efforts. In order to keep safety nets temporary, they must be complemented with programmes that enable recipients to overcome dependency on aid. This is especially important in a country like Ethiopia, where resources for social protection programmes are extremely limited in comparison to the large number of people who qualify. In 2005, Ethiopia embarked on a Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) that has the dual aim of protecting people against food insecurity and helping them to escape from poverty (de Gramont et al., 2007). This programme is perceived as an important landmark in the development of productive safety nets.

This paper examines whether the Ethiopian PSNP programme enables recipients to ‘graduate’ from the PSNP programme according to the definition of graduation as adopted by the Ethiopian food security programme, meaning that they become food-self-sufficient and no longer need the support of the PSNP programme. The PSNP started in 2005 as a joint initiative of the Ethiopian Government and international donors. It is a response to the recurring food crises in the country. Though food crises in Ethiopia go back to Biblical times these became frequent since the late 19th Century (Pankhurst, 1985). Since the mid-1970s Ethiopia’s responses to recurrent food crisis have been dominated by humanitarian assistance. Emergency relief is mostly unpredictable and most of the time it is being delivered after people have depleted their assets. The PSNP, however, is a long-term programme with predictable transfers (Devereux et al., 2008). It is designed to protect households from slipping into destitution by providing six months of food or cash transfers to chronically food insecure households for a period of five years. Beneficiary households with able bodied members get food or cash in exchange for labour in public works, while vulnerable families who have no labour or other means of support get direct support (MoARD, 2004). With these contributions, households are secured of enough food to overcome their hunger gap. The key to the programme is that recipients are simultaneously enrolled in complementary development interventions called the Other Food Security Programmes (OFSP) that aim to lift households out of poverty and food insecurity by building the asset base needed for successful ‘graduation’ (MoARD, 2006).

When it was launched in 2005, the PSNP supported about 5 million people in four regions. In 2009 the number of beneficiaries had grown, mainly through geographical expansion of the programme to pastoral areas, to 8.3 million people in eight regions. It was expected that the number of beneficiaries would decrease when assisted households started to graduate (MoARD, 2009). Recent studies, however, show that graduation rates fall far below expectation (MoARD, 2009; Devereux, 2010). By the end of 2009, about 9% of the beneficiary households have graduated leaving more than 90% of the households in need of safety net transfers to cover their food shortages.

Are the low numbers of graduation merely an indication that the programme has been slower than anticipated, or is the programme not viable in producing food secure graduates? To contribute to this crucial question, this paper focuses on a group of households that has graduated from the first phase of the programme (2005-2009). It sheds light on the principles and practices of graduation in Ebinat district, and analyses the situation of graduated households. It also examines the experience of graduation from the perspectives of graduated households. While many studies have been carried out on the safety net programme in Ethiopia, most of the studies have been done at national level neglecting local perspectives (Coulter, 2009). This study examines the experience of safety net graduation at household level in an attempt to fill this gap. By focusing on PSNP graduated households, the paper aims to contribute to discussions on the feasibility of the PSNP graduation in Ethiopia, and social safety nets in general.

Ethnographic fieldwork was undertaken for 18 months from February 2009 through August 2010 in two villages in a drought affected highland region of Ethiopia. Data were collected using in-depth household interviews and questionnaire surveys conducted with selected PSNP graduated households and from secondary data collected from the district agricultural office. Of the 163 households in the two villages, all of whom were surveyed, 16 were graduates. These 16 households were interviewed further to collect in-depth household data throughout the fieldwork period. Moreover, community focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted. Key informant interviews were undertaken with representatives of community elders, Kebele¹ administrators and experts at the District agricultural office and regional bureaus. PSNP implementation manuals, assessment reports and graduation guidance notes were also reviewed as sources of secondary data. The household head was the main informant for the study. In the absence of the head, another adult member of the household was interviewed. Households were asked a range of questions regarding their livelihoods, the role of PSNP and OFSPs in household food security, their experience of graduation and about the status of the household after graduation. The analysis of the data collected from this study is to show how the programme is implemented and reveal local level processes and dynamics in a remote chronically food insecure district. By doing so the study highlights issues that may not come to light through larger surveys and evaluations and therefore has potentially important implication in safety net programming.

The paper starts by analysing the concept of graduation, the definition of benchmarks to determine graduation, and the principles of implementation. The second part of the paper introduces the study area and characteristics of graduated families compared to non-graduated families. It shows that graduated families indeed have more assets than the average PSNP recipient. Nonetheless, as the next section will show, the majority of graduated households continues to be food-insecure or risks falling back into food insecurity in the short term. The final part of the paper presents the experiences of these households with the programme. We conclude that the livelihood conditions in the district and the institutional set-up of the programme are important factors why successful graduation is unlikely, and how people continue to be dependent on different programmes and safety nets.

The meaning of graduation

Graduation from a safety net programme is described as *“a process whereby recipients of cash or food transfers move from a position of depending on external assistance to a condition where they no longer need these transfers, and can therefore exit the programme”* (Devereux, 2010: 9). In the Ethiopian food security document, the term graduation was first introduced as

a key goal of the safety net programme in 2004 (MoARD, 2004). Later in 2006, graduation was adopted as the overall goal of the government Food Security Programme (FSP) of which PSNP is a component. This document emphasizes that graduation should be a result of integrated efforts. For a food insecure household to become food self-sufficient, a household must also receive other interventions aimed at building household assets. Therefore, the PSNP was linked with OFSP programmes aimed at building household assets (MoARD, 2006). The safety net ensures that households remain at the same level and protects them from falling into destitution while the OFSP enables them to build their productive assets and address factors of vulnerabilities that make them food insecure (MoARD, 2007). Other development programmes also contribute by creating an enabling environment and helping households to build productive assets (Slater et al., 2006; Dom, 2008).

In 2007, a definition of graduation was introduced into the food security programme to guide its implementation (MoARD, 2007). Graduation is introduced as a two-stage process. The first stage is graduation from the PSNP and the second is graduation from the Food Security Programme. This paper, however, is focused only on the first stage of graduation i.e. graduation from the PSNP as defined in the graduation guidance note. Graduation from the Food Security Programme is a much more complex and longer term issue that cannot be addressed on the basis of the current context where only a small proportion have graduated even from the PSNP. Graduation was described as the movement of a household out of the PSNP. This occurs when a household has improved its food security status to a level that shifts it from being classified as chronically food insecure to food self-sufficient, and it is then no longer eligible for the PSNP. Graduation from safety net is, therefore, defined as: *“A household has graduated when, in the absence of receiving PSNP transfer, it can meet its food needs for all 12 months and is able to withstand modest shocks”* (MoARD, 2007:1). This state is described as being ‘food sufficient’. Note that this definition is narrow as it only refers to the quantity of food. Most definitions of food security emphasize that it relates to the required needs for all family members to live healthy, active and productive lives (Maxwell and Frankenberger, 1992; Christiaensen, 1994). The qualitative aspect incorporated in these definitions is not part of the definition of the Food Security Programme. This article will follow the FSP definition and only ask about the quantity of food people reportedly need to be food secure.

Graduation benchmark

Graduation benchmarks use a measure of household assets to determine households’ potential for graduation. Graduation benchmarks describe the level of assets a food sufficient household is likely to have in each Region. This is because assets are considered a better indicator than income in reflecting lasting changes in chronic food insecurity status. The idea of asset-based graduation benchmarks was introduced by IFPRI, at the request of the Ethiopia government. The IFPRI study indicated that incomes tend to fluctuate between seasons while assets are likely to remain stable except for periods of severe shocks (Hoddinott, 2006; MoARD, 2007). It is also difficult to accurately measure income as people are not willing to share such information openly. Devereux (2010) also considers asset ownership a better indicator of resilience than income because it provides better protection against livelihood shocks as they can be liquidated to bridge a food gap. Tolossa (2005) who undertook a study in Oromiya zone of Amhara region also reported that food insecurity is associated with lack of productive assets such as land and oxen. Though applying an asset based system of graduation benchmark seems feasible and might be thought to be simple to administer, it is not without critics. Asset based criteria are difficult to implement and do not always reflect the extent of household food self-

sufficiency. This is partly because it doesn't take savings, remittances and incomes from other off-farm activities into account which might have significant contributions to household food self-sufficiency.

Assets owned by households are converted into their monetary value in order to assess whether a household reaches the graduation benchmark or not. The benchmarks differ across regions (Table 1). The regional food security bureau of Amhara Region, where this research was implemented, adopted a regional benchmark of 4200 birr² per capita. According to the regional graduation guidance note, until a household reaches this point, it remains eligible to participate in the PSNP and cannot be removed from the program unless households decide to leave the program by themselves - a term which is described as self-graduation (MoARD 2007). This occurs when a household decides that investing labour in other activities (like wage employment or own production) are more profitable than participating in the PSNP (MoARD, 2007). There were no self-graduated households in the study area of this research.

Table 1 illustrates the regional graduation benchmarks adopted by four major regions of the country. It describes the difference both in terms of graduation benchmarks and the use of asset elements across different regions.

Table 1: Indications of Regional Benchmarks of the Major four regions of Ethiopia

Region	Initial IFPRI Benchmark*	Average asset value according to FGGN**	Benchmark as adopted in the RGGN***	Asset Benchmark Elements
Amhara	4,800 Birr per capita	4,200 Birr per capita	4,200 Birr per capita	Livestock, agricultural technologies, perennial crops, savings, capital, store, weaving equipment's, and other income generating items
Oromiya	10,000 Birr per capita	19,187 Birr per household	19,187 Birr per household	Livestock, crop production, perennial crops, income from income generating activities
SNNPR	4,000 Birr per capita	2,998 Birr per capita	75% or more based on regression	Land holdings, level of schooling, capital based on agricultural tools and livestock availability, family size and sex of household head
Tigray	4,300 Birr per capita	5,600 Birr per capita	5,600 Birr per capita	Productive assets and must have repaid 75% of outstanding loan

Source: Adapted from the IDL group 2010

*Based on the 75% benchmark (a potential exclusion error of 25%) and a land holding of less than 1 ha.

** Federal Graduation Guidance Note

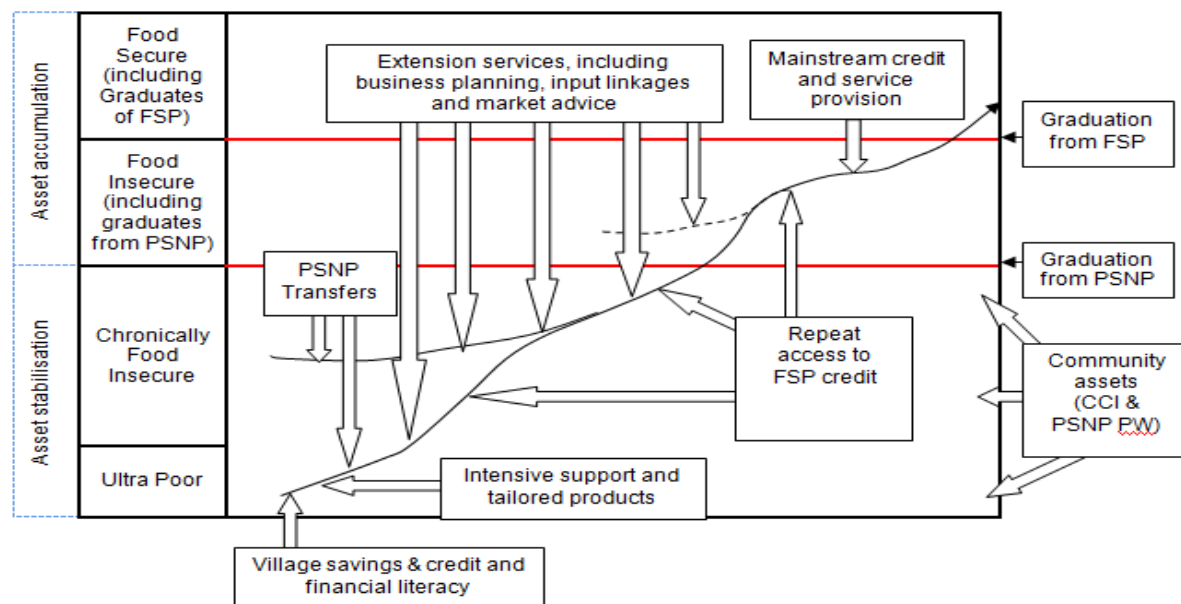
*** Regional Graduation Guidance Note

Graduation in principle

Figure 1 below shows the implementation scheme of the PSNP in conjunction with credit and other supports from other food security programmes. These programmes will enable chronically food insecure households to build productive assets while keeping their consumption smooth. As their assets base increases, PSNP beneficiary households will reach a point where they no longer need safety net support and graduate from the program. After

graduation, however, households are still entitled to receive support in terms of credit and extension, and to participate in other development interventions to further develop their productive assets until they finally become entirely independent from the Food Security Programme (de Gramont et al., 2007; MoARD, 2009).

Figure 1. Linkages between PSNP, OFSP and Other Development Interventions



Source: Adopted from Food Security Programme 2010-2014 (MoARD, 2009: 16)

One of the core principles of the FSP is that the community should play a crucial role in the graduation process. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the Community Food Security Task Force (CFSTF) to decide on graduation. This taskforce is formed by elected representatives of an elder, youth, female, male, and a health extension worker together with a development agent and representative from the Kebele food security task force. (MoARD, 2007).

While the CFSTF should decide on graduation, the assessment of the households is undertaken by government officials, the so-called development agents (DAs). The DAs in each Kebele prepare an overview of the asset holdings of PSNP beneficiary households. Once information on household assets has been collected, they calculate the value of household assets per household member using a set of agreed asset values. On the basis of the resulting household profiles, the CFSTF will prepare a list of households that can graduate from the PSNP. Those households with asset holdings equal or higher than the benchmarks will be proposed for graduation to district authorities. The district will review and approve these proposals for graduation. For effective implementation of the benchmarks, the regional graduation guidance note emphasizes the establishment of a strong institutional framework from the district down to the village level. Nevertheless, as it will be shown later in this paper, some of these institutions established were not effective in executing their intended tasks specially those institutions at Kebele and Community levels.

Study area

The study was undertaken in South Gondar Administrative Zone, in Ebinat district, one of the chronically food insecure districts of Amhara region. Ebinat was selected for this study because of high levels of food insecurity with more than one-third of the population being

undernourished. According to information obtained from the district agricultural office, about 37% of the rural population of the district (77, 618 people) received support from the PSNP program since 2005. The district is predominantly agricultural, 96% of the population is involved in mixed farming practicing crop production, livestock rearing and agricultural labour. Livelihoods in the area are predominantly dependent on rain-fed agriculture. However, rainfall patterns are erratic and uneven and are characterised by late onset and early withdrawal. Average land size is very small and declining becoming too small to support an average family size of five people per household.

Wheat, barley, sorghum and *Teff* are the main crops cultivated for consumption while lentils, beans and oil seeds are the main cash crops grown in the district. Average production of cereals, the major agricultural output is very low. Average duration of household food sufficiency based on production in a typical year is between 6-7 months. As a result, large numbers of households are chronically food insecure and, therefore, depend on government support. Poor agricultural performance is attributed to poor soil fertility, high environmental degradation and weather-induced drought. The vulnerability of the district is further increased by fragmentation of land holdings, limited agricultural extension programmes, population pressure and climate change.

Characteristics of the graduated households

Major socio-economic differences existed between graduated and non-graduated households in Ebinat district. Out of the total of 80 PSNP beneficiary households in the study area female headed households account for about 20% of the beneficiaries. However, among the graduated households females represent a small proportion. Of 16 graduated households in the area, only two were female headed households while the remaining 14 were male headed. In the study area of the total 163 households, 80 households were getting PSNP transfer since 2005. Out of these 80 beneficiary households 16 households have been “graduated” by the end of 2009 while 64 households were still getting PSNP support. The following section will compare these two groups of households in order to explore the difference in the livelihood situations of the graduated and non-graduated households, especially in terms of asset ownership as this is the basis used to select graduated households. Non-graduated households have an average family size of 5.3 whereas graduated households reported an average family size of 6.2 with one fourth of the households have eight household members.

The major types of assets in the area include livestock and land ownership. Regarding livestock ownership; oxen, cows, sheep, goats and donkeys are the main livestock kept by farmers in the area. Possession of these livestock, however, decreased over time mainly due to drought, lack of fodder and increasing level of poverty. Graduated households were relatively better-off than the non-graduates. For most livestock the differences were significant. Average ownership of oxen for non-graduates was found to be 1.2 whereas for graduated households average ownership was 1.7 (Table 2). It was also found that 23% of the non-graduated households have no ox at all whereas all graduated households reported possession of an ox. Sheep and goat ownership also revealed further differences. Average ownership of sheep and goat for the non-graduates was 2.5 whereas graduated households own 3.5 on average. In terms of donkey ownership graduated households have one donkey on average compared with 0.5 for non-graduated households. No major difference was recorded in terms of cow ownership. In the study area, however, possession of other livestock was very low which indicates the high level of poverty faced by many of the households.

Table 2. Characteristics of graduated and non-graduated households

Households Characteristics		Status of Households		
		Graduated	Non-graduated	Total
Sex of Household heads	Male	14	50	64
	Female	2	14	16
Average family size		6.2	5.3	5.48
Average livestock ownership	Ox	1.7	1.2	1.3
	Cow	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Shoats	3.5	2.5	2.7
	Donkey	1.0	0.5	0.60
Average Land ownership		1.0ha	0.75 ha	0.80 ha
Land Rented on average		1.0ha	0.5ha	0.60 ha

Source: Own Field Survey 2010

Average size of land ownership among graduated households was one hectare compared to 0.75 hectare for the non-graduates. About one third of the graduated households have less-than one hectare of land; just over half of the households own between one to two hectares of land while the rest have more than two hectares of land. To maximise their production, most of the households rented land from labour poor households and households who don't have an ox. Average size of rented land was found to be one hectare for graduated households whereas it was 0.5 hectare for the non-graduates. Because of the small size of farm lands, the level of productivity was very low. Off-farm activities are also limited except for some people who migrate to nearby or distant areas to work as daily labourers. Households reported that the PSNP is a major source of food which provides them resources used for household consumption.

This comparison shows that indeed the graduated households had access to more assets than the average PSNP recipient household. The question is whether their assets are enough to become sustainably food secure?

Are graduated households food secure?

This section of the paper illustrates the food self-sufficiency situation of graduated households based on households' self-assessment of food sufficiency. As discussed above graduation from the PSNP is defined as being food self-sufficient throughout the year. When the graduated households were asked about their food self-sufficiency status about a quarter of them reported food self-sufficiency throughout the year. The study, however, revealed that a significant group of graduated households falls short of the intended outcomes. Three-fourths of the graduated households reported a food shortage even after graduation. These households faced a food shortage of two to five months (Table 3). These are households who reportedly had a food shortage of about six months when they were targeted in the PSNP. They described that the safety net programme had resulted in an improvement in their food consumption, yet they were still food insecure.

Table 3: Graduated households by months of food self-sufficiency

No of Food Sufficient Months	Frequency	Percentage
12 Month	4	25.00
10 Month	3	18.75
9 Month	4	25.00
8 Months	3	18.75
7 Months	2	12.50
Total	16	100.00

Source: Own Field Survey 2010

Among the graduates, households who reported food self-sufficiency are those with better asset holdings and household labour. According to these households, having enough labour and oxen enabled them to rent additional land to produce enough to cover household food shortage. It also enabled them to better utilise the credit they took. They mostly used the credit to buy an extra ox and rent additional land which helped them to increase their productivity.

On the other hand, graduated households who reported food shortages, gave small land size, shortage of oxen for ploughing, and effects of the frequent droughts as major reasons for their food insecurity situation. They reported that inability to adequately feed their households forced them to sell the livestock they have acquired over the last few years to cover household consumption gaps.

Household interviews showed that the livestock holdings of graduated households improved after their participation in the PSNP and OFSP programmes, although most of their livestock was bought with a loan that had not yet been repaid. A few labour rich households also reported that they used part of PSNP cash payments to purchase livestock. However, about three-fourth of the graduated households depend on livestock sales to cover consumption gaps and to pay back their loan. In the study area, where livestock ownership is very low, the sale of livestock for consumption smoothing purposes is critical for rural livelihoods, as it can endanger the future viability of households. This is likely to make households become dependent on emergency relief for survival in the long-term (Devereux and Guenther, 2009; Carter and Barrett, 2007). The majority of graduated households in our sample was thus still food insecure, in debt over the purchase of livestock and was losing their accumulated assets. This raises the question of why they were graduated from the programme.

Graduation in practice: Ebinat district

In Ebinat district, safety net records showed that a total of 77,618 people received support from the PSNP since its introduction in 2005. Of these, 91% of the beneficiaries were public works participants while 9% of them were direct support beneficiaries. In the district, graduation has been implemented since 2008 using the regional benchmark of 4,200 birr per capita. Accordingly, of the total public works beneficiaries 3,608 people (870 households) have graduated in the district during the first phase of the programme (2005-2009). This represents about 5% of the beneficiaries.

According to information obtained from the Amhara Region Food Security Bureau, after setting the graduation benchmark at the regional level, awareness creation meetings were undertaken with zonal and district administrators. Training was also provided to district agricultural office experts about the overall graduation process since they are responsible for the training of the Kebele food security task force and the development agents at a lower level.

However, the trainings provided were said to be very theoretical and did not provide them with the skills they need to implement graduation benchmarks. The CFSTF were also unaware of graduation benchmarks.

Graduated households were asked about their awareness concerning the graduation benchmark and process of graduation. About two-thirds of the households reported lack of awareness. One-third of the households revealed a very limited awareness. The majority of the household heads reported that they were not even briefed about the criteria before their graduation. Households were also asked if they agreed with the decision about their graduation. Only two of the sixteen households agreed about the decision. One household head responded that:

I don't agree with the decision. I believe that it is wrong that I graduated from the safety net. There are households better than me who still participate in the PSNP because they are very close to the Kebele administrator. It is good that I have got a credit that I used it to buy additional livestock and to purchase cereals. But they forced me to graduate when they knew that I don't cover my food needs throughout the year. I still believe that I should get the safety net since I don't cover my food gaps³.

Good connections with Kebele administrators were mentioned by some households as a reason for a household to stay in the PSNP. Caeyers and Dercon (2011) reported a similar finding where connections to powerful people at local level were the most important predictor of being included in the safety net. Most of the graduated households argued that they did not know anything about their graduation until they have been informed by the CFSTF in a public meeting.

Graduated households were also asked whether they had been provided with credit before graduation. It was found that about three-fourths of the households were provided with credit before they graduate. However, most of them used a significant amount of the credit for consumption smoothing purpose. It was also indicated that none of the graduated households have started loan repayment so far. One household head told us that:

We have taken credit one year before we were graduated. They told us that we should use the money to buy livestock but we didn't use all the money to buy livestock. We have eight family members but we were getting the PSNP only for five family members for the last four years and, therefore, the support was not enough. Especially last year was not a good year. Hailstorm destroyed our crops and therefore we used part of the loan money to buy grains for consumption⁴.

Three-fourths of the graduated households argued that, when the Kebele committee decides to graduate them, the committee was looking only at the fact that they had taken credit without examining their food security status or productive assets they have acquired. When asked about this, members of the Kebele council asserted that households who have taken credit are better-off in terms of asset holdings and are expected to graduate from the PSNP. Apparently, the council took credit as a sole indicator for graduation, rather than determining household's asset base as would have been required. As this study shows, however, access to credit doesn't guarantee households' food sufficiency as most of the households used a significant amount of the credit to cover short-term food shortages. This type of graduation exercise was also documented by Devereux (2010) where access to credit was used as criteria to select graduating households without considering its role in productive investment.

Safety net beneficiary households expressed their views that desire to have access to this limited credit service became a motive for households to graduate even without improving their food security status let alone their household assets base. A graduated household explained this as follows:

Before I graduated I wanted to take credit from the safety net but when I ask for credit the Kebele committee told me that I can get the credit only if I will graduate from the PSNP. I didn't want to graduate but I need the credit to buy an ox that is why I was selected for graduation. But I still have food shortages⁵.

Support after the graduation

To prevent graduated households from falling back into poverty and destitution, graduated households are entitled to household asset building supports, such as credit, extension support and provision of technology (MoARD, 2007). Graduated households, however, revealed that they did not get support as pledged to them after their graduation. Less than a quarter of households reported to have received limited technological support, in particular *Broad Bed Maker* and *Tied Ridger*⁶. The majority of the households, however, did not receive any support from the government. Three-fourths of the households described that they are now supporting themselves through selling their livestock. They are worried that if they do not get proper support from the government to improve their livelihoods, they will fall back into destitution after they finish selling their livestock. The following excerpt from one household demonstrates this clearly:

When we graduate they told us that the government will support us in the future, but since graduation no one has visited us and we did not get any support. For now we are selling our livestock to cover our food shortage but we are now worried about the future. When we finish our livestock we will be in trouble. We need to be supported by the government⁷.

This lack of support, according to interviewed households, became an impediment to expand their livestock and other business opportunities. Most of these households depend on subsistence agriculture on small plots of degraded land with the PSNP provided a significant input into their livelihoods. They are not able to cope with the withdrawal of this support and risk to lose the assets they built over the course of the programme.

The district PSNP coordinator explained the lack of access to credit for graduated households with reference to resource shortage. Because of limited financial resources, the district only provided credit to new cohorts of graduating households since 2008. This was also reported in interviews held at the regional food security bureau. An expert at the regional bureau explained that OFSP resources fall short of the demands at the regional level, which is a reason to restrict credit to potentially graduating households.

The graduation guidance note (MoARD, 2007) states the possibility of households' re-entry into the PSNP when hit by shocks. However, none of the graduated households knew about this possibility. Experts at the district agricultural office also argued that allowing re-entry into the safety net will affect the effectiveness of the program. The experience of Ebinat district showed that support provided to graduated households hit by shocks has been covered by the contingency budget and risk financing mechanism rather than allowing re-entry into the PSNP. In 2009, for example, in one of the study villages the contingency budget was used to support graduated and non-beneficiary households after their harvest had been damaged by a hailstorm.

Challenges of Programme Implementation

The results above revealed that 12 out of the 16 graduated households continue to be food insecure and depend on the sale of livestock to cover their food gaps. How could this happen? Discussions with graduated households revealed that the combination of the PSNP and OFSP programmes were not sufficient to sustainably improve households food security situations. Both graduated and non-graduated households were asked to indicate the main problems preventing households from achieving food security with support from the PSNP and OFSP programmes. 56% of the households indicated that the main problem was the small nature of transfer they received as compared to the problems they faced. 31% believed that lack of appropriate information about the PSNP and OFSP programmes were a major factor, whereas 13% reported the non-transparent nature of program implementation (Table 4).

Table 4. Major problem preventing households to achieve food security

Major Problem	Frequency	Percentage
Small nature of transfer	45	56.25
Lack of clear information about PSNP and OFSP	25	31.25
Non-transparency of the programme	10	12.50
Total	80	100.00

Source: Own Field Survey 2010

Results from in-depth interviews held with food insecure graduated households and key informant interviews conducted with district agricultural experts revealed that the following five factors are the major reasons why the combination of the PSNP and OFSP programmes have failed to take all graduated households out of poverty and food insecurity in a sustainable way.

Too little support

Beneficiary households raised concerns about the amount of transfer they received. The majority of the participants argued that the amount of safety net and other food security programme transfers are too small to cover households' food shortages. This results in limited improvements in household asset accumulation patterns which is a critical step for graduation to take place (Devereux, 2002; Carter and Barrett, 2006; Devereux and Guenther 2009). Households also mentioned their concern about the current high rate of inflation which has reduced the purchasing power of the cash transfer. More than two-thirds of interviewed households described absence of full family targeting⁸ as a major factor why the amount of transfer is too small. Full family targeting was introduced into the food security programme in 2007, to avoid the need of households to sell their assets to compensate for partial transfers. However, implementing full family targeting was a major problem, as PSNP resources were diluted in order to cover larger number of needy households. About three-fourth of the households who have received credit used a significant amount of the credit for consumption smoothing. This was also related, in the experience of households, to the late nature of transfers which forced them to use credit and sale of livestock to cover consumption gaps. Most of the households reported that a delay of two months is common and sometimes even higher. Gilligan et al. (2009) also reported issues of payment delay as one major problem of the safety net programme.

Meeting quota or targets

The district PSNP coordinator mentioned in his interview⁹, that they annually receive a graduation quota from the regional food security bureau. Local development agents and Kebele administrators, in turn, revealed that they usually receive orders from the Woreda agricultural office to graduate a certain number of households every year. As a result, they reported that, they are being forced to select every year a certain number of households among safety net beneficiaries for graduation, irrespective of their level of food security. Allocation of the graduation quota, therefore, puts pressure on local officials at district level.

Officials at the regional bureau, however, explained that the bureau does not set graduation quota, but instead graduation targets are set for each district, in order to estimate the necessary resources required to achieve graduation and to monitor graduation performance. It was clear that, whatever the purpose of the targets, the understanding and interpretation at the district level was about quotas by which their performance would be evaluated at a later stage. Fear of being held accountable for programme failure, which would result in negative effects for career prospects of local officials, thus affected the implementation process. A similar result was reported regarding targeting of households for resettlement in Sekota district (Bishop and Hilhorst, 2010). This explains why local officials have a tendency to graduate households prematurely.

Limited Awareness and Training

The study revealed a lack of awareness concerning the graduation process and graduation benchmark at Kebele and community level especially on the part of the beneficiary households. About two-thirds of graduated households revealed lack of adequate knowledge about graduation. They were not even briefed about the criteria before their graduation. Members of the CFSTF also showed no knowledge of the graduation benchmark. Even the development agents (DAs) and members of the Kebele food security task force who have been trained to implement graduation believed that the training was very theoretical and insufficient in terms of providing them practical instructions and experience on how to implement the program. This lack of proper awareness, therefore, contributed to poor implementation capacity of the programme at the local level which ultimately affects its success. Dom (2008) also reported similar findings about how limited awareness due to lack of proper training on graduation process affected implementation of graduation in Tigray. These results are, however, contrary to what is reported by the graduation assessment report commissioned by the World Bank which reported adequate awareness of the graduation concept even at the local level (IDL group, 2010).

Inconsistent asset registration

Development agents are said to be responsible for recording the assets of safety net beneficiary households. In the study area, however, it was reported that asset registration was undertaken together with members of the Kebele Councils and was undertaken without the consent of individual households. From field observation and interviews with households and DAs, the study revealed that one major problem is lack of consistency in recording household assets among DAs throughout the district. Another example is that assets which are not elements of regional graduation benchmarks are included in the asset registration process. The study, for example, witnessed that ownership of weapons was included as an element of graduation while weapon ownership is not an official element of graduation. There was also a case where DAs registered the value of perennial plant by estimating its value for 10 years' time while there is no guarantee that the plant will be productive for 10 years.

Lack of Strong institutional setup for program implementation

The study also revealed the lack of strong institutions for the implementation of the programme at community level. Though the Community Food Security Task Force (CFSTF) exists in structure, they are not functional. In principle they are responsible to select potential graduates, however, the actual selection of graduates was undertaken by the Kebele council and the DAs. The CFSTF is only in place nominally as a symbol to be seen to follow the proposed structure. In a discussion, one member of the CFSTF told us that they do what they have been told to do by the Kebele administrator and the DAs. They do not know what criteria to use and what the graduation benchmarks are about. They select people simply based on the information they get from the Kebele administration.

The study also revealed the lack of a strong institutionalised appeal mechanism. The appeal committee comprises the same people as the Kebele council who select and approves households for graduation. Though there were a few cases of appeals made at the Kebele level against graduation, more than half of interviewed households expressed the view that they even didn't know the possibility of appeals against their graduation. Even most of the households who knew about the possibility of appeal don't believe that things will be different if they complain later. The appeal cases made at the Kebele level were also turned down by the Kebele committee. One graduated person expressed his experience as follows:

I know that I was selected for graduation not because I am rich. But where can I go to complain? If you go to the Kebele office you will get those same people who make the decision in the first place. I went to the district Agricultural office to complain but they told me to make my complaint at the Kebele office and they sent me back. But in the Kebele they don't want to listen to my problem. I don't have a place to go to complain. So, what can I do rather than accepting the decision?¹⁰.

Conclusion

The Ethiopian food security program and in particular the PSNP, represents a major effort on the part of the Ethiopian government and the international donor community to assist millions of households to break out of households' dependence on humanitarian assistance and to achieve food security. Notwithstanding these efforts, there is an abiding question of how successful the program is going to be. Already, it is clear that graduation rates have fallen far behind expectations, with only 9% of recipients having graduated until 2009 and a large number of them faced food shortages even after graduation. This paper has investigated a group of households that were graduated. Among the group of 16 graduated households, 12 had not reached food security despite their graduation.

The first explanation of why graduation is not successful, is found in the overwhelming numbers of food insecure households that dilute even the large resources mustered by the government and donors. The total number of people being assisted by the food security program has actually increased from 5 million in 2005 to 8.3 million people in 2009, rather than going down as it was expected due to graduation. As a result, resources are spread thin. Moreover, there are not enough resources through the OFSP to allow the build-up of an asset base that renders households food secure. In addition, instead of receiving full family support, households cannot survive on limited resources provided by the safety nets alone. They have to use resources that are meant to expand their asset base to smoothen consumption.

This research also highlights the fact that there are major institutional impediments to a successful programme. The PSNP and the process of graduation is quite complex and requires a high capacity level of the local bureaucracy. In practice, there appeared to be many problems. Graduation was not implemented according to the rules set out for its implementation. There was lack of uniform understanding of the graduation benchmark as well as processes across different levels of implementers. This is partly related to lack of training and misunderstandings. At the same time it was found that the setting of targets or quota works as a disincentive for the quality of the programme. Local level officials have an overriding concern to meet the targets, which they perceive to be important for their future career prospects. As a result, they tend to use credit facilities as mechanisms to force households into graduation without examining households' food security status or productive assets. At the same time, the local committees that are responsible for implementing graduation do not function properly due to lack of organisation and information. As a result, they do not act as a countervailing power or watchdog, but follow the proposals for graduation forwarded by the DAs and local administrators. There is no effective mechanism for households to complain against unjust graduation and the complaints committees exist only on paper. These institutional impediments result in the premature graduation of households.

The major problem remains that the food security programme, the PSNP and OFSP, has not resulted in a structural improvement of the food security capacities of households in the study area. 12 out of 16 households have graduated from the programme, even though they are still food insecure. They leave the programme with a modest asset base, often acquired with a loan that they have not yet repaid. In order to survive, they depend on the sale of livestock, without being able to reproduce or restock their sheep and goats. Livestock in these cases, become a temporary safety net that is quickly depleting. Once depleted, households will likely become dependent again on external assistance. Despite all the efforts and good intentions, it seems that for most households, the food security programme has not been able to sustainably break the vicious cycle of dependence on aid. From dependency on food aid, households have moved to dependency on the safety net programme, and are now dependent on a rapidly depleting livestock base, with a risk of becoming dependent on aid again. The structural problems that have been identified as impeding food security, namely poor soil fertility, environmental degradation and weather-induced drought, population pressure, fragmented landholdings and lack of income generating opportunities outside of agriculture, have not been resolved and continue to frame the possibilities of households to overcome food insecurity. Instead of achieving sustainable food security, graduation from the PSNP has only meant for most families a re-allocation of their dependency.

Notes

- 1 Lowest tier of administration next to the district, previously called Peasant Association
- 2 1birr = 0.06 USD in March 2011
- 3 Interview: Graduated household, Mecheda February 29, 2010
- 4 Interview: Graduated household, Mecheda, June 18, 2010
- 5 Interview: Graduated household, Worgaja May 12, 2010
- 6 'Modern' farm equipment used to plough a land
- 7 Interview: Graduated household, Worgaja, January 15, 2010
- 8 Full family targeting refers to provision of sufficient resources to households to meet all family members' consumption needs
- 9 Interview: District PSNP coordinator May 9, 2010
- 10 Interview: Graduated household, Mecheda April 24, 2010

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Chapter Five

The differential impact of microcredit on rural livelihoods: case study from Ethiopia

This chapter has been Submitted as:

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Abstract

This paper examines the differential impact of credit on rural Ethiopian households. Though credit is generally expected to have a positive impact on household livelihoods, this paper argues that credit affects households differently depending on wealth. Results show that credit failed to enable poor households to move out of poverty and food insecurity, whereas better-off and labour rich households used credit to improve their livelihoods. For poor households, rather than achieving long-term livelihood improvements, access to credit only means short-term consumption smoothing with a risk of being trapped into a cycle of indebtedness. Participation in a safety net programme could, to some extent, break this cycle, because such participation enhanced the credit-worthiness of poor households. The paper is based on ethnographic research, including a survey of 106 households, and a series of monthly in-depth interviews with a group of 15 households in the district of Ebinat, northern Ethiopia, over an 18-month period, from February 2009 to July 2010.

Keywords: microcredit, livelihoods, food security, safety nets, Ethiopia.

Introduction

Since its introduction in the mid-1970s, microcredit has been considered a major tool for development and poverty reduction (Fisher and Sriram, 2002). By the end of 2007, microcredit programmes reached over 154 million clients worldwide, notably women in developing countries (Daley-Harris, 2007; 2009). Proponents of microcredit claim that it helps poor people to reduce risk, raise productivity, obtain high returns on investment, increase income, and improve the quality of their lives and that of their dependants (Robinson, 2001; Goldberg, 2005). It is further believed that microcredit can play a major role in assisting the poor to move out of poverty by providing start-up capital which they have been unable to access historically because financial markets are undeveloped in poor economies (Getaneh, 2004). In Ethiopia, government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) consider microcredit as a prime policy instrument in fighting poverty and increasing the productivity of the poor (Wolday, 2001; 2003).

However, there is so far no consensus among academics about the actual impact of microcredit on poverty reduction and household food security (Banerjee *et al.*, 2009, Fisher and Sriram, 2002; Weiss and Montgomery, 2005; Develtere and Huybrechts, 2005; Segers *et al.*, 2010; Armendáriz de Aghion and Morduch, 2010). Karlan and Zinman (2010: 433) argue that, despite claims about the role of microcredit in lifting the poor out of poverty, there is little agreement as to whether credit does borrowers more good than harm.

In recent microcredit literature, the differential impact of credit on different types of household has become a major discussion point (Khandker, 2005; Coleman, 2006; Islam, 2007; Segers *et al.*, 2010). So far, there has been little empirical research on this topic. Moreover, most of the existing microcredit studies are conducted by employing quantitative research methods and they tend to ignore the voices of beneficiary communities and individuals (Cons and Paprocki, 2008). In the Ethiopian context, very little is known about the role of microcredit in household food security and its impact on wider rural livelihoods (Segers *et al.*, 2010; Getachew and Yishak, 2006; Getaneh and Garber, 2007; Pankhurst 2009).

This paper aims to contribute to the debate on the differential impact of credit in Ethiopia. Evidence will be put forward to support the view that there is a differential impact of credit on the livelihoods and food security of different types of households in the drought-prone, chronically food-insecure district of Ebinat in the northern highlands of Ethiopia. Results show that credit failed to enable poor households to move out of poverty and food insecurity, whereas better-off and labour-rich households used credit to improve their livelihoods. For poor households, rather than achieving long-term livelihood improvements, access to credit only meant short-term consumption smoothing with the risk of being trapped into cycles of indebtedness. Poor households get into cycles of poverty and destitution mainly because of the very strict microcredit repayment regimes and their socio-economic status which forces them to divert most of the loan for consumption smoothing. Better-off and labour-rich households, on the other hand, use credit better than poor households to improve their livelihoods. Small food gaps and the availability of large amounts of household labour enable better-off households to invest most of their credit in improving their livelihoods. By focusing on the differential impact of microcredit on rural households, the paper aims to contribute to the wider debate on the relevance of microcredit in taking poor households out of poverty and food insecurity in Ethiopia in particular, and in developing countries in general.

In addition, the paper will shed light on the impact of safety-net programming on the ways in which credit works. Our research on credit took place within the framework of research into the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). The PSNP supports millions of Ethiopian households annually to enable them to break through their poverty. We found that those poor households participating in a safety net programme could, to some extent, break away from the cycle of indebtedness associated with microcredit because participation enhanced their creditworthiness. This helped poor households to use credit for livelihood enhancing investments. This finding provides suggestions on how poor people can better benefit from microcredit.

After elaborating the study area and the methodology, the paper will provide an overview of the types and nature of credit available in the area and how clients use the available credit programmes. The paper then discusses the impact of credit on rural livelihoods including asset creation, agricultural productivity and household food security. Finally, the findings about the effect of the PSNP on credit patterns are presented.

Study area

The study was undertaken in two food insecure villages in Ebinat district, South Gondar Administrative Zone of Amhara Region. Ebinat is one of the chronically food insecure districts in the region. Food insecurity is the norm, affecting more than one third of the rural population. About 94% of the District's 221,000 population live in rural areas of which about 37% (around 76,000 people) have been supported by the government's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) since 2005. The PSNP is one of the main components of the Ethiopian Government Food Security Programme which, together with Other Food Security Programmes (OFSP) are designed to achieve household food security. The PSNP programme provides six months of food and/or cash annually to chronically food insecure households with the aim of smoothing household consumption (MoARD, 2006). By providing a predictable, guaranteed and timely transfer, it also aims to prevent the poor from depleting their assets and becoming destitute (Bishop and Hilhorst 2010: 189). At the same time it creates assets in the community. The OFSP programme, on the other hand, provides asset building support by linking up beneficiary households to credit and other development programmes. It aims to lift households out of poverty and food insecurity and take them into successful 'graduation' - a term used to describe 'the movement of households out of dependence on safety net support' (Devereux *et al.*, 2006; MoARD, 2009; Siyoum *et al.*, forthcoming).

The district is predominantly agricultural and 96% of the population practices mixed farming. Agricultural labouring is another, very limited, source of cash. Agriculture in the area is predominantly rain-fed and is very vulnerable because the distribution of rainfall is uneven and is characterised by late onset and early cessation. Average land size is often very small and insufficient to support an average family of five people. Opportunities for off-farm activities are also very limited. As a result, large numbers of households are vulnerable to chronic food insecurity and depend on government support to cover their food shortages. Large numbers of poor households depend on credit for consumption smoothing purposes, especially in the hungry season when households have already consumed their produce. Out of the total households who have access to credit, about 81% have diverted some credit for unintended purposes: consumption smoothing takes most of the diverted credit.

Methodology

This paper results from 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork by the first author which took place from February 2009 to July 2010. Ethnography aims to study social processes in everyday settings by depicting the activities and perspectives of the actors in that setting (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 23-24). 'Participant observation' is a key working method in ethnography. It can also incorporate a range of other data gathering techniques (Geertz, 1983).

For this research, in addition to participant observation, we conducted a survey among all the 106 households in two selected research villages in Ebinat District that had accepted credit. They represented 65% of the total population of the 163 households in the selected villages. In order to classify the households into poor and better-off, livestock ownership, land size and labour availability were used as the main criteria as these were found to be the key distinguishing wealth features in the study area. The actual ranking of the households was done by wealth ranking by a group of representatives of the community and validated on the basis of the initial survey data. From the 106 households, 55 were classified as poor and 51 as relatively better-off.

A total of 15 (8 poor and 7 better-off) of the households were selected to be part of a group involved in in-depth interviews. Over a period of one year, the same group of households was interviewed by the first author in a systematic way by revisiting them every month to get more in-depth understanding of the role of credit in their livelihoods. The recurring interviews allowed us to observe closely the use of credit throughout the year. The researcher was able to build trust over the year. This was important because people usually do not like to talk openly about money matters and are disinclined to reveal the full picture. With the growing level of trust, the full picture could slowly be developed for these 15 families. We also discussed the purpose of the research with respondents and assured all informants of complete confidentiality. While the group research deepened findings from the survey, survey findings were used to validate findings from the group research.

Finally, we also conducted nine interviews with key informants, including representatives of community elders, local cooperatives, Amhara Credit and Saving Institute (ACSI) field staff, development agents (DAs), ACSI district representatives, and the head of the District Agricultural Office. Official reports and other relevant documents were also used as sources of secondary data. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data coupled with the everyday presence of the researcher sharing people's lives for prolonged periods of time, provided a unique opportunity to understand the complexity of people's lives and the role of credit in their livelihoods.

Types and nature of credit sources in Ebinat

Three types of credit operate in the study area: credit from Amhara Credit and Saving Institution (ACSI), the government food security credit provided within the framework of the OFSP programme, and informal credit. ACSI is one of the main microcredit providers. Initially developed as a department within the Organization for Rehabilitation and Development of Amhara (ORDA), ACSI was registered and licensed as a microfinance share company institution in April 1997 (Getaneh and Garber, 2007). With over 1.4 million clients served by the end of 2009, ACSI is the largest microfinance institution in the region. It operates through its headquarters in Bahir Dar with 10 branch and 186 sub-branch offices covering all districts in the region (ACSI, 2009). ACSI provides four types of financial

services to its clients: credit extension, modern savings service, fund administration and money transfer. This paper will focus on the credit programme which is the only one relevant for the study area.

ACSI loans

The main objective of ACSI's credit programme is to assist asset-poor households of the region to develop their assets. Loans are based on collateral granted to groups of five to seven people, jointly liable as borrowers. Loan amounts and terms vary depending on many factors with a maximum loan size of 5,000 ETB⁸ and a maximum loan term of three years. Loans have to be paid back by the end of each loan season with an interest rate of 18%. A compulsory saving of 1% of the total loan amount must be paid on a monthly basis throughout the loan period. By the end of 2009 in the study district, ACSI had 3,842 clients with a total loan amount of 6,478,573.14 ETB and with a repayment rate of 98.7%. In the selected study Kebeles (Kebele represents the smallest administrative unit composed of groups of villages), ACSI had a total of 536 clients with total loan amount of 839,700 ETB.

ACSI's beneficiaries are selected by a Development Committee (also known as the Credit and Savings Committee) at the Kebele level. The committee consists of five people: the Kebele Administrator, Vice Administrator, the Kebele Secretary and two community members. These committee members, together with the ACSI field worker, are responsible for selecting beneficiaries among applicants based on their good conduct and determination to work. Selected households are trained for 3 to 5 days on credit objectives, use of loan money, insurance, repayment mechanisms, and the nature of the group collateral. Although the primary focus of ACSI consists of the poor, local villagers claimed that the very poor people are being excluded. This is primarily the case for poor households which do not have land or oxen and are therefore unable to form a collateral group. When this question was raised with the ACSI sub-branch coordinator, he explained that the community will be trained not to exclude hard-working poor people simply because they are poor. But he indicated that ACSI cannot force people to include any particular person as membership in a group is based on people's willingness and on trust. He explained that when they faced this kind of situation, they tried to help the poor to form a group of their own but this proved to be difficult.

Government food security loans

Food security credit is the second type of loan. This is a major component of the Ethiopian Government Food Security Programme (FSP) that also incorporates the PSNP programme. It is provided by the District Agricultural and Rural Development Office (WARDO) through farmers' cooperatives and is distributed to individual farmers without collateral. Its objective is to help farmers to move out of poverty through increasing their assets and productivity. It is usually used for one or more of the following components: crop production, livestock breeding and fattening, technological dissemination, and engagement in non-farm activities. Food security loans include two types. The first is a short-term loan which is provided for crop production purposes to help farmers increase their annual production. The second is a long-term loan provided to farmers to increase and diversify their assets and income through livestock investment and provision of technological inputs.

The loan amount depends on a business plan prepared for each household. On average the loan amount ranges from 2000 to 4000 ETB and the loan term is either one year or three years. The short-term loan has to be repaid within one year after the beneficiary farmers have

⁸ 1 ETB = 0.06 USD in December 2011

harvested their crop. The long-term loan, on the other hand, is repayable in three years in annual instalments in which the borrower has to pay one-third of the loan each year with an interest rate of 7.25%. According to the WARDO Credit and Input Supply Department Head, after the introduction of the PSNP in 2005, about 29,911,241 ETB worth of food security loans were distributed through cooperatives in 32 rural Kebeles of the District. In the selected study Kebeles, a total of 2,095,595 ETB was distributed which accounts for about 7% of the total food security loans in the District.

The WARDO, the District Finance Office and the District Administration assume collective responsibility for loan recovery. However, unlike the ACSI credit system, loan default and rescheduling is common in the case of food security loans. The repayment rate is about 1.3% of the total loan amount. Farmers told the researcher that they preferred the food security loan over the ACSI loans, mainly because of the less strict enforcement of the food security loan regulations. In terms of coverage, however, ACSI has by far the largest share of clients.

Informal loans

The third type of loan is the informal loan within the community. Before the introduction of formal credit in the area, credit was a matter of informal arrangements between households or individuals, usually involving grain and/or cash between households which maintained reciprocal relationships.

Informal loans can be divided into two: informal loans that take place between close neighbours, friends or relatives and informal loans between two households or individuals who are not related and have had no prior relationship. According to members of the community, the first type of loan is small in amount and most of the time they are interest free. These take place when neighbours or relatives are in need of help due to problems that cannot be covered by the households' resources alone. Most of the time there is no fixed repayment time for this type of loan but conventionally it is after the next harvest season. The second type of loan is a seasonal grain or cash loan between better-off and poor households: grain loans are the most usual. In times of shortage, large numbers of poor households depend on grain loans from better-off households for their survival or when they face seed shortage. Even in good years, poor households' own production is not always enough to meet their needs due to small land holdings and other problems. Credit is, therefore, an important element in the coping strategy. For this type of loan, regardless of when a loan was made, repayment is usually required after the next harvest. With respect to cash, poor households often depend on loans from private money lenders who charge high interest. This kind of loan is mainly used to meet urgent cash needs for different purposes. The loan period varies from a few days to a few weeks or months and interest rates range from a small percentage to around 50 per cent monthly.

According to community elders, debt repayment problems are very rare in informal credit systems, regardless of the type of loan. This is mainly because of the small size of informal loans and strong social relations that exist among community members. These days, however, informal grain and cash loans are decreasing in magnitude and frequency. This kind of informal loan arrangement is now limited to only small circles of close neighbours and family members. During focus group discussions, community members indicated that there are two major reasons for this. The first is the introduction of formal credit institutions that undermine the traditional lending practices. People prefer to take loans from the government than from individual lenders mainly because of the possibilities of taking larger loans with smaller interest rates. This could actually be seen as an endorsement of the micro-credit

system which aims to bring down interest rates and to provide alternatives to the ‘loan-sharks’. The second reason is the inability of better-off people to provide loans to the poor. During focus group discussion, informants indicated that poverty is deepening and there are very few people who can lend. This reason signals a worrying trend, namely that the community as a whole is becoming less resilient. They argue that most people don’t have enough grain or cash to satisfy their own needs let alone to lend to others. An elderly man explained this as follows:

‘Previously if you had grain shortages it was easy to ask neighbours and get what you needed. Now it is very difficult to ask. Those people who were rich are now poor and they do not have much to lend to others. Even if there are a few rich people, they are not willing to give loans to others because they fear that they will not get it back.’

Informal lending practices, however, are not only limited to individual lending. There are also other kinds of grain and cash loans reported by community members including credits available from the Church, funereal associations (*Iddir*) and from other religious associations (*Mahibers*). Sometimes, when in need of both cash and grain, a household resorts to these institutions. The amount of credit provided by these institutions varies but in general it is small compared to individual or formal credit. A grain loan is usually repaid after the next harvest. The repayment time for cash loans, however, is flexible. It depends on the borrowers’ repayment capacity. Interest rates are also different. For cash loans, interest rates are between 10 and 20 per cent. For grain loans, on the other hand, interest rates depend on the arrangements between the individual and the institution but usually the interest is one-third of the total amount of the loan to be paid immediately after the household has collected the harvest. The amounts of such loans, however, are usually very small and their contribution to household wellbeing and food security is insignificant compared with other types of loan.

Households’ utilisation of credit

While informal credit is often extended to bridge a household consumption gap, formal credit is usually provided for specific purposes, namely, to help poor farmers to improve their livelihoods and move out of poverty. Our findings show, however, that the majority of households divert formal credit which raises questions about the amount of the loan diverted and for what purpose.

In the study area, most people tend to divert credit to meet needs which are incompatible with the intended objective. As agriculture in the area is vulnerable to drought, most poor farmers face substantial grain deficits that cannot be covered by their own production. This, together with the absence of income from wage labour and other off-farm activities, forces farmers to divert large amounts of credit to meet food costs or other household needs such as seed, school fees, clothes, religious and social celebrations, medical expenses, house repairs or paying off debts. Survey results show that, of the total credit beneficiary households in the study area, 81% reported a certain amount of loan diversion. The extent of loan diversion, however, was not uniform across households. About 93% of the poor have diverted a certain amount of the loan to meet other needs compared to 68% of better-off households (Table 1).

Table 1 Extent of loan diversion by type of household

	Loan diversion cases	Total households	Percentage
Poor	51	55	92.7
Better-off	35	51	68.6
Total	86	106	81.0

Source: Field Survey, February 2010

The amount of diversion varies significantly between households. Better-off households diverted about one quarter of the loan amount. Since they have better income to cover other household needs, they invest the largest part of the loan in the intended business activities. But 60% of poor households diverted more than half of their loan. The proportion of loan diversion, therefore, can be seen as an indicator of the level of poverty.

People diverted credit for different purposes. When asked about the purpose of loan diversion, households revealed that consumption smoothing is the dominant use of loan diversion followed by seed purchase and debt repayment (Table 2).

Table 2 Households by purpose of loan diversion

Use of the money	No of HHs	Percentage
Consumption smoothing	76	88.3
Purchase of seed and other farm inputs	31	36.0
Pay-off debt	17	19.8
Religious and social celebrations	14	16.3
Medical expenses	11	12.8
House repairs	8	9.3

Source: Field Survey, February 2010

An analysis of the purpose of loan diversion also revealed some differences between poor and better-off households. For poor households consumption smoothing, religious and social celebration and debt repayment are the dominant use of loan diversion whereas seed purchase, house repair, medical expense, and debt repayment are the main use of loan diversion for better-off households.

Interviews with credit beneficiary households revealed that loan diversion has important advantages. First, loan diversion enables them to survive, given the unavailability of other sources of income including wage labour. Secondly, people appreciate that loan diversion protects them from entering into high interest loan arrangements with private lenders. However, in the study area, there are still 29% of poor households that have taken loans from private lenders with high interest rates to pay off their debts (Table 3). Shetty (2010) similarly found in Chennai, India that people depend on local money lenders to pay off debts despite the unaffordable interest rates. In addition, interview results also showed that farmers divert part of their loan as a risk aversion strategy as farmers do not want to take risks by investing all the loan for one purpose.

Table 3. Nature of poor household loan repayments

Activities	Number	Percentage
Sale of livestock	27	49.0
Sale of crops and others	21	38.0
Loan from different sources	16	29.0

Source: Field Survey, March 2010

From these considerations, it shows that loan diversion is important for people's livelihood strategies. They divert loans to survive, and to prevent the sale of livestock. Some farmers who faced seed shortage also argued that if it had not been for loan diversion, it would have been difficult for them to plough their own land. The use of loan diversion to spread investments means that farmers may use loans in unintended ways, but nevertheless they invest it in their livelihoods according to their own risk aversion logic.

The impact of credit on asset creation

One of the main objectives of credit is to enable households to acquire and develop household assets. Various studies (Pitt and Khandker, 1998; Mosley and Hulme, 1998; Zaman, 1998) indicate that microcredit has a positive impact on building household assets. However, in this study area, we found that microcredit has a limited impact on household assets and the impact is not the same for all types of household. Results show that credit has a relatively greater positive impact on better-off households than on poor households in terms of asset creation. By comparing poor households with better-off households in an in-depth interview, one farmer described how better-off households use credit to build household assets:

'Now everyone is taking credit from the government. The rich people are taking credit because they want to increase their assets and become richer. However, the poor are taking credit to cover their food shortages. The poor use credit mainly to buy grains for consumption whereas the rich use credit to buy additional livestock.'

Livestock purchase is a common use of credit in the area. According to survey results, of the total credit beneficiary households, about 79% bought at least one animal. Livestock purchase, however, is not the same for all categories of household. About 90% of better-off households bought livestock compared with 69% of poor households (Table 4). Focus group discussions revealed that the type of livestock bought is also different. The poor acquired small livestock like sheep and goats whereas the better-off invest their money in large livestock, notably cows and oxen.

Table 4 Livestock purchase by types of household categories

Category of HHs	HHs who bought livestock	Total number of HHs	Percentage
Poor	38	55	69.0
Better-off	46	51	91.2
Total	84	106	79.2

Source: Field Survey, March 2010

We also found that the impact of credit on asset creation depends on the source of the credit. The household survey shows that about 69% of the poor took credit from the informal market

compared with 33% of better-off households (Table 5). Informal loans are smaller than formal loans: and therefore have limited impact on asset creation even without loan diversion. About 53% of better-off households took relatively large loans from the food security credit system whereas only 16% of the poor took these loans - mainly because the former are considered more credit worthy than the latter. Access to relatively large loans, therefore, helped better-off households to invest larger amounts of money in asset creation but nevertheless the impact generally falls short of expectations. Improvements in asset holding have been recorded for better-off households but the gains were not sufficient to ensure sustainable household food security. This was one major reason why the rate of safety net graduation was very low in the study area (Siyoun *et al.*, forthcoming).

Table 5. Access to credit by type of households

Type of Credit	Type of household					
	Poor households			Better-off households		
	No.	Total households	Percentage	No.	Total households	Percentage
Informal	38	55	69.1	17	51	33.3
ACSI	40	55	72.7	38	51	74.5
Food Security	9	55	16.4	27	51	52.9

Source: Field Survey, March 2010

According to some poor households, credit not only has limited impact in household asset creation but also has a negative impact on poor households' asset holdings through forcing households to sell their livestock to pay back their loans. This drives most poor households further into poverty. Most of the poor farmers argued that they failed to repay their loans mainly because of lack of income from loan financed business activities and poor crop performance caused by drought, pests and insufficient land holdings. Survey results show that 49% of the poor were forced to sell the livestock that they had bought with a loan or that they had owned before the loan in order to pay the loan back (see Table 3). These households explained that they sold their livestock because they had no other way of paying back their loan. One interviewed farmer explained this as follows:

'Last year I got credit from ACSI that I have used to buy an ox. However, due to drought I was not able to get sufficient crops to pay back my loan. Now I am going to sell my ox so that I can pay back my loan. If I don't sell my ox and pay my debt I will be sent to jail and I cannot get credit for next year.'

Another interviewed farmer also described his situation as follows:

'Last year we took about 1500 birr credit from ACSI for livestock investment. But we used half of the loan to purchase grains as we did not have enough to eat. We used the remaining half of the loan to buy 3 goats. We hoped to pay back the credit from the money that we will get from goat breeding. But we were not lucky. Two of the goats died from a disease and we sold our ox to pay back our loan so that we can get a loan next time.'

Inability to pay back loans, therefore, forces households to dispose of their assets at the risk of increasing their vulnerability. Sale of livestock to pay back loans, especially the sale of

ploughing oxen, means that poor households may be obliged to rent out their land to another farmer only to get from one quarter to half of the products as rent. This puts poor households further into poverty.

The impact of credit on agricultural productivity and household food security

Another aspect of credit is its impact on agricultural productivity and household food security. Microcredit programmes aim to help rural households invest in improved agricultural inputs, as well as enabling them to use their time effectively on their farms by reducing time spent on income-generating non-farm activities. The aim is to improve agricultural production and thus improve their household food security (Nosiru, 2010; Asmelash, 2003).

Households were asked, therefore, if credit had enabled them to improve their agricultural productivity and household food security. A similar result was reported as for asset creation: that access to credit did not enable poor households to increase their agricultural productivity and household food security. The majority of the poor invested most of their loan in immediate consumption needs and, therefore, credit had no impact on increasing agricultural productivity. Credit simply helped poor households to cover seasonal food shortages with no impact on long-term productivity and household food security. Poor households are risk averse and this prevents them from using their loans to invest in agricultural productivity to improve their food security. Large numbers of better-off households, on the other hand, reported positively compared to the poor households. Credit enabled better-off households to buy additional oxen, seed, and fertiliser which helped them to increase their productivity. One interviewed household explained this as follows:

‘Last year we took a food security loan from the government and bought an ox. The ox helped us to plough additional land that we have rented from another farmer. We have got a good harvest so that we paid back our loan by selling the crops that we harvested. Therefore, credit helped us to plough additional land and increase our production.’

According to information obtained from household interviews, there are four major factors that determine the role of credit in agricultural productivity and household food security which are the availability of land, labour, and livestock, and the extent of loan diversion. In terms of the availability of land, survey results indicate that about half of the poor own less than half a hectare of land or no land at all. It is difficult to increase agricultural productivity with such small plots of land. Lack of enough farm land is, therefore, a major bottleneck in increasing agricultural productivity for many poor households. Availability of enough land, however, does not necessarily mean an increase in agricultural productivity. Shortages of labour and livestock also inhibit the poor from expanding their agricultural productivity. One interviewed female-headed household (FHH), for example, told us that though she has enough land, she rented out her land for only a quarter of the production as rent because of shortage of labour:

‘I took credit from ACSI but I didn’t use it to buy agricultural inputs. My husband died a few years ago and I don’t have a son old enough to plough my land. Therefore, I have rented my land only to get a quarter of the harvest. I am hoping to get a good harvest so that I can pay back my loan. If not, I don’t know what to do.’

Female-headed households and households with elderly people are particularly vulnerable to labour shortage. These households do not manage to use credit for agricultural productivity. In rural Ethiopia, labour availability is an important component of agricultural production. Labour shortage is typical of poor households: it restricts the poor from using credit to maximise their productivity and household food security. Labour shortage means that poor households' ability to undertake labour intensive agricultural activities are very limited (Getaneh, 2004; Pankhurst and Bevan, 2004). Better-off households, on the other hand, have more household labour available and that enables them to increase their productivity and improve their household food security through ploughing extra farmland.

Diversion of credit is also another factor that determines the effectiveness of credit in improving agricultural productivity and household food security. Diversion of credit, for example, allows poor households to cope with short-term problems, but drives them further into long-term poverty and food insecurity. Diversion of loans also means that households have little money to rent farm lands or to buy agricultural inputs to increase their productivity.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, household shocks, especially human and livestock diseases, are other major crises that hold back agricultural productivity and drive poor farmers further into food insecurity. These crises have made large numbers of poor households in the study area worse-off after accessing credit. Lack of proper clinic and veterinary services have further aggravated the problem. The existing clinic and veterinary services are insufficient to provide effective treatment due to the absence of adequately trained staff and the lack of medical facilities and medicines.

The impact of credit on labour rich and better-off households' agricultural productivity and household food security is different. Interview results indicate that labour-rich households benefit more from credit than labour-poor households in terms of increasing agricultural productivity. Having a small food gap and large labour availability enabled better-off households to invest part of their credit in renting additional land for agriculture. The household survey showed that because of the availability of extra labour, about 60% of better-off households used credit to rent additional land to increase their productivity and improve their household food security. Better-off households divert only a small amount of their loan into consumption and therefore they are able to invest a large amount of the loan in acquiring agricultural inputs. Ownership of large numbers of productive assets, in particular livestock, also contributes significantly.

The results of this research show that increases in agricultural productivity and improved household food security is not only determined by access to credit but also by multiple factors including access to land, livestock, and household labour.

The effect of PSNP on the pattern of credit utilisation

The PSNP is one of the major components of the Ethiopian Government Food Security Programme. It provides six months of cash and/or food transfer to food insecure households to cover food gaps. It aims to protect household assets and provide households an opportunity to engage in productive investments. In the study area, we found that access to the government PSNP programme has an impact in terms of access to other forms of credit and ways in which households invest their credit.

Results revealed that by providing a guaranteed transfer to cover household food gaps, PSNP enables poor beneficiary households to use credit effectively for livestock investment better than non-beneficiary households. As noted above, 69% of the poor reported livestock purchase using credit. However, purchase of livestock was not uniform within poor households. Access to the government PSNP affects households differently. Survey results indicate that, of the 69% of the poor who bought livestock, 45.4% were PSNP beneficiaries compared with 23.6% non-beneficiaries (see Table 6).

Table 6. Livestock purchase by types of household categories and access to PSNP

Types of households	Poor HHs			Better-off HHs			Grand Total
Access to PSNP	PSNP	Non-PSNP	Sub Total	PSNP	Non-PSNP	Sub Total	
HHs who bought livestock	25	13	38	22	24	46	84
Total HHs	55	55	55	51	51	51	106
Percentage	45.4	23.6	69.0	43.1	47.1	91.2	79.2

Source: Field Survey, March 2010

Since beneficiary households can use PSNP transfers to cover part of their food gaps, access to PSNP increases households' opportunities to invest credit in building household assets rather than investing it for consumption smoothing. Access to PSNP has, thus, contributed to breaking the common trend whereby poor people use credit for consumption smoothing and then get trapped in a vicious circle of poverty trying to pay back their loans. This result, therefore, indicates how targeted transfer programmes (PSNP in this case) can help poor households to invest credit in livelihood enhancing activities. Nevertheless, in the study area, such investments are very limited and are unable to have sustainable positive impact on the poverty situations of beneficiary households. Access to PSNP, however, does not have a significant difference within better-off households.

We also found that access to PSNP transfers affects households differently in terms of access to credit, especially in the informal market. Results show that PSNP beneficiary households have better access to informal credit than non-beneficiary households. Of the 69% of the poor households which had access to informal credit, 66% were PSNP beneficiaries and the non-beneficiaries accounted for the other 34%. Results from focus group discussions show that people have much greater faith in PSNP beneficiary households than in non-beneficiaries as the former have at least a guaranteed transfer which can be used to pay back their loan. This result also reveals how targeted transfer programmes like the PSNP can have a positive impact in building the credit worthiness of poor households. This indicates the importance of building poor households' capacities, through targeted transfer programmes in order to increase their access to credit.

Conclusion

By providing start-up capital for self-employment, credit can, in theory, help poor people to move out of poverty and food insecurity. However in practice, the role of credit in poverty reduction and long-term livelihood improvement is not as beneficial as claimed by its proponents. Using an ethnographic approach, this paper has investigated a group of 106

households who took credit from both formal and informal sources and has provided a more detailed account of the role of credit in households' livelihoods which other quantitative researches are unable to provide.

The findings of this paper reveal that credit has a differential impact across households in different wealth groups, mainly due to loan diversions. The inability of poor farmers to satisfy household needs throughout the year from their own production requires them to divert credit to meet unanticipated household needs thereby limiting the amount of credit available for long-term livelihood improvement. Results show that, although credit is meant to help poor households to develop their capacities to invest in long-term livelihood improvement to ensure household food security, in reality, credit has failed to do this except by providing buffers in times of shortage. The majority of poor households lack the resources needed to cover their food gaps and are forced to divert credit to cover short-term consumption needs. Consequently these households are forced to sell their productive assets or take another loan with high interest rates to pay back their existing loans. This puts them at risk of further impoverishment and indebtedness.

The paper also revealed that the low risk-taking behaviour of poor households is another major factor preventing them from investing their loans in long-term livelihood improvement and household food security. Shortages of land, labour, and livestock are also factors that inhibit the poor from benefiting from credit. However, PSNP beneficiary households are in a better position to use credit for livelihood improvement as transfers received in this programme helped to reduce household food gaps thereby reducing the extent of loan diversion for consumption purposes. The paper shows how access to external transfers plays an important role in terms of assisting poor households to invest credit for productive purposes. The paper showed that better-off and labour-rich households are the ones which used credit to improve long-term livelihoods and household food security. Having a small food gap and more labour enabled them to invest most of the credit in long-term livelihood enhancement thus enabling them to improve their socio-economic status.

The findings of this study suggest that access to credit has not resulted in a structural improvement in the livelihoods of most of the beneficiary households in the study area. For a large majority of poor households, the long-term impact of credit is very limited. Though it enabled poor households to cover short-term food gaps and helped them to survive in periods of shortage, most of them are trapped into cycles of indebtedness and poverty. Despite all the assumptions and expectations, credit did not enable poor households to break out of poverty and food insecurity. The major structural problems preventing poor households from investing their credit in livelihood improvements have not been addressed. Improving households' livelihoods in the long-term involves not only providing access to credit but also greater access to productive resources and assets such as land, labour, livestock, technology, and the opportunity to develop the necessary skills. Increasing access to these productive resources is considered to be very important for increasing productivity in subsistence farming (Liverpool and Winter-Nelson, 2010). To ensure household food security in the long-term, therefore, credit has to produce a positive change in access to these productive resources.

Instead of assisting poor households to move out of poverty and food insecurity, credit has pushed most of them further into indebtedness. This study revealed that, labour-poor and vulnerable households are less likely to benefit from credit in terms of long-term livelihood improvement and household food security. It indicates the importance of integrating credit

with other targeted transfer programmes to give poor households an opportunity to engage in livelihood enhancing investments which will help them to improve their current socio-economic status. Credit, therefore, should not be considered as a 'one size fits all' kind of programme suitable for all types of households. Tailored approaches to credit are crucial so that the credit programmes fit the livelihoods of different categories of households and can have a sustainable positive impact on the livelihoods of poor households.

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Chapter Six

Food aid and dependency syndrome in Ethiopia: Local people's perception

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Abstract

In chronically food insecure areas, long-term provision of food aid is usually attributed to peoples' 'dependency syndrome' which is often perceived as peoples' unwillingness to initiate activities on their own to improve their wellbeing. This discourse is very strong in Ethiopia due to the country's dependence on food aid for over three decades. This study explores this discussion to analyse local peoples' behaviour in a chronically food insecure district where food aid has been central for more than two decades. Based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken for about 18 months, the paper analyses a group of 112 food aid beneficiary households. Results show that, food aid constitutes a very small proportion of households' overall food needs. It shows that food aid is one of the several components of the livelihood portfolio poor people's use to cover household food gaps. The paper argues that the 'dependency syndrome' is largely a construct of outsiders rather than an existing risk among food aid beneficiary households who receives a limited amount of aid that cannot cover entire household food gaps.

Keywords: food aid, dependency syndrome, food insecurity, livelihood, Ethiopia

Introduction

Long-term provision of aid to people in need of assistance has been associated with fear of creating a 'dependency syndrome' (Harvey and Lind, 2005). The main concern is the fear that beneficiaries of aid will lack the motivation to work by themselves to improve their own livelihood after receiving benefits or that they will deliberately reduce their work effort in order to qualify for the transfer (Grosh et al., 2008; Jansen, 2011). Such concern over the 'dependency syndrome' is used by governments and development actors to introduce labour intensive public works in the form of safety net programmes which support chronically food insecure households in developing countries. The main question, however, is whether long-term receivers of aid develop a dependency syndrome to the extent that they reduce their own efforts to improve their livelihoods. This paper takes this question further to analyse the behaviour of food aid beneficiary households and their livelihood activities in rural Ethiopia where food aid has been provided every single year for over two decades.

Food insecurity resulting from poverty, recurrent drought, and soil and land degradation is a persistent problem in Ethiopia (Nigussa and Mberengwa, 2009; Hoddinott et al., 2011). Historical documents show that Ethiopia has experienced famine and food insecurity for over a century (Gobena, 2008; Pankhurst, 1985). Agriculture in Ethiopia is characterised by its subsistence nature and high dependence on unreliable rainfall patterns. Irrigation is very limited with only around 2% of the total arable land of the country being irrigated (FAO/WFP, 2006). This together with extensive soil erosion, low level of fertiliser use, and susceptibility to diseases and pests has resulted in the low performance of the agricultural sector since the 1960s (Holden and Shiferaw, 2000).

Successive Ethiopian governments have tried to address the issue of food insecurity in the country. However, none of them have dealt with the problem successfully. The Imperial Government and the *Derg* regime failed to protect the people from hunger and starvation. Neither the Imperial regime during the 1974/75 famine nor the *Derg* regime during the 1984/85 famine had effective safety net mechanisms in place to deal with the consequences of severe droughts which occurred at the time (Bevan and Pankhurst, 2006). Consequently a large proportion of the population has been surviving on imported food aid for many decades. Currently it is estimated that over eight million people receive food aid under the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) to cover their food shortages (MoARD, 2009). The 2011 food crisis in the Horn makes the problem even worse by increasing the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance. Of the 13.3 million people in need of food assistance in the Horn of Africa, 4.6 million were in Ethiopia (OCHA, 2011).

In Ethiopia, food aid has been an important mechanism by which chronically food insecure households survive. In this regard Ethiopia is one of the largest recipients of food aid in the world (Lentz and Barrett, 2004; Asfaw et al., 2011). Due to failure to produce sufficient food for its population and overcome recurrent food shortages, the country has been dependent on food aid for many decades. Since 1984, more than 5 million people have been annually dependent on food aid reflecting the chronic nature of food insecurity (MoARD, 2004). In the year 1999-2000, for example, out of the total estimated 62 million people in the country, about 16% of the total population received food aid (Lind and Jallela, 2005: 9). At the same time, the amount of food aid as a share of Ethiopia's foreign exchange earnings grew at alarming rate over the last couple of decades from about 2% in the 1950s to over 40% in the mid-1990s (Nega and Degefe, 2000).

Drought and famine are the major drivers of food aid flows to Ethiopia. Between the mid-1970s and early 2000 a large proportion of Ethiopia's population has been affected by recurrent drought and severe food crisis. The proportion of Ethiopians affected by drought and famine rose from 4% in the 1972-74 famine to over 20% during 2002/2003 food crisis. At the same time the number of people requiring food aid has also reached its highest level of about 13 million people in 2003. As a result, the amount of food aid required to mitigate the impact of drought and famine in 2002/2003 was the highest in Ethiopian history with an estimated amount of 1.4 million metric tonnes (FAO/WFP, 2007; EEA/EEPRI, 2004).

Massive resources invested in the food aid programme, however, did not bring structural change in the food security situation of chronically food insecure people in Ethiopia. Despite decades of food aid, food insecurity remains a key challenge. The country has remained among one of the most food-insecure in the world with nearly half of the population being undernourished (MoARD, 2004: 1; WFP, 2006: 3-6; FAO/WFP, 2010; FAO, 2011). In an attempt to address the decade long persistence of food insecurity, the government introduced the PSNP and the Other Food Security Programmes (OFSPs) in 2005. These programmes aim to attain household self-sufficiency and to graduate⁹ beneficiary households out of dependence on external assistance. The PSNP programme has started in 2005 by assisting about 5 million people. However, by the end of the first phase of the programme in 2009, the number of beneficiaries has increased to about 8.3 million people (MoARD, 2009).

Many development actors including the Ethiopian government seek some explanation for the persistent food crisis in the attitudes of people concerned. They attribute a dependency syndrome of the local people as a major constraint to attain food security in the country. The so-called dependency syndrome is explained as a behavioural issue expressed by people's lack of motivation to engage in their own activities to improve their livelihoods by themselves due to anticipation of aid. However, the question of whether rural households are overly dependent on food aid to the extent of developing a dependency syndrome is controversial and worth investigating.

Though there are studies that have been done on the dependency debate in relation to food aid in Ethiopia, most studies were conducted by employing quantitative research giving very little attention to the views and perceptions of the beneficiary people. As a result available studies fail to take into account people's own experiences and perceptions which are vital in understanding people's dependency situations. There is, therefore, lack of sufficient research looking at this issue more in-depth from the view of food aid beneficiary households. Since the dependency syndrome is a matter of attitudes, it is best captured by in-depth ethnographic research rather than quantitative research. It is, therefore, the intention of this paper to fill this gap through analysing whether or not long-term beneficiaries of food aid have developed an attitude of dependency. Ethnographic research has been carried out over an eighteen month period in an area receiving food aid every single year since the Great Ethiopian famine of 1984-5.

This paper, therefore, aims to explore local people's views and perceptions regarding the notion of dependency syndrome. It analyses local peoples' behaviour in response to long-term food aid provision and how it has affected people's activities towards improving their own livelihoods. It examines people's understanding of dependency and analyse if people are

⁹ Graduation means that the household is no longer chronically food insecure and also has the economic resilience to resist from falling back into chronic food insecurity in the future (Devereux et al. 2006)

being trapped in a dependency syndrome by observing people's day to day activities in one of the chronically food insecure districts in the northern highlands of Ethiopia.

Being based on ethnographic research this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on the impact of food aid on dependency syndrome in the context of protracted food crisis. Moreover, the paper aims to contribute in long-term policy programming in Ethiopia in particular and in developing countries in general.

The paper starts by introducing the methodology and the description of the study area including the history of food aid in the area. This will be followed by the conceptual definition of dependency syndrome. We will then present the main findings on the views and perceptions of households on food aid and dependency syndrome. Findings indicate that though food aid plays an important role in household food consumption as part of household's diversified coping strategies, beneficiary households are not entirely dependent on food aid. Food aid contributes a limited proportion of household's food needs as compared to other sources of food. Results show that even in times of crisis when households' are in need of food aid, households engage in many different types of income generating activities to support themselves rather than depending on food aid alone. The paper shows that beneficiary households are less dependent on food aid than is usually assumed. We argue that in such situations, it is unlikely that households will develop dependency and that the 'dependency syndrome' is a construct of outsiders rather than an existing disposition among chronically food insecure households.

Methodology

The study is based on an ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a chronically food insecure district for about 18 months from February 2009 till July 2010. Ethnography is a systematic study of a particular phenomenon, based on extensive fieldwork in selected areas. It involves documenting people's practices from their own perspectives to bring out complex insights and meanings of everyday life. Through close observation of people's activities, ethnography is crucial for understanding people's behaviour as it happens in a natural setting. This is because what peoples believe, understand and act cannot be detached from their context that they are confronted with (Riemer, 2009). Though ethnography primarily uses participant observation as a main tool of data collection (Geertz, 1983), it can also use multiple data sources and data collection methods in order to increase the validity and trustworthiness of the findings (Riemer, 2009).

Therefore, in addition to participant observation, this research uses household surveys and in-depth interviews in order to collect the relevant data. In total this study investigates 112 households (73 current PSNP beneficiary and 39 previous food aid beneficiary households). A household survey was conducted with all 112 households. Out of 112 households 20 households were also selected to be part of a panel for recurring in-depth interviews. Over the 18 months period, the 20 panel households were interviewed in a systematic way by revisiting them every month to get more in-depth understanding of their livelihoods and their perception of dependency syndrome. This in-depth interview provides relevant information to understand households' behaviour and their reaction in response to food aid availability. The fact that we were able to build trust with the community as a result of our day to day presence in the field enabled people to speak to us openly regarding their experience with food aid. While the use of in-depth interviews enabled us to have a more detail understanding of the situation, we used survey results to validate our findings from the panel.

In addition to in-depth interviews, six focus group discussions were undertaken with selected community members in order to collect information relevant to community level attitudes about the existence of attitudes of dependency in the area. Eight key informant interviews were also undertaken with officials at different administrative levels including representatives of community elders, Kebele administrators, and development agents in respective villages and district agricultural officials and experts at the regional food security bureau. This provides information about how dependency is viewed by different stakeholders at different level.

This study focuses on PSNP beneficiary households participating in Public works and earlier food aid beneficiary households and does not cover the Direct Support beneficiaries. Direct support beneficiaries are labour short and vulnerable households who receive free food or cash transfers without participating in the public works programmes. Since direct support beneficiary households do not have any able-bodied household member, they cannot engage themselves in life changing investments and, therefore, the discussion on dependency syndrome don't capture them well.

The Study Area

The study was undertaken in Ebinat district, one of the chronically food insecure districts in the northern part of Amhara region. About 94 percent of the district's population live in rural areas. People's livelihood is highly dependent on rain fed agriculture. Rainfall patterns are, however, unreliable with rains often starting late or stopping early resulting in crop loss. About 95 percent of the rural population earn their livelihoods from agriculture directly or indirectly. Food insecurity in the study area is generally a long-term phenomenon caused by a combination of both natural and man-made factors. These include unreliable rainfall pattern, land degradation, lack of modern agricultural inputs, limited credit facilities and lack of alternative income sources outside agriculture. Based on information obtained from the district agricultural office, average land holding is very small with an average of less than a hectare per household. As a result, production of cereals is very low and insufficient to support an average family size of 5.5 people per household. Large numbers of households are thus vulnerable to chronic food insecurity. The vulnerability of the district is further aggravated by environmental degradation, frequent drought, dependence on unpredictable weather conditions, poor soil fertility, and fragmentation of land and population pressure.

The district experiences both chronic and acute food insecurity problems for more than two decades. As a result, large numbers of people in the district depend on food aid to cover part of household food gaps beginning from the mid-1980s. Information obtained from the district agricultural office indicates that, on average about a quarter of the households in the district have been receiving food aid on annual basis since the mid-1980s.

Official documents from the district agricultural office and results from focus group discussions revealed that, in the district, food aid distribution started in the mid-1980s when the northern parts of the country was hit by severe drought which resulted in the death of thousands of people. Since then food aid has been distributed regularly on annual basis. Households' interview showed that when food aid was introduced in the area for the first time, it was provided freely without households required to invest their labour in public works. Official documents from the district agricultural office also reveal that, food aid was provided to needy households for free until the Employment Generation Scheme (EGS) was

established in 1993. Moreover, during the 1980s food aid was provided to many households irrespective of households' food insecurity situation.

However, since 1993 beneficiary households were required to participate in the Food-for-Work (FFW) programme under the then Employment Generation Scheme (EGS). EGS was one of the major components of the National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management (NPDPM) which was introduced in 1991 when the current government came into power. One of the objectives of implementing EGS was to address the issue of dependency that farmers can develop as a result of free distribution of transfers (TGE, 1993). However, due to limited capacity of local level implementers, enforcement was not strict and people used to get food aid even without investing their labour in the FFW activities. It was argued that, during the EGS programme, there were no clear and strict targeting criteria to select people eligible for the programme. Therefore, everyone had equal chance of being included in the FFW programme.

Later in 2005, the government has started the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). The PSNP programme has clear targeting criteria. It is primarily for people who are chronically food insecure and who have faced at least three months of food gap over three consecutive years (MoARD, 2004). The programme also requires able-bodied members to invest their labour in public works projects for 5 days per month per household members to be eligible for resource transfer. Official documents at the district agricultural office showed that since the introduction of the PSNP in 2005, on average about 74,400 people or around 34% of the total rural population of the district have been receiving support in the form of food aid and/or cash transfer (See Table 1). It shows that large numbers of households have been relying on food aid to cover part of their household food gaps even in normal years. As it will be discussed in the following section, however, as a result of the decade long dependence of the district on food aid transfer, there is a widespread belief among local government officials and experts at the district level that local people have developed a dependency syndrome and lacks interest to engage themselves in activities to improve their own livelihoods.

Table 1. People Supported by PSNP programme in Ebinat District (2005 to 20010)

S. No.	Year	Beneficiary Number						Total
		Public works			Direct Support			
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
1	2005	29389	29150	58539	1530	2025	3555	62094
2	2006	34477	35986	70463	2121	5034	7155	77618
3	2007	34442	36104	70546	2413	4659	7072	77618
4	2008	34442	36104	70546	2413	4659	7072	77618
5	2009	33293	35414	68707	2413	4659	7072	75779
6	2010	35928	33306	69234	2799	3869	6668	75902

Source: District Agricultural office July 2010

Dependency syndrome: Conceptual definition

The term 'dependency syndrome' was first introduced in the context of refugees by Barbara Harrell-Bond during her research in Ugandan refugees in Sudan in 1982. She observed that there was a widespread notion among aid workers to attribute a dependency syndrome to refugees which she described as "*the real and apparent lack of support for each other, the refusal to co-operate under conditions where co-operation appears advantageous, and the prevalence of destructive and anti-social behaviour*" (Harrell-Bond, 1986: 283). However,

this notion of dependency syndrome has been challenged by Kibreab (1993) and van Uffelen (2006) with their research showing that dependency is a myth and stereotype rather than a reality. Kibreab, for example, argued that refugees use all the available means at their disposal to cope with crisis and improve their situation (Kibreab, 1993).

Dependency, however, is a general term that is not often clearly defined. Devereux, for example, indicates that dependency can have two distinct meaning which is either negative or positive (Devereux, 2010: 3). Lentz and Barrett (2005: 12) explained that “*positive dependency occurs when external assistance helps individuals, communities and organizations to meet their basic needs when they are unable to do so*”. On the other hand they explain that “*negative dependency occurs when individuals, households or communities needs are met at the expense of recipients’ capacity to meet their basic needs in the future*”. This is what is often described as a ‘dependency syndrome’.

One of the most popular ways of defining dependency syndrome is based on who is dependent on aid. In this regard, Lind and Jallela’s (2005) analysis of dependency syndrome can be classified into two broad categories. The first one is beneficiary’s dependency which refers to the dependency of local people who receive food aid for survival. The second one refers to the dependency of the entire aid apparatus which includes the government, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), as well as donor agencies as being dependent on relief assistance for their existence (Lind and Jallela, 2005: 5). This paper, however, deals with the first types of dependency syndrome: the dependency of aid beneficiaries as this is more relevant in the context of the study area.

Though dependency syndrome can be defined in many different ways, this paper adopted Little’s (2008) definition of dependency syndrome as “*a condition where farmers modify their social and economic behaviour in anticipation of food aid*” (Little, 2008: 861). This definition refers to the condition in which long-term beneficiaries of relief assistance opt to continue to receive relief assistance over their own ways of dealing with food shortages. It assumes that beneficiary households depend on external assistance to the extent that they reduce their engagement in other livelihood activities that could enable them to become food self-sufficient (Lind and Jallela, 2005).

In Ethiopia, the dependency syndrome has been associated with food aid beneficiary households in chronically food insecure districts. As a result, debate and discourse on relief assistance in the country is deeply influenced by notions of ‘dependency syndrome’ (Lind and Jallela, 2005). Generally, there is a widespread belief among aid agencies and government officials that long-term beneficiaries of aid have developed a ‘dependency syndrome’ and have become reluctant to improve their wellbeing in expectation of relief assistance. Hilhorst (2003) argues that when a discourse becomes so dominant, it is viewed as reality rather than an interpretation by some actors.

In this regard, in Ethiopia, the ‘dependency syndrome’ is explained by the special situation of prolonged food aid and by what is called the ‘aspiration failure’ of the local people who have lost hope for a better future. Frankenberger *et al.* (2007), for example, argued that aspiration failures occur when individuals are unwilling to make pro-active investments to better their own lives. They defined aspiration failure as: “*the lack of systematic pro-active effort to better one’s future*” (Frankenberger *et al.*, 2007: 23). Bernard *et al.* (2011) also tried to link aspiration failure to what they called ‘fatalism’: a term which is commonly associated with

poor Ethiopians and which refers to *'the implied acceptance of their circumstances and a lack of proactive and systematic effort to better one's own life'* (Bernard *et al.*, 2011: 2).

The debate on dependency syndrome in Ethiopia has strongly influenced the direction of the government food aid policy since the 1980s (Lind and Jalleta, 2005). In an attempt to address the issue of dependency syndrome, the government has introduced a public works component to food aid programming. The government's food aid policy, for example, states that no able-bodied person should receive free food aid without working on public works activities. This policy aims to ensure that food aid should not create dependency behaviour on beneficiaries (TGE, 1993; Little, 2008, Jayne *et al.*, 2001).

In developing the current Food Security Programme, which started in 2005, a key government concern was to reduce the dependency of beneficiary households by promoting self-sufficiency. This is clearly reflected by making graduation from the safety net central to the success of its Food Security Programme. The recent food security policy of the government, thus, aims to 'graduate' food aid beneficiary households after five years of support, which is a major attempt to reduce the dependency of households on external assistance. It is, therefore, the intention of this paper to analyse the nature of beneficiaries dependency on food aid in an attempt to contribute to the discussions of dependency syndrome and to long-term food aid policy programming in Ethiopia in particular and in protracted food crisis situations in general.

Measuring the extent of households' dependency syndrome is not simple as it deals with households behavioural issues. In this paper, therefore, proxy indicators were used to analyse whether beneficiaries of aid have modified their behaviour in anticipation of aid. In order to achieve this objective, aid beneficiary households were asked about the reliability of food aid, the share of food aid in household's food consumption and the type and nature of livelihood activities households' pursue to improve their livelihood and food security status. Reliability of food aid in this sense refers to the sufficiency, timeliness and predictability of transfers. Since dependency syndrome is defined as a behavioural change caused by beneficiaries anticipation of food aid, farmers' experiences regarding these indicators can show local people's perceptions and attitudes towards aid.

Food aid and people's Perception of Dependency

Due to the inability of farmers to grow enough food crops caused by recurrent droughts, large numbers of people in the study area have been receiving food aid beginning from the mid-1980s to cover their food gaps. However, local officials and development actors working in the area argue that such provision of food aid for an extended period of time is a major constraint to address food insecurity successfully. During interviews with government officials at the district level, officials refer to people as suffering from a 'dependency syndrome' stating that farmers lack interest to improve their livelihood by themselves because of availability of food aid. The head of the District Agricultural office, for example, explained that: *'Due to availability of food aid for many years, farmers have developed a dependency syndrome and have become reluctant to improve their lives. As a consequence they are not willing to use their potential to improve their livelihood by themselves'*. Officials and experts generally describe local people as unwilling to invest their time and resources to improve their own wellbeing.

This paper, therefore, attempts to analyse local people's experience and perception of food aid based on the three major proxy indicators discussed above with the aim of understanding whether or not farmers are unwilling to use their potentials to improve their livelihoods and if farmers have modified their behaviour in anticipation of food aid which is a symptom of dependency syndrome.

Reliability of food aid

An important point in the discussion of food aid dependency is the reliability of the resources transferred to targeted households. For households to entirely depend on food aid and opt not to invest their available resources to improve their own food security, provision of food aid should be reliable. Local officials assume that food aid provided to targeted vulnerable households is sufficient and reliable to meet household food gaps.

However, interviewed food aid beneficiary households explained that, based on their experience of food aid delivery since the mid-1980s, food aid was not reliable enough to depend on it. More than half of the interviewed households argue that food aid always arrives very late and that as a result they hardly depend on food aid even in times of crisis. The following account of a farmer regarding the distribution of food aid in the 1980s and 1990s shows why people don't count too much on food aid. A farmer explained that:

Food aid usually comes after we have used our available means to survive and even after we sold our productive assets. Moreover, when it finally arrives in our Kebele, we don't know whether we will be eligible to receive it or not.

Even now under the current productive safety net programme which is supposed to be a predictable transfer for targeted beneficiaries, interviewed households complained about the reliability of transfers in particular the delays in food/cash transfers. Although official documentation states that central to the programme's success is the reliability and timeliness of the resource transfer (MoARD, 2004), interviewed PSNP beneficiary households reported that most of the time they get their payments late. During field work period it was also observed that households were not paid for two months following completion of the public works.

During focus group discussions, people argued that they don't have confidence in the predictability of the transfer. Most of the beneficiary households express the view that they are not sure whether or not they will continue to receive food/cash transfers as frequent retargeting exercises and the implementation of 'graduation' may mean that they are no longer entitled to such benefits. Though transfers are guaranteed in principle for a five year period, the practice of retargeting exercises and graduation means that people perceive food/cash transfers as not reliable and something they cannot depend on.

Share of food aid in household's food need

Another aspect of food aid that determines whether or not people can count on food aid is the share of food aid in household's food needs. Interviewed officials both at the district and regional levels argue that food aid contributes for the majority of household's food needs when households experience shocks. Accordingly, households were asked if access to food aid was enough to cover their annual household food shortages in times of crisis.

Households' response, however, revealed that their experience of food aid was not in line with official assumptions. Survey results show that, for more than 60% of the interviewed

households, the amount of food aid was not enough to cover household food shortages. They argued that food aid constitutes a very small amount as a share of total household food requirement at household level. As a result, they reported that they cannot depend entirely on food aid to cover their food gap even during times of crisis. When asked about the share of food aid as a percentage of total households food needs, current safety net public works beneficiary households, for example, argued that on average food aid contributes for about 20 percent of the total household food needs (See Table 2).

Interviewed current PSNP beneficiary households explained that, though large number of households gets the safety net support, no one is entirely dependent on safety net transfers alone to cover their household food shortages. This also explains why the rate of graduation in the study area fell way short of the government's expectations during the first phase of the PSNP programme (see Siyoum *et al.*, forthcoming). As a result, households argued that, they engage in other livelihood activities to cover their household food gaps in addition to receiving food aid. So in such situations, it is questionable if households can be able to depend on food aid to the extent of developing a dependency syndrome?

Table 2. Average Food Aid amount as a share of total household food requirements

Source of food	Share of total household food needs (in %)	
	DS households (n=7)	PW households (n=73).
Production from own land	25.0	50.0
Income from wage labour	0.0	10.0
Remittance	15.0	8.0
Support from relatives	15.0	3.0
Income from non-farm activities	0.0	9.0
Food aid	45.0	20.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Compiled by the Author from household field data, 2010

While 60% of interviewed households acknowledged the importance of food aid in covering part of their food shortages, they revealed that food aid falls short of covering critical needs at household level. They argued that food aid transfers fail to help them achieving food self-sufficiency. One interviewee said:

'We have six family members and we have been getting food aid under the productive safety net programme over the last five years. However, the amount of food aid that we have been receiving was not enough to cover our food gaps and we always have to supplement our income from other sources'

Accordingly survey results show that, in addition to the food aid they have been receiving, about 65 percent of the surveyed households depend on the sale of productive assets like livestock and on credit to cover consumption gaps in times of need (See Table 3).

Table 3. Mechanism used to cover household food gaps

Activities	Number	Total HHs	Percentage
Sale of Livestock	44	112	39.3
Loan from different sources	29	112	25.9

Source: Field Survey July, 2010

Harvey and Lind (2005) argue that when households' ability to meet their subsistence needs are compromised by shocks, households have to depend on external transfers. Results in the study area, however, revealed that people are less dependent on food aid than has been usually assumed. Another interviewee expressed why they are not entirely dependent on food aid to cover their food gaps as follows:

'The amount of food aid that we receive is small and is not enough to cover our food gaps. Therefore, we are not entirely dependent on food aid to cover our food shortages. We have to engage in other activities to be able to cover our food needs throughout the year'

This perception of a farmer was also shared by most of the interviewed households in the study area. Generally, focus group discussion with food aid beneficiary households revealed that beneficiary households cannot rely on food aid alone to cover their food gaps mainly for the following four major reasons: small amount of transfer as compared to total food consumption needs, delays in food aid transfer, dilution of transfer due to sharing of one's quota with other unregistered household and lack of full family targeting¹⁰.

Types and nature of livelihood activities

Another issue in the dependency syndrome debate is the types and natures of livelihood activities households' pursue to improve their livelihood. One of the main arguments of local officials in portraying farmers as passive recipients of aid was their perceived lack of interest to engage in other forms of livelihood activities to supplement their income. To take up this issue, households were asked about the type of livelihood activities they pursue in order to cover household's food requirement.

Households' responses revealed that for the majority of poor farmers, food aid is one of the many types of activities in their livelihood portfolio on which they depend to overcome shortages. Interviewed households explain that they engage in many livelihood activities to earn income in order to support their families. For example, one interviewed household head explained how they cannot depend on food aid alone to cope with crisis as follows *"if we were waiting for the food aid without doing anything else, we would not be here talking about food aid at this time"*. Survey results also show that, as food aid is not sufficient to cover household food gaps, households engage themselves in as many livelihood activities as possible. Table four shows the number of livelihood activities households in the area pursue to cover their food shortages.

Table 4. Numbers of livelihood activities undertaken by households

Number of Livelihood activities	Number of households	Percentages
0 – 1	6	5.3
2 – 3	59	52.7
≥ 4	47	42.0
Total	112	100.0

Source: Compiled by the author from field data July 2010

¹⁰ Full family targeting refers to the provision of sufficient resources to households to meet all family member consumption needs to help households avoid the sale of their productive assets to compensate for partial transfers.

As indicated in the table, the majority of households' livelihood portfolio includes a combination of more than one type of livelihood activities. For example, 42% of the households employ at least four types of livelihood activities to earn a living while about 53% of them employ 2-3 types of livelihood activities. Interview results also revealed that the major livelihood activities people in the area undertake include subsistence farming, casual labour, petty trading, seasonal migration and other non-farm activity (See table 5).

Table 5 .No of households by types of Livelihood strategies

Types of livelihood	No of HHs	Percentage
Subsistence farming	99	88.4
Casual labour	48	42.8
Other Non-farm activities	35	31.3
Seasonal migration	32	28.6
Petty Trading	21	18.8

Source: Field Survey February, 2010

Discussion with beneficiary households further revealed that, during crises, instead of entirely depending on relief assistance, people try to maximise the number of livelihood activities they undertake in order to diversify their source of income. Interviewed households explained that in such situations, food aid is one of the many coping mechanisms they depend on to overcome a crisis. This is in line with the observation by Ellis (2000) and Young *et al.* (2005) who argue that for people affected by crisis, external aid is one of the many ways in which people use to survive.

Table six shows the major types of coping strategies, apart from receiving food aid, that people in the study area pursue in order to overcome household food shortages in times of crisis. Literature on coping strategies also supports these findings (See Corbett, 1988; Webb, 1993; Barrett and Maxwell, 2005; Harvey and Lind, 2005; Little, 2008). Corbett (1988), for example, argued that aid is one of the many different mechanisms which people use to deal with shortages during a crisis situation.

This finding, therefore, challenges the validity of the assumption that people are passive recipients of aid. Results generally revealed that people don't lack interest in other livelihood activities because of availability of food aid; rather the limited nature of food aid forced people to employ a diversified livelihood strategy to earn their survival income.

Table 6. Coping strategies households adopt to deal with food shortages in times of crisis

Type of coping strategies
Firewood and charcoal selling
Depend on remittance received from relatives
Migrate to other rural areas for wage labour
Migration to nearby town for wage labour
Borrow grain from relatives
Borrow grain or cash from lenders
Sell off small animals
Sell off farm oxen
Renting out land
Consuming less preferred foods
Reducing the number and amount of food consumed

Source: Field Survey May, 2010

Can the dependency syndrome explain people's behaviour?

When discussing about the dependency syndrome, it is clear that the targeting of food aid transfers is fundamental as it can create potential negative dependency on food aid beneficiaries. That is especially when people receive food aid when they don't need external assistance to smooth their consumption. This is what Lentz and Barrett (2005) described as a negative dependency. It refers to a dependency that occurs when individuals' or households' needs are met at the expense of recipients' capacity to meet their own basic needs in the future. This makes targeting a critical issue in the management of food aid as it may 'cultivate' a dependency syndrome.

As discussed earlier, in the study area, people have been provided with food aid for free irrespective of households' food insecurity status in the 1980s and 1990s. Such provision of food aid irrespective of household food security status, seems to have created a dependency attitude on some households. This is reflected by the fact that, whenever there is food aid distribution, some households believe that they should be eligible for transfers even if they are not chronically food insecure by local standards. In this regard some households in the study area try to portray themselves as chronically food insecure and by doing so expect to have access to food aid transfers. Especially in one of the villages there seem to be a general unwillingness to use the term 'better-off' among community members. There was also a tendency to exaggerate the problem when it comes to food-gap related questions especially for non-beneficiary households. However, this self-representation of households as in need of food aid cannot be described as a dependency syndrome.

This is what Utas described as "victimcy". It refers to a form of self-representation by which people represent themselves as victims to be 'legitimate recipients' of humanitarian aid (Utas, 2005: 408-409). In the same way Bakewell (2000: 112) indicates how labelling people (in this case as having a 'dependency syndrome') encourage them to describe themselves in terms of that particular label. Woods (1985: 348), for example, describes labelling as "*an act of valuation and judgement involving prejudices and stereotyping*". Wood, thus, argues that labelling is used by those who create and impose labels to determine access to resources and is used to set rules for inclusion and exclusion as well as in determining eligibility for resource transfers. Therefore, he argues that "*People are thus compelled to adjust their behaviour, to redefine the way they present themselves in order to handle access successfully*" (Wood, 1985: 352). This, however, should not be interpreted as a sign of people's 'dependency syndrome'. According to Bakewell (2000), it is rather an active response by people to strengthen and diversify their resource base.

Therefore, the attempt by some households in the study area to portray themselves as chronically food insecure and as being in need of food aid is best explained by 'victimcy' rather than by a dependency syndrome. It is an attempt by households to represent themselves as victims to secure access to resource transfers that otherwise they would not have access to.

Generally, results of this research revealed that there is no evidence of the existence of a dependency syndrome or a dependency mentality among farmers in the study area. Research findings indicate that, given households' experience with food aid transfer for over two decades, it is unlikely that food aid beneficiary households have developed a dependency syndrome as a result the decade's long availability of food aid transfers. The amount of transfer as a share of overall household food needs is limited while the reliability and predictability is not guaranteed. As a result, farmers cannot afford to depend on such transfers and they engage themselves in diversified sources of income even in times of crisis.

However, due to limited livelihood opportunities to improve their food security status, a large number of households depend on food aid transfers to cover part of their food shortages. This, however, is a reflection of positive dependency and should not be misunderstood with a dependency syndrome which is characterised by unwillingness to engage in life changing activities due to anticipation of external transfers.

Conclusion

Due to inability to produce enough food for its population, Ethiopia has been dependent on foreign food aid for more than three decades. The country is one of the largest recipients of food aid in the world. Massive amounts of resources were transferred to the country since the mid-1970s in the form of relief aid, however, did not address the problem of food insecurity. Currently, more than 8 million people are dependent on food aid as part of Ethiopia's productive safety net programme. In this regard, government officials and development actors have attributed a dependency mentality of beneficiary households as one of the reasons for the country's failure to deal with the issue of food insecurity successfully.

This paper has looked into the dependency syndrome debate in the context of long-term food aid transfers in one of the chronically food insecure districts in Amhara region, Northern Ethiopia. Using ethnographic research this paper has studied a group of 112 past and current food aid beneficiary households for over a period of 18 months. It has attempted to understand impact of food aid transfers on people's dependency syndrome.

Study findings show that, as opposed to what is often assumed, food aid transfers contribute only a small amount as a share of overall household food needs. Results also revealed that most of the time food aid transfers are made after households have utilised available means to cover their food shortages. Even under the PSNP programme, where predictable and timely resource transfers are seen as central to smooth consumption and avoid the sale of productive assets, food aid transfers seem to be unreliable. The research findings indicate that in situations characterised by unreliable food aid transfer, it is unlikely that households will reduce engagement in other livelihood activities in anticipation of food aid. Results even show the opposite. The study shows that households engage in as many livelihood activities as possible in times of crisis to increase the possibility of earning additional income to cover household food gaps. Large numbers of households also depend on credit, sale of productive assets and income from other non-farm activities more than food aid even in times of crisis.

It is important that when households face livelihood shocks and are unable to cover their food-gap by themselves, they should be able to depend on food aid to meet their basic needs. However, this kind of dependence on food aid should not be confused with a dependency syndrome which is characterised by unwillingness to engage in life changing investments. These two types of dependency are fundamentally different and in the study area there was no indication of a dependency syndrome caused by transfer of food aid or any other form of external assistance. The inability to produce enough food in the face of environmental degradation and external shocks, such as recurrent drought, and the limited possibilities for other livelihood opportunities and the resulting need for seeking additional support should not be interpreted as an indication of a dependency syndrome.

It may be argued that the government and development stakeholders are using the dependency syndrome argument as a scapegoat to the failure of the food security programme in addressing the root causes of food insecurity in the country. In line with this, the paper

shows how a dependency argument has been used to introduce the ‘graduation’ concept in the food security programming since 2004. Though introducing the concept of graduation is not inappropriate by itself, households should graduate in line with the technical criteria and not for other reasons as this may render households even more vulnerable than they were at the start of the programme. This also may result in making households highly dependent on external assistance for their survival in the future.

Generally, the low productivity of the agricultural sector in the study area and households’ dependence on food aid to cover part of their food gaps should not be interpreted as a consequence of farmers’ dependency syndrome. Rather it indicates weakness on the part of the government’s food security strategy in introducing innovative technologies that can address the underlining production failures as a major cause of food insecurity. The major structural problems that have been responsible for the persistence of food insecurity have not been addressed. However, the government and its development partners continue to label people as having a dependency syndrome. Labelling people as having developed a dependency syndrome can lead to a wrong diagnoses of the real problem and thus inevitably lead to inappropriate responses (Harrell-Bond, 1986; Bakewell, 2000). This to a considerable extent explains what is happening in the study area. Attributing a dependency syndrome to aid beneficiaries, thus, may shift the focus away from addressing the root causes food insecurity. In this regard, the research findings suggest that, if the problem of food insecurity is to be addressed effectively in Ethiopia, it should not be focused on efforts to address the dependency syndrome as a label to explain why food aid has not resulted in solving households’ chronic food insecurity. Rather the government and its international partners should temper their concern about dependency syndrome among beneficiary households and focus instead on addressing the major structural problems in order to provide vulnerable households an opportunity to move out of poverty and food insecurity permanently.

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Chapter Seven

General discussion and conclusion

Introduction

This thesis deals with the impact of food security interventions implemented by the Ethiopian government and its development partners on the lives and livelihoods of chronically food insecure households in Ebinat district of Ethiopia's Amhara region. It has captured the experiences, views and perceptions of households by using ethnographic approach. The research analyses how people's livelihoods are affected by chronic situations of food insecurity and how current food security interventions, in particular the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and Other Food Security Programmes (OFSP), impact on households' food security situations and shape household livelihoods.

The thesis used the concepts of food security and livelihoods in the analysis of the food security and livelihood situations of households. The thesis especially uses the Food Availability Decline, Food Entitlement Decline and Response failure approaches to understand the food insecurity situations of the case study households. The use of these approaches provide a full understanding of why food insecurity is still a key problem despite decades long quest to address issues of food insecurity in the country. Moreover, the thesis has used the livelihoods concept to understand the impact of the government's Food Security interventions on the lives and livelihoods of rural households. A livelihood is understood as comprising a set of assets, activities and the access to these assets and activities that determine an individual or household means of making a living (Ellis, 2000:10).

Intensive ethnographic fieldwork was undertaken in two remote villages over an 18 month period from February 2009 to July 2010 in Ebinat district, one of the chronically food insecure districts of Amhara region in northern Ethiopia. Farmers' perspectives about their food insecurity status and their perception towards the government's food security interventions and other related factors were documented on a monthly basis. Moreover, farmers' interaction with their environment were documented and analysed contributing to a better understanding of the livelihoods and food security situations at household level.

This chapter presents the main findings of the research and draws a general conclusion to the main research question: Why are households food insecure despite the implementation of different food security interventions designed to achieve household food security?

Food security interventions and household food security

The articles presented in chapter three and four provide an understanding of households' food insecurity in relation to the PSNP and OFSP programmes. The empirical chapters show that in spite of these food security programmes, food insecurity in the study area continues to be a problem for a large proportion of rural households.

Historical documents reveal that famine and the issue of food insecurity are not new to Ethiopia and that the country has a history of famine and food insecurity dating back for centuries. However, systematic attempts to deal with issues of food insecurity started relatively recently with the establishment of Ethiopia's first disaster management institution, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) in 1974. Attempts over the last three decades to address the structural causes of food insecurity, however, have fallen short of expectations and food insecurity remains a key problem in the country (Lautze *et al.*, 2009).

Analysis of the causes of food insecurity in the study area showed that both human and physical factors are responsible for the persistence of food insecurity. The major physical

factors that are responsible for food insecurity include recurrent drought, environmental degradation, poor soil fertility, crop diseases and pest infestations as well as a lack of access to technology and credit facilities, lack of alternative sources of income outside agriculture and increased population pressure. Human factors like poor environmental management and weak policies also play an important role. Devereux (2000) identified two camps in the analysis of causes of food insecurity in Ethiopia. The first one is the 'physical ecology cluster' which focuses on population growth, declining soil fertility and drought. The second one is the 'political economy cluster' which focuses on the failure of the government policies, weak market and institutional failure. On the basis of my research I would argue that both types of explanations are valid and relevant for Ethiopia and that both are strongly interrelated.

The causes of food insecurity in Ethiopia in general, and in the study area in particular, can be explained both by the food availability decline and by the food entitlement decline (access related factors). However, chapter three and four show that these factors by themselves cannot explain the persistence nature of food insecurity in the study area. Political factors (inadequate response by the government and the international community) also play a major role.

A similar argument can be made about the three successive schools that Devereux distinguishes to explain food insecurity: the food availability decline approach, the food entitlement decline approach, and the approach focusing on response failure (Devereux, 2009). All three are relevant and interrelated. The food availability decline explanation focuses on vulnerability to biophysical shocks which are responsible for the low productivity of agriculture. However, such vulnerabilities may also point to response failure, as the supply of agricultural and technological inputs is one of the main components of the government's rural development policy under the current food security strategy. The food entitlement decline approach, finds lack of access to non-farm income earning activities a major factor to explain food insecurity. Likewise, this results from lack of access to start-up capital, which relates to policy failures causing lack of knowledge and skill as well as absence of supporting rural infrastructure to enable people to gain access to income.

The absence of sound and adequate food security strategies and the frequent changes in the government's food security policies over the last few decades further testify to response failures. Over the last three decades, successive Ethiopian governments have unsuccessfully tried to address the issue of food insecurity. For example, thousands of deaths that resulted from the famines that occurred in the mid-1970s and mid-1980s resulted from the failure of the imperial and the Derg regime to effectively address the consequences of the devastating drought that affected the northern part of the country. Though more localised in nature, the 2002/2003 famine that the country experienced under the current government to some extent reflects a response failure by the government and international community to address the decade's long persistence of famine vulnerability and food insecurity adequately.

Though the government has introduced the PSNP and OFSPs in 2005 to end Ethiopia's dependency on food aid with the aim to graduate chronically food insecure households from the safety net and out of poverty, mass graduation from the safety net has not taken place to date. In that sense the programmes falls short of expectations in addressing the food insecurity problem adequately. Since the introduction of the PSNP famine has been averted also through the emergency response utility of the PSNP such as the emergency feeding programme. This thesis, however, shows that in the study area the food security status of a

large proportion of the rural poor has remained unchanged. Most of the rural population in the study area is still living in poverty and risks food insecurity. The country's malnutrition and under nutrition rates also remain one of the highest in the world with 41% of the population being undernourished (FAO, 2011). The major structural problems that make people vulnerable to drought and food insecurity in the study area, such as poor soil fertility, environmental degradation, weather-induced droughts, population pressure and land tenure security issues have not been addressed adequately. Though the government has recently issued land use certificates to farmers with the aim of addressing the land tenure issue, it hasn't brought significant change among farmers in the study area as they have seen farmers from the neighbouring villages being evicted from their land even after provided with the certificates.

Here, it is, therefore, important to look into the historical development of the food security programming in the country in order to understand why successive programmes failed to address the root causes of food insecurity successfully over the last couple of decades.

Ethiopian food security policies since 1974

As noted above, Ethiopia's structural response to drought and food insecurity goes back to the mid-1970s with the establishment of the RRC in 1974. The RRC was established as part of the Derg's government relief effort to coordinate both domestic and international aid for victims of the 1972-74 famine (PANE, 2006). The RRC was not only mandated to coordinate and provide relief support for famine victims, it was also expected to prevent disasters through establishing an early warning department. As part of the RRC's mandate to prevent disasters such as the dramatic impact of drought, the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) began a small scale project to use relief food aid as a developmental tool. Efforts focused mainly on soil and water conservation as well as afforestation with the aim to address the root causes of food insecurity. This initiative, known as 'project 2488' started in the early 1980s and became one of the largest Food-For-Work (FFW) projects in Africa (Humphrey, 2002; Nedessa and Wickrema, 2010)

Though the initial response by the government through RRC achieved impressive standards in implementing relief measures and in responding to the threat of food insecurity and environmental degradation, the RRC's role became quickly politicised as the Derg government sought to utilise RRC for other ends including in support of military purposes (De Waal, 1997). This coincided with a lack of political will by Western donors to support the socialist Derg regime (Lautze and Raven-Roberts, 2004) and resulted in neglecting the issues of food insecurity. Issues like poverty reduction, improving the wellbeing of the population, and natural resource rehabilitation as well as economic growth were all overshadowed by political activities (De Waal, 1997).

The quality and sustainability of the development activities undertaken under the project 2488 FFW also fall short of expectations (Admassie, 2000, Nedessa and Wickrma, 2010). The FFW activities did very little in addressing the root causes of food insecurity. Drought and food insecurity issues were mainly addressed by the provision of emergency food relief. The emergency response, however, was characterised by limited resources and lack of coordinated effort to deal with the problem that the country was experiencing.

After the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991, the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took power. In the meantime, the transitional government developed a policy to address the causes of disaster and the imminent threat of famine and

recurrent drought in the country. In 1993, the government established the National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management (NPDPM) and restructured the RRC into a new Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC). The new policy promoted disaster prevention programmes in all development efforts. The policy stated that disaster relief should ensure adequate income transfers for disaster affected households, promote self-reliance among beneficiaries, preserve asset to promote speedy recovery and be geared towards eliminating the root causes of disaster vulnerability. The policy also advocates community participation, with priority to the most at-risk areas, coordination of efforts and no free distribution of aid to the able-bodied members among the affected population (TGE, 1993; Lautze, Raven-Roberts and Erkinch, 2008).

This policy resulted in the adoption of Employment Generation Schemes (EGS) as a central component in the country's food aid policy. EGS was a labour intensive public works programme designed to provide temporary employment for able-bodied people affected by disasters or threatened by severe food crisis. The able-bodied beneficiaries were expected to contribute to development through investing their labour in return for which they received food aid. However, critics argued that the EGS programmes were not different from their predecessor FFW programmes in many ways. Relief food under EGS was not reliable; resources were too little and arrived very late. Moreover, essential complementary inputs like tools, equipment and supplies were largely unavailable (Kehler, 2004).

In 1996, as a response to this persistence nature of food insecurity, the government of Ethiopia developed a new Federal Food Security Strategy (FFSS), which was later updated in 2002. This strategy focused on three thematic areas which included: increasing supply and availability of food; improving access and entitlement to food, and strengthening emergency response capabilities. The 2002 version of the policy also reflected concerns with environmental rehabilitations and sustainability with a focus on water harvesting and promoting the production of high value crops (Negatu, 2008; Pankhurst, 2009). However, the recurrence of another famine in 2002/2003 which affected parts of the country mainly in Afar and SNNPR regions exposed the weakness of the country's food security strategy which was still mainly based on emergency food relief approach (De Waal, 2007). While food aid has saved millions of lives in Ethiopia, it did little to address the underlying causes of food insecurity and failed to decrease people's vulnerability to future shocks (Kehler, 2004). The occurrence of famine in 2002/2003 thus raised concerns about the scope and nature of the food insecurity response in the country (Negatu, 2008).

In response to this concern, therefore, the government in collaboration with its international donors established the New Coalition for Food Security in Ethiopia (NCFSE) in 2003. This coalition aimed to improve long-term food security for chronically food insecure people. The coalition promoted safety nets as an important way of protecting household assets against shocks and promoted community asset creation through labour intensive public works (NCFSE, 2003). The coalition thus recommended gradual transition from a humanitarian assistance to a system based on productive safety nets. Ethiopia's new FSP designed in 2004 consisted, therefore, of three components: the Productive Safety net Programme (PSNP), the Other Food Security Programmes (OFSP) and the Voluntary Resettlement Programme (VRP). The PSNP is the main and central component of the FSP and seen as crucial to better protect people against destitution and suffering as compared to emergency aid (Negatu, 2008).

Findings regarding the PSNP

As discussed in the articles presented in chapter three and four of this thesis, the PSNP and OFSPs are implemented in chronically food insecure districts. The PSNP aims to provide a safety net for consumption smoothing while at the same time protecting household assets. The OFSP, on the other hand, aims to build household assets as a pathway out of poverty and food insecurity through enabling households to graduate out of the safety net programme. The combined programmes were seen as instrumental to reduce dependency on external assistance and enable households to become food self-sufficient on permanent basis.

However, results from chapters three and four reveal that in the study area and in Amhara region in general these programmes fall short of expectation. Analysis of the results revealed that the PSNP and OFSPs are not delivering enough resources to food insecure households as required by the scheme. The prospect of the programmes also shows that full delivery of the PSNP and OFSPs in the future is very unlikely as the government and its international partner's focus on graduating households out of the programme: a major attempt to reduce the number of beneficiary households from the PSNP. Information obtained from the regional food security bureau, however, shows that during the first phase of programme implementation (2005-2009) only nine percent of the PSNP beneficiary households graduated from the safety net. Worse, results of chapter four indicate that a large majority of the households that were graduated were not food self-sufficient. This indicates that the food security programmes failed to address the major structural problems identified as causes of food insecurity at least in the study area. Results from chapter three and four show that there are at least four major factors responsible for the limited impact of the programmes in achieving household food security. These are the small nature of transfers provided to households that fail to cover household food gaps, the untimeliness of resource transfers and late nature of payments, the labour absorption of the public works programs which force households to prioritise Public Works over their own agricultural activities (sometimes even abandoning those) and the lack of strong institutional setup and proper awareness about program implementation amongst beneficiaries and those implementing the programmes.

The article in chapter three clearly shows how the PSNP Public Works programmes affects households in terms of absorbing their household labour, especially for the large majority of labour poor households. This labour absorption of the PSNP Public Works forces households to abandon their own farm activities in favour of Public Works to secure access to short-term transfers which contribute to increasing households' long-term vulnerability as they neglect their own agricultural activities. In times of crisis, poor people depend on their human capital and other social support to survive. However, in the study area, due to the increasing incidence of poverty and food insecurity, the nature of social support among members of the community has reduced to a great extent. The only possible source of income for the poor is, therefore, their human capital. As noted in chapter three, however, poor households in the area are characterised by labour shortages. This together with the labour absorption of Public Works, strongly reduces poor household's opportunities to improve their livelihoods. This explains why households who cannot afford to provide labour for both Public Works and own farm activities are more vulnerable as compared to relatively labour rich households who can provide labour for both activities. So competing labour demands significantly reduce the impact of the food security interventions in particular for labour poor households.

The study showed that labour rich households are relatively better-off even without access to adequate land holding as compared to labour poor households with large land holdings. This

confirms that food security results from a combination of complex factors which includes availability of land, income, assets, as well as household labour. As explained in chapter three, households with sufficient land holdings can face serious food shortages if they lack labour, ploughing oxen or access to income to acquire agricultural inputs.

Old wine in new bottles?

As explained throughout the chapters of this thesis the current Food Security Programme has introduced important changes over the previous food security strategies. For example, the new food security programme was designed to make resources predictable for a certain period of time as opposed to the previous emergency relief resources which were unpredictable. As discussed in chapter six, however, the predictability of the food aid under the PSNP is in practice much less than anticipated. The chapter shows that the experience of the previous food security programmes and the current practice under the PSNP thus left people with a lack of confidence in the reliability and predictability of the food aid transfer.

The current food security programme also makes a distinction between chronic and acute food insecurity as well as between able-bodied persons who can participate in Public Works and Direct Support beneficiaries who are entitled to free resource transfers. However, the distinction between able-bodied and others who cannot participate in Public Works is not different as compared to previous FFW programme. Generally, in day to day practice and implementation, the current Food Security Programme does not reflect a major structural change in the food security approach and in that respect current food security programming is not that different from previous food security programmes.

Chapter four discussed that the impact of the PSNP and OFSP programmes in addressing food insecurity and in taking households into successful graduation falls short of expectation with only five percent of households graduated in the study district during the first phase of the programme. This finding is in line with the regional government's report which documented only a nine percent rate of graduation in the same period. This raises concerns about the feasibility of these programmes to contribute to a lasting solution of the country's food insecurity. There are also concerns by other researchers that achievement of genuine graduation from the PSNP will be slow despite the introduction of different livelihood packages (Devereux, 2010). Results from chapter four further indicate that given the current PSNP and OFSP programmes, sustainable graduation from the PSNP will take much more time for the majority of the households despite the expectation of the government.

Nonetheless, the government is planning to graduate all PSNP beneficiary households from the safety net programme by the end of the second phase in 2014 (MoARD, 2009). In Amhara region, where this research was conducted, the plan is even to graduate all households by 2013. Chapter four narrates how local level officials are trying to graduate as many households as possible to meet regional expectations even without assessing households' food security status properly.

On the basis of these findings, it must be feared that the government is trying to graduate households prematurely only to demonstrate the success of the food security programmes to its international donors. This will have serious consequences as it will leave needy households without much needed support to maintain basic food security let alone to improve their livelihoods. This means that a large number of poor households will be at a risk of falling back into destitution in the near future, once their accumulated assets are depleted again.

The discussion presented in chapter three and four reveal that the structural change in food security policy that have made the PSNP and OFSPs as integrated food security programmes possible is falling short of implementation in practice. The fact that the PSNP and OFSP programmes have not resulted in a structural improvement in the livelihoods of most of the chronically food insecure households is clear evidence of this. Despite the claims by the government and its international partners that the Food Security Programme represents a radical break and improvement compared to programmes of the past, I should like to conclude that there is instead a major continuity with past attempts and failures to address food security. While the safety net provides families indeed with a temporary relief from destitution, the FSP – like its predecessors - so far has not been able to enable for a structural escape from chronic food insecurity.

Credit and household food security

The article presented in chapter five analyses the role of credit in rural livelihoods in the context of the Ethiopian Food Security Programme. In rural Ethiopia lack of credit facilities is one of the major structural problems identified as a cause for the prevalence of poverty and food insecurity (Wolday, 2003). As a response to this structural problem, the government and its development partners consider the provision of credit as a major policy instrument to address the prevalence of poverty and food insecurity. Since 2005 credit provision became part of the government's food security strategy through its OFSP programme. There is, however, a debate amongst academics on the actual impact of credit and its contribution to poverty reduction and household food security (Banerjee et al., 2009; Segers *et al.*, 2010; Armendáriz de Aghion & Morduch, 2010). Some researchers argue that credit has a positive impact in helping households to move out of poverty and food insecurity (Robinson, 2001; Goldberg, 2005) while others argue that microcredit does not work for all (for example Snodgrass and Sebstad, 2002).

Chapter five, therefore, aimed for a better understanding of the differential impact of credit on different household categories in situations characterised by chronic food insecurity. The chapter focused on the extent of the impact of credit in improving household's livelihood and food security. In general results showed that credit plays an important role in addressing short-term food needs and helping households to cope with seasonal food shortages. Results also indicate that in the long term credit plays a very limited role in taking households out of poverty and food insecurity.

Results across households further showed that the role of credit in household poverty and food insecurity is not uniform. The impact of credit differs across households mainly on the basis of household's level of poverty. Credit has a relatively better impact on better-off and labour rich households than on poor households, in particular those characterised by shortage of labour. Results show that better-off and labour rich households can better manage small food gaps and that this is crucial in minimizing diversion of loans (for consumption smoothing purposes) and using credit for making investments in livelihood diversification. For poor households, however, large food gaps and labour shortages forced them to divert credit to cover short-term consumption needs. They also put themselves at a risk of increasing their vulnerability as they might not be able to repay their loans. They may, therefore, be forced to sell productive assets making them vulnerable to destitution.

Results of chapter five, however, also show that the PSNP was to some extent found to be crucial for poor households to invest credit in asset buildings and to improve their livelihoods. Results indicate that PSNP beneficiary households utilised credit better than the non-beneficiary households through investing credit in livestock production. PSNP resource transfers enable beneficiary households to minimize household food gaps which enable them to make productive investments rather than diverting their loans to smooth consumption. Access to PSNP thus not only enabled poor households to make productive investments but also increased their creditworthiness. This enabled such households to access loans from the informal credit market, although these are too small to make life changing investments.

In the Ethiopian context, however, it is argued that credit may not be the most important constraint on poor household's livelihood in rural area (Borchgrevink et al., 2005; Tassew et al., 2006). Other issues, in particular vulnerability to drought, access to markets, lack of options for non-farm income generating activities and health shocks may be more significant. This implies that ensuring access to credit alone may not be sufficient for poverty alleviation and ensuring food security. Linkages between credit, infrastructure and services are crucial. Findings of the paper are in line with these observations and imply the need to integrate credit with other measures such as improvements in infrastructure, service provision, access to improved agricultural technologies and skill development. Moreover, interventions aimed at improving productive assets are important for credit to contribute to poverty reduction and household food security in chronically food insecure areas.

Food aid and dependency syndrome

The article presented in chapter six addresses the question of how people perceive the role of food aid in their livelihoods and household's dependence on food aid. The main objective of the chapter is to find out if people in the study area have developed a dependency syndrome as a result of the decade's long provision of food aid. The paper analyses farmers' activities in the context of long-term availability of food aid.

Local officials and development actors working in the study area attribute a dependency syndrome to chronically food insecure households as a result of the prevalence of food insecurity in the study area and in the country in general. Dependency syndrome is a term which is defined as "*a condition where farmers modify their social and economic behaviour in anticipation of food aid*" (Little, 2008: 861). This assumes that beneficiary households reduce their engagement in other livelihood activities to improve their own wellbeing in anticipation of external assistance mainly food aid (Lind and Jallela, 2005).

The findings presented in chapter six, however, show that farmers don't depend on food aid to the extent of abandoning other livelihood activities in anticipation of food aid. Results show that even in times of crisis, instead of depending on external assistance, households engage in many livelihood activities in order to diversify their income source to cover their food gaps. Chapter six shows that people in the area pursue at least five different types of livelihood activities apart from receiving food aid. The fact that households engage in different types of activities as livelihood strategies demonstrate that rural households are trying their best to diversify their portfolios of income rather than depending on food aid alone. In attempting to diversify their livelihood strategies, however, farmers face many constraints, both natural as well as human-induced. The major constraints include: recurrent drought, lack of sufficient farm land, shortage of financial capital, shortage of labour at the household level, lack of credit facilities and lack of appropriate skills. As a result of these

constraints households earn little return from livelihood activities and therefore remain vulnerable and food insecure. As a result many households depend on food aid to cover part of their household food gaps. This kind of dependence on food aid, when households are unable to cover their food shortages by themselves, however, should not be misunderstood as a dependency syndrome. Rather this is what Sharp (1998) described as economic dependence which refers to the inability of households to achieve economic self-sufficiency and therefore being dependent on external transfers which is a positive dependency rather than a symptom of dependency syndrome.

I believe that when households are unable to cover their food gaps for reasons beyond their control, they should be able to depend on government and other transfers to protect themselves from uncertainties. Some households in the study area, however, have used the vulnerability of the area as an opportunity to portray themselves as poor and in need of food aid. This is a reflection of what Utas, (2005:408-409) described as 'victimcy' - a self-representation of people to describe themselves as victims to be 'legitimate recipients' of external assistance. This, however, to some extent can be regarded as a strategy by local people to diversify their resource base in the face of perceived uncertainties and should therefore not be misunderstood as a dependency syndrome.

Stakeholders at local level should therefore be careful in attributing a dependency syndrome to local people as attaching such a label is not only inappropriate but can also undermine the need for food security programmes and distort working relations between those who administer and implement such programmes and those in need of such programmes. As discussed in chapter six, this kind of labelling can distort the reality and the chronic nature of the problem and can contribute to wrong conclusions and inappropriate responses. Chapter six brought out that the government's fear of dependency was a major reason to introduce a labour intensive Public Works as part of the current safety net programmes. However, as elaborated in chapter 3, this labour requirement is affecting the majority of labour poor households negatively.

Results of the paper generally reveal a discrepancy between local realities and government's perceptions of the so-called dependency syndrome. This reflects the fact that policy interventions do not reflect local reality or incorporate local people's perspectives. This suggests the need to integrate farmers' perspectives in the policy design process and give voice to the affected people to ensure that operational responses address local problems and achieving planned positive food security outcomes.

Theoretical reflections

This thesis has used the concept of livelihoods and food security in the analysis of the impact of food security interventions on the lives and livelihoods of chronically food insecure households in Ebinat district Amhara region of Ethiopia. The thesis showed that both concepts are useful in understanding rural livelihoods and food insecurity in the two study villages. From the analysis of the thesis, it is possible to draw two general lessons regarding the major theoretical frameworks used in this thesis.

The first lesson is that, food aid is an important part of peoples' livelihood strategies and that this must be seen as strategizing the use of food aid rather than passivity and the result of people having developed a dependency syndrome. The analysis of the empirical chapters showed how people use food aid as part of their livelihood strategy in dealing with food shortages in the context of limited livelihood opportunities.

The second lesson is that availability decline, entitlement failure as well as response failures (often presented as competing explanations for food insecurity) are all relevant in the case of Ethiopia. Each of them explain part of the reality and is relevant in explaining food insecurity in the study area in particular and in the country in general. This thesis, however, showed that in the Ethiopian case response failure is understated as an explanation for the persistent nature of food insecurity in the country and this is a major contribution of this thesis.

Areas of Further Research

This research has tried to address the issue of food insecurity in one of Ethiopia's chronically food insecure areas and the impact of the government's Food Security Programmes, notably the PSNP and OFSP programmes. The study, however, is not without limitations and further research is required.

One of the limitations of this research is that it is focused on two research villages in one of the districts of Amhara region and based on a small number of cases in those villages. In order to inform decision making processes and address the limitations of the current food security programmes, similar research is needed in other chronically food insecure areas as well. Such research should focus on broadening the understanding of how the changes introduced in the current food security programme are different from the previous food security programmes particularly in terms of the day to day programming implementation on the ground and how this contribute differently towards livelihood improvements and household food security.

Another limitation of the study is its focus on households as a unit of analysis, without looking into intra-household differentiations and relations. Additional research is needed to investigate the nature of individual food insecurity within the household. In particular, the gender implication of food insecurity should also be studied in order to understand how the process of food insecurity affects individuals differently.

Another area of research is the link between formal social safety nets and the informal community-based social support systems. This study mainly focused on a formal safety net programme and its contribution to household livelihoods and food security. In rural Ethiopia, informal social safety nets are important means of coping mechanism for poor households. However, the introduction of the formal safety net programme and how this affected the informal safety net systems has not been studied in detail. Further research is needed in order to better understand how the formal safety net programme (which will be of limited duration although needed for a longer timeframe than anticipated at the design stage of the safety net) affects the informal safety nets on which people depend in normal times. Care should be taken for formal safety net programmes to sustain and strengthen community based support systems rather than eroding and marginalising them. In a similar manner, further research could be undertaken to understand better how the introduction of formal credit, as part of the government food security programme, affects the informal credit market. Strengthening such links would benefit a large majority of the poor who depend on the informal credit market for their loan.

Another area of further research is the role of the resettlement programme as a developmental oriented solution towards Ethiopia's food insecurity. Resettlement is the third components of the government food security programme adopted in 2003 with the objective of enabling rural chronically food insecure households attain food security through providing access to

farm land in resettlement areas. To date very little research has been undertaken on resettlement while it is an important pillar of Ethiopia's quest for food security and end its dependency of food aid. Therefore, further research needs to be undertaken to understand how the resettlement programme contribute in addressing the challenges of food insecurity in the country.

Rethinking the notion of safety nets in Ethiopia

There are many reasons explaining why the PSNP and other related food security programmes fail to provide households an opportunity to become food secure and escape from their poverty trap. This is partly due to implementation problems of the PSNP and OFSP programmes. For example, this thesis shows both intentional as well as unintentional distortion in implementing policies at the local level including bias towards some people at the cost of others which contributes to food security policies falling short of planned outcomes. Another issue is wrong diagnosis of the problem of food insecurity. This is clearly seen by the government's interpretation that a dependency syndrome is a key bottleneck in finding a structural solution to the crises of food insecurity. Labour imposition created by the Public Works programmes is another problem which forces households to prioritize short-term food security, through diverting their labour to Public Works activities, at the expense of abandoning their own farm lands. Such households thereby reproduce the conditions for long-term insecurity which Wood (2003) explains as the 'Faustian Bargain'.

The findings of the thesis imply that, under current conditions, the PSNP and OFSP programmes risk having only limited impact on poverty reduction and household's food security. Food security programming thus leaves a significant proportion of poor households as chronically food insecure and in need of external support to cover part of their food gaps. Moreover, given the vulnerability of the country to climate change related hazards, in combination with the chronic nature of poverty experienced by a large proportion of the population, it is unlikely that the current PSNP and OFSP programmes can address the structural problems to end food insecurity and poverty.

This calls for the need to establish a long-term social protection programme that will reduce the vulnerability and chronic poverty of the poor. Social protection programmes are basically long-term and usually permanent programmes focused on consumption and are linked to basic services like health and education. Conceptually social protection encompasses policies and programs that seek to protect people against risk and vulnerability, mitigate the impacts of shocks, and support people who suffer from chronic incapacities to secure basic livelihoods. Social protection programmes can also be used to build assets and to reduce both short-term and long-term poverty (Adato and Hoddinott, 2008). Social protection can include both formal and informal interventions undertaken on behalf of the poor (Holmes and Jones, 2009).

According to Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004), social protection provides four complementary functions. These include the protective, preventative, promotional, and transformational functions. They argue that the protective function of social protection aims to protect people from economic and social deprivation through providing emergency interventions and targeted transfers. The preventive function includes measures designed to avert deprivation or to mitigate the impact of adverse shocks through, for example, insurance or risk diversification. The promotive function focuses on actions that aims to enhance people's income, asset and capabilities whereas the transformative function aims to introduce legal and judicial reforms which seek to address concerns of social equity and exclusion.

The Ethiopian PSNP is regarded as an example of a social protection programme. However, as indicated in this thesis, the existing safety net programme has shortcomings in its assumption, coverage, scope, budget allocation as well as implementation for it to be seen as a fully-fledged social protection programme. It was designed as a short term programme (initially only for a five year period) with a focus on consumption smoothing and asset protection. It focuses only on chronically food insecure rural households in drought prone areas and does not cover other vulnerable food insecure households within the PSNP beneficiary districts or in districts not targeted by the PSNP programme. Therefore, there is a need to transform the existing social safety net programme into a long-term social protection scheme covering a wide geographical area on long-term bases to effectively address the decade's long issues of poverty and food insecurity in the country.

However, implementing such a long-term social protection programme requires initiatives designed to address the shortcomings of the existing safety net programme characterised by inadequate resources, weak institutional capacity for effective implementation as well as weak linkages between different sectors and a lack of accountability in programme delivery. This implies the need to strengthen the implementation capacities of institutions both at regional and local levels for a smooth implementation of policies effectively down to the grass root level.

At the same time there is a need to make the policy design and implementation process participatory in order to address the needs of the beneficiary people. Current food security policies and strategies are formulated and implemented in a top down approach and do not provide a chance to incorporate the views and perspectives of the food insecure people. The design and formulation of appropriate social protection programmes should build on the knowledge of the local people. In this regard, social protection policies should be participatory not only in the implementation but also in the design processes.

In line with this, creating a government which is accountable to the needs and interests of the people is crucial. In the Ethiopian case where the government is highly dependent on foreign aid, there is a tendency on the part of the government to be more accountable to donor countries rather than to its own people. It is every citizen's right to be protected from hunger and food insecurity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹¹ (UDHR) of the United Nations in its article 25(1) declares that all people have a right to food which states that 'everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food'. In this regard the recent government tendency to grant large tracts of farm land to foreign investors to produce cash crop for export at the expense of the local people's right to use their land to feed themselves can be seen as a violation of people's rights.

Though the design of Ethiopia's current Food Security Programme takes into account some of the key critiques on the country's previous structural approaches to address food insecurity, its implementation is a major challenge. As a result, the programmes falls short of expectations in terms of addressing the food security problems the country has been experiencing since the mid-1970s. Designing a good policy alone is not enough to address the challenges of food insecurity in the country. Proper implementation of policies down to the

¹¹ UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948.

local level is central in determining the success of policies. A realistic policy that doesn't reflect any political interest with proper implementation and monitoring down to the grass root level is important to ensure that policies and strategies play their role in addressing the structural causes of poverty and food insecurity in the country. However implementing a long-term social protection programmes has huge financial implications and can be beyond the capacity of a poor country like Ethiopia. In this regard local and international NGOs, donor agencies and governments have a role to play in supporting the country through providing financial assistance and technical advice in respect for the lives and livelihoods of Ethiopians living in the country's chronically food insecure areas.

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Summary

This thesis deals with rural livelihoods and how government's food security interventions affect household's food security status, in one of the chronically food insecure districts of Amhara region, northern Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian economy is dependent on low input and low output rain fed agriculture. Agriculture employs more than 80% of the labour force and contributes for about 41 % of the GDP and 70 percent of the total export earnings (Diao et al., 2007). However, despite such socio-economic significance, the performance of agriculture in the country is poor and is characterised by low and declining productivity, caused by a combination of both natural and human induced constraints. As a result, Ethiopia is characterised by large food self-sufficiency gap at national level and food insecurity at household level. Ethiopia has been structurally food deficit at least since the early 1980s. Research indicates that for over 50 percent of farm families, the production systems are not enough to satisfy household basic needs and, therefore, over 50 percent of Ethiopians at national level are said to be food insecure (Negatu, 2008).

Consequently, food aid has been an important way of tackling the food insecurity problem at the national level providing on average about 10 percent of the total annual food availability (Negatu, 2008). In this regard, Ethiopia is one of the highest recipients of food aid in the world. At least since 1984, more than 5 million people have received food aid in the country on annual basis, indicating a situation of chronic food insecurity. Since 2009, it is also estimated that more than 8 million people are supported by food aid transfer under the Productive Safety Net Programme to cover part of their household food shortages (MoARD, 2009).

This research attempts to analyse household's situations of food insecurity from the perspectives of local people. It tries to understand the link between food aid and people's perceptions and practices to cope with food insecurity and food security interventions within the framework of the government food security programmes notably the PSNP and OFSPs. The main objective of the thesis is to provide insight into how chronically food insecure households try to cope with food insecurity and build self-resilience at the household level within the framework of the government food security interventions. The research tried to answer the question why households are food insecure despite the many attempts to address the challenges of food insecurity over the last couple of decades. The research generally attempted to explore the major factors responsible for the persistence of food insecurity in the country.

Intensive ethnographic fieldwork had been undertaken in two remote villages in one of the chronically food insecure districts of Amhara region, northern Ethiopia for about 18 months, from February 2009 to July 2010. Farmers' perspectives about their own status of food insecurity and their perception towards the government food security interventions and their livelihoods were documented on monthly basis. The thesis used various concepts and food security approaches to explain the empirical findings of the research.

Chapter one of the thesis starts with a general background to the research problem. It presents the situation of food insecurity from the global perspective down to the national level through describing Ethiopia's vulnerability to food insecurity over the last couple of decades. The chapter shows that despite many attempts undertaken by successive Ethiopian governments

to address food insecurity over the last three decades, food insecurity remains a persistent problem with about half of the population being undernourished and with millions of people depending on food hand-outs. Based on this general description, the chapter presents the objective of the thesis and the major research question that will be addressed later in the empirical chapters. Moreover, the chapter introduces the study area and the methodologies applied to collect the research data. As it is explained in the chapter, the research is mainly based on qualitative data with a focus on in-depth interviews and personal observation.

Chapter two presents an overview of the theories and discussions around the major concepts that are central to this research. It starts with the definition of the concept of food security and discusses the major paradigm shifts in the thinking of food security over the last three decades with the objective of providing a clear understanding of the concept. It gives special emphasis to the major factors explaining the persistence of famine and food insecurity in developing countries. In addition to the decades long emphasis on the Food Availability and Entitlement Decline approaches as an explanation for the persistence of famine, this chapter discusses a concept that Devereux (2009) explains as ‘response failure’ as an explanation for the persistence of famine in Sub Saharan Africa. The chapter then presents a discussion on livelihoods. The concept of livelihood is discussed as comprising a set of assets, activities and the access to these assets and activities influenced by policies and institutions that determine individuals or households means of making a living (Ellis, 2000). This is followed by a discussion on the livelihood framework. The chapter highlights the major components of the livelihood framework and discusses some of the shortcomings of the framework as analytical tool to understand the complex realities of livelihoods. Finally, the chapter provides a closer look at the concept of household and household livelihood strategies to better understand how people respond to risks and uncertainties affecting their livelihood and household food security situations.

Chapters three to six present the empirical findings from the field. Chapter three looks into the role of the PSNP programme in household food security and challenges the popular notion of development projects or safety net programmes demanding labour contribution as a requirement for households’ eligibility for transfers. It focuses on different groups of households’ categorised on the basis of availability of household labour to analyse the impact of the PSNP programme on household’s food security. The chapter generally shows how the PSNP public works programmes affect households through absorbing their household labour especially for the large majority of labour poor households. The chapter argues that, the labour absorption effect of the PSNP public works programmes force households to abandon their own farm activities in order to work for public works to secure short-term transfers that further contributes to increase households’ vulnerability. The results of the study indicate that, irrespective of land ownership, labour-poor households were found to be more vulnerable than labour-rich households who managed to increase their household productivity even without owning enough land to feed themselves. The chapter finally calls for rethinking of the popular notion of development interventions and safety net programmes demanding labour from beneficiary households.

Chapter four discusses the role of the PSNP and OFSP programmes in taking households out of dependence on external support. The chapter starts with the conceptual definition of the concept of graduation from safety net programmes. The chapter then describes the rate of graduation in Amhara region in general and in the study area in particular. It shows that, rates of safety net graduations falls short of expectations during the first phase of the PSNP programme (2005-2009). Moreover, the chapter indicates that, though graduated households

have more assets than the average PSNP recipients, the majority of graduated households continue to be food-insecure or face the risk of falling back into food insecurity in the short-term. The chapter further discusses the experiences of these households within the programme and shows some of the major challenges of programme implementation as documented at local level. In conclusion, the chapter argues that the livelihood conditions in the district and the institutional set-up of the programme are important factors determining why successful graduation is unlikely, and why people continue to be dependent on different programmes and safety nets.

Chapter five focuses on the role of credit in rural livelihoods within the context of the Ethiopian government's food security programmes. This chapter outlines the major types of credits available in the study area and shows how these different types of credit function at local level. It discusses the role of credit in household livelihood by looking households based on their wealth groups. The chapter specifically discusses the role of credit in asset building as well as in agricultural productivity and household food security. It argues that, though credit is generally expected to have a positive impact on households' livelihood, credit affects households differently depending on their wealth. The chapter generally reveals that credit failed to enable poor households to move out of poverty and food insecurity, whereas better-off and labour rich households improved their livelihoods through credit. The chapter highlights that, for poor households, rather than achieving long-term livelihood improvements, access to credit only means short-term consumption smoothing with a risk of being trapped into a cycle of indebtedness. The chapter, however, indicates that participation in a safety net programme could, to some extent, help poor households to break away from this cycle of indebtedness, because participation in safety nets somehow enhances household's access to other forms of credit and enabled them to use credit effectively for livestock investment better than non-beneficiary households.

Chapter six addresses the contradictory notion of dependency syndrome attached to long-term beneficiaries of food aid. The chapter analyses the activities and behaviours of long-term food aid beneficiary households in an attempt to understand if people have modified their behaviour in anticipation of external aid. Moreover, the chapter explains how the dependency syndrome discussion has influenced the Ethiopian government's food aid policy directions since the mid-1980s. The chapter generally shows that food aid constitutes a very small amount as a share of households' overall food needs. It further reveals that, in times of crisis, food aid is one of the many components of livelihood portfolios that poor people depend on to cover household food gaps. The chapter concludes that, in situations when food aid makes up only a small share of household food needs, the dependency syndrome is simply a construct of outsiders rather than an existing risk among food aid beneficiary households who receives a meagre amount of aid that fails to cover their entire household food gaps.

Finally, chapter seven presents the summary of the major results of the thesis and provides suggestions for further research. Finally the chapter presents a general conclusion of the thesis. The chapter generally provides answer to the major research question. It shows why rural Ethiopia is still food insecure despite the many attempts undertaken by successive Ethiopian governments to address the chronic food insecurity crisis. The chapter specifically indicates why government's food security strategies falls short of expectations in taking households out of poverty and food insecurity.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift gaat over de bestaanszekerheid en de invloed van overheidsprogramma's op de voedselzekerheid van huishoudens op het platteland in één van de meest chronisch voedselonzekere districten in de Amhara regio in noord Ethiopia.

De Ethiopische economie is afhankelijk van kleinschalige en niet-intensieve landbouw die gekenmerkt wordt door lage opbrengsten. Meer dan 80 procent van de beroepsbevolking is werkzaam in de landbouw sector. In totaal draagt de landbouw voor 41 procent bij aan het Bruto National Product (BNP) en vormt 70 procent van de export opbrengsten (Diao et al., 2007). Ondanks deze significante cijfers presteert de landbouwsector slecht met een lage en verder dalende productiviteit veroorzaakt door een combinatie van zowel natuurlijke als sociaal economische factoren. Als gevolg kent Ethiopië een structureel voedseltekort op nationaal niveau en voedselonzekeerheid op huishoudniveau sinds begin jaren tachtig van de vorige eeuw. Onderzoek toont aan dat voor 50 procent van de huishoudens op het platteland de landbouwproductie onvoldoende is om te voorzien in hun eerste levensbehoeftes. Dit betekent dat meer dan 50 procent van de totale bevolking te maken heeft met voedselonzekeerheid (Negatu, 2008).

Voedselhulp speelt derhalve een belangrijke rol in het aanpakken van de voedselonzekeerheid op nationaal niveau en vormt gemiddeld tien procent van de jaarlijkse lokaal beschikbare hoeveelheid voedsel (Negatu, 2008). Ethiopië is hiermee één van de grootste ontvangers van voedselhulp in de wereld. Sinds 1984 hebben meer dan 5 miljoen Ethiopiërs jaarlijks voedselhulp ontvangen, wat wijst op het chronisch karakter van deze voedselonzekeerheid. Sinds 2009 ontvangen 8 miljoen Ethiopiërs voedsel vanuit het Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) dat huishoudens ondersteunt om het voedseltekort te verlichten (MoARD, 2009).

Dit onderzoek tracht de voedselonzekere situatie van huishoudens te analyseren vanuit het perspectief van de lokale bevolking. In de studie wordt het verband en de invloed onderzocht tussen structurele voedselhulp, in het bijzonder vanuit de PSNP en de zogenoemde Other Food Security Programmes (OFSPs), en hoe de lokale bevolking deze programma's ziet en er gebruik van maakt om te komen tot een betere voedselzekerheid. De belangrijkste doelstelling van dit proefschrift is om inzicht te geven in hoe chronisch voedsel onzekere huishoudens omgaan met deze voedselzekerheidsprogramma's van de overheid en in hoeverre deze bijdragen aan een oplossing. Het onderzoek probeert antwoord te vinden op de vraag waarom huishoudens nog altijd voedselonzekeer zijn ondanks de vele interventies dit te verhelpen in de afgelopen decennia. In algemene zin probeert het onderzoek de belangrijkste factoren van het voortbestaan van de voedselonzekeerheid in kaart te brengen.

Voor het onderzoek is 18 maanden intensief etnografisch veldonderzoek gedaan in twee afgelegen dorpen in een district in de Amhara regio in noord Ethiopië, een gebied dat kampt met chronische voedselonzekeerheid. Het veldwerk is uitgevoerd in de periode van februari 2009 tot en met juli 2010. De percepties van de boeren omtrent hun bestaanszekerheid als mede hun mening over de overheidsinterventies op het gebied van voedselonzekeerheid zijn maandelijks gedocumenteerd. In het proefschrift zijn verschillende concepten en theoretische benaderingen gebruikt om de empirische gegevens te interpreteren.

Het eerste hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift beschrijft de achtergrond van het onderzoek. Er wordt een overzicht gegeven van de voedselonzekere situatie vanuit zowel een mondiaal

perspectief als een nationaal perspectief door de kwetsbaarheid van de voedselvoorziening in Ethiopië te beschrijven gedurende de laatste decennia. Het hoofdstuk laat zien dat, ondanks de vele pogingen van de verschillende Ethiopische regeringen om de voedselonzekeerheid aan te pakken in de afgelopen drie decennia, de voedselonzekeerheid een hardnekkig probleem blijft waarbij circa de helft van de bevolking chronisch ondervoed blijkt en miljoenen mensen afhankelijk zijn van voedselhulp. Gebaseerd op deze algemene omschrijving van het probleem wordt in dit hoofdstuk de doelstelling van het onderzoek gepresenteerd evenals de belangrijkste onderzoeksvraag die in de daarop volgende hoofdstukken wordt behandeld. Bovendien wordt in dit hoofdstuk het studiegebied beschreven evenals de onderzoeksmethoden die zijn toegepast om de benodigde data te verzamelen.

Hoofdstuk twee presenteert een overzicht van de theorieën en debatten met betrekking tot de belangrijkste begrippen die centraal staan in dit onderzoek. Allereerst wordt het begrip voedselzekeerheid gedefinieerd en worden de voortschrijdende inzichten omtrent dit begrip over de afgelopen drie decennia besproken. Hierin wordt speciaal aandacht gegeven aan de belangrijke factoren die het chronische karakter van honger en voedselonzekeerheid in ontwikkelingslanden verklaren. In aanvulling op de decennia lange nadruk op de theorieën die focussen op voedselbeschikbaarheid en toegang tot voedsel, wordt het door Devereux (2009) besproken concept van ‘response failure’, vrij vertaald als ‘falende interventie’, gebruikt als een element om de aanhoudende honger in sub-Sahara Afrika te verklaren. Hierna worden de aspecten gerelateerd aan het begrip ‘livelihood’ ofwel bestaanszekeerheid geïntroduceerd. Dit begrip wordt beschreven als de samenstelling van verschillende middelen en activiteiten die een individu of huishouden ter beschikking heeft voor het levensonderhoud evenals de toegang tot deze middelen en het vermogen deze activiteiten te ondernemen zoals beïnvloed door beleid en regelgeving (Ellis, 2000). Vervolgens wordt het theoretisch kader besproken dat gebruikt wordt om de bestaanszekeerheid te kunnen analyseren. De belangrijkste componenten van dit theoretisch kader worden beschreven alsmede de tekortkomingen om de complexe realiteit van bestaanszekeerheid te kunnen onderzoeken. Tenslotte geeft het hoofdstuk inzicht in het concept ‘huishouden’ en de strategieën van huishoudens om hun bestaanszekeerheid veilig te stellen. Dit geeft inzicht in hoe huishoudens reageren op risico's en onzekerheden die hun voedselzekeerheid beïnvloeden.

Hoofdstukken drie tot en met zes bespreken de empirische bevindingen van het onderzoek. In hoofdstuk drie wordt gekeken naar de rol van het PSNP programma ten aanzien van de voedselzekeerheid van huishoudens. De overheersende gedachtegang dat in zulke programma's huishoudens een substantiële bijdrage in de vorm van arbeid moeten leveren als structurele oplossing voor voedselonzekeerheid wordt in dit hoofdstuk in twijfel getrokken. In het hoofdstuk wordt op basis van de beschikbare arbeidskracht gekeken naar verschillende categorieën huishoudens om het resultaat van het PSNP programma op de voedselzekeerheid van huishoudens te kunnen beoordelen. Het hoofdstuk laat zien dat de infrastructurele ‘Voedsel voor Werk’ (‘Food for Work’) projecten van het PSNP programma op sommige categorieën huishoudens een negatief effect hebben doordat de beschikbare arbeidskracht wordt gebruikt voor deze projecten. Dit is in het bijzonder een probleem voor huishoudens die relatief weinig arbeidskrachten ter beschikking hebben. Zij worden gedwongen om hun arbeid primair in het PSNP programma te investeren om toegang tot voedselhulp zeker te stellen maar daarmee verontachtzamen ze eigen landbouwactiviteiten om zelf voedsel te produceren. Op de lange termijn draagt dit bij aan een toename van de kwetsbaarheid van deze huishoudens. De resultaten van dit onderzoek geven aan dat, ongeacht het grondbezit, huishoudens die over onvoldoende arbeidskrachten beschikken, kwetsbaarder zijn dan huishoudens die over voldoende arbeidskrachten beschikken aangezien het deze laatste groep

lukt om de productiviteit van het huishouden te verhogen zelfs als ze niet over voldoende land beschikken om in hun eigen voedselbehoefte te voorzien. Het hoofdstuk vraagt tenslotte om een herziene visie op de heersende veronderstelling binnen ontwikkelingsinterventies dat 'Voedsel voor Werk' programma's ' conditioneel zijn voor toegang tot voedsel.

Hoofdstuk vier gaat in op de rol van de PSNP en OFSP programma's in het verminderen van de afhankelijkheid van huishoudens op hulp van buitenaf. Het hoofdstuk begint met een definitie van het begrip 'graduatie' ofwel het niet langer nodig hebben van voedsel transfers als vangnet om de voedselbehoefte af te dekken. Het hoofdstuk geeft vervolgens een overzicht van graduatie in de Amhara regio en meer in detail voor het studiegebied. Er wordt aangetoond dat graduatie ver achter blijft bij de doelstellingen en verwachtingen van de eerste fase van het programma (2005-2009). Bovendien laat het hoofdstuk zien dat ondanks het feit dat huishoudens die wel gegradueerd zijn en meer bezittingen hebben deze huishoudens nog altijd voedselonzekeerheid kennen, of het risico lopen op korte termijn weer voedselonzekeer te worden. Het hoofdstuk gaat verder in op de ervaringen van deze huishoudens met de PSNP en OFSP programma's en beschrijft de belangrijkste knelpunten in de uitvoering van het programma op basis van hun ervaring. Tot slot wordt in het hoofdstuk beargumenteerd dat de lokale context evenals de opzet van het programma belangrijke factoren zijn die bepalen waarom graduatie een moeizaam proces is en waarom de huishoudens afhankelijk blijven van de verschillende programma's en vangnetten.

Hoofdstuk vijf gaat in op de rol van krediet ten aanzien van voedselzekeerheid op het platteland als onderdeel van de voedselzekeerheid programma's van de Ethiopische overheid. In het hoofdstuk wordt een overzicht gegeven van de belangrijkste soorten kredietverlening die beschikbaar zijn in het studiegebied en hoe deze verschillende kredietverleningen werken op lokaal niveau. Het bespreekt de rol van krediet in het levensonderhoud van huishoudens door de huishoudens onder te verdelen in verschillende inkomensklassen. Dit hoofdstuk gaat specifiek in op de rol van krediet in het opbouwen van bestaansmiddelen en het verhogen van de agrarische productiviteit en verbetering van voedselzekeerheid van huishoudens. In het hoofdstuk wordt beargumenteerd dat, ondanks dat in het algemeen wordt aangenomen dat krediet positief bijdraagt aan de bestaanszekeerheid, het effect van krediet verschilt afhankelijk van de inkomensklasse van een huishouden. Het hoofdstuk laat zien dat voor arme huishoudens krediet geen garantie is om armoede te verminderen en voedselzekeerheid te verbeteren. Relatief rijkere huishoudens die over voldoende arbeidskrachten beschikken zijn veel beter in staat om hun bestaanszekeerheid te verbeteren door middel van krediet. Het hoofdstuk benadrukt dat voor arme gezinnen toegang tot krediet, in plaats van verbetering van hun bestaanszekeerheid op de lange termijn, kan leiden tot een tijdelijke toename in consumptie met het risico om verstrikt te raken in schulden. Desalniettemin laat het hoofdstuk ook zien dat deelname aan de PSNP tot op zekere hoogte arme gezinnen kan helpen om uit de schulden te komen, doordat deelname hen toegang geeft tot andere vormen van krediet die zij effectief kunnen gebruiken, met name door te investeren in veeteelt.

Hoofdstuk zes behandelt het zogenaamde 'dependency syndrom' ofwel de hulpaafhankelijkheid die gecreëerd zou worden als gevolg van langdurige en structurele voedselhulp. Het hoofdstuk analyseert de activiteiten en het gedrag van huishoudens die gedurende een lange tijd voedselhulp hebben ontvangen om te zien of zij hun gedrag en activiteiten hebben aangepast om blijvend in aanmerking te komen voor voedselhulp in plaats van die hulp overbodig te maken. Bovendien wordt in het hoofdstuk uitgelegd hoe sinds midden jaren 80 van de vorige eeuw het debat over hulpaafhankelijkheid het beleid van de Ethiopische regering heeft beïnvloed op het gebied van voedselhulp. Het hoofdstuk laat zien

dat voedselhulp slechts een zeer klein deel vormt van de totale behoefte aan voedsel van een huishouden. Bovendien toont het hoofdstuk aan dat in tijden van crisis voedselhulp één van de vele middelen is die arme huishoudens benutten om hun voedseltekort te overbruggen. Het hoofdstuk concludeert dat, in situaties waar voedselhulp slechts een klein deel uitmaakt van de voedselbehoefte van huishoudens, het begrip hulpafhankelijkheid slechts een bedenksel is van buitenstaanders in plaats van een reëel risico voor huishoudens om blijvend hulpafhankelijk te worden.

In het afsluitende hoofdstuk zeven wordt een samenvatting gegeven van de belangrijkste bevindingen van dit proefschrift en worden suggesties gedaan voor vervolgonderzoek. Tot slot worden de conclusies op basis van dit proefschrift getrokken en wordt de belangrijkste onderzoeksvraag beantwoord. Het hoofdstuk laat zien waarom de voedselonzekeerheid een hardnekkig probleem blijft op het Ethiopische platteland, ondanks de vele pogingen van de verschillende Ethiopische regeringen om de chronische voedselonzekeerheid aan te pakken. Het hoofdstuk gaat specifiek in op waarom de strategieën van de overheid de verwachtingen niet kunnen waarmaken om de huishoudens uit de voedselonzekeerheid en armoede te halen.

About the author

Aschale Dagnachew Siyoum was born in 1978 in Addis Zemen, Gondar, Ethiopia. He obtained his first degree in Geography from Debub University, Dilla College of Teachers Education and Health Sciences in 2002 with great distinction. After working at the Addis Ababa Master Plan Revision project Office for one year he went to Norway for his M.Phil. degree. He obtained his M.Phil. degree in Development Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in 2005. As part of his thesis research, he conducted his field work in Ethiopia. His research focuses on the Impact of Population Pressure on Agricultural Land Fragmentation and Land Use Change.

After he obtained his M.Phil. degree, he joined the Addis Ababa Finance and Economic Development Bureau as a consultant and engaged in the development public private partnership manual on service delivery in Addis Ababa. Latter in 2006, he joined Bahir Dar University, Disaster Risk Management and Sustainable Development department as a Lecturer. At the university he has been involved in teaching different courses in disaster risk reduction and development fields. He has been also engaged in research projects undertaken by the department mainly on topics of community disaster risk management. In 2008 Aschale started his PhD research at Disaster Studies group of Wageningen University, for which he conducted a one and half year of fieldwork in Amhara region, Ethiopia.

Training and Supervision Plan

Annex to statement

Name: Aschale Dagnachew Siyoum

PhD candidate, Wageningen School of Social sciences (WASS)

Completed Training and Supervision Plan



Wageningen School
of Social Sciences

Name of Activity	Department/Institute	Year	ECTS*
A) Project related competences			
Property rights, Natural resources and Conflict (LAW 31306)	Disaster Studies Law and Governance/WUR	2008	6
Humanitarian aid and Reconstruction (RDS 34806)	Disaster Studies/WUR	2008	6
Presentation 'PSNP and Household Food Security: The case of Ebinat District'	National Conference entitled "From Emergency Aid to Food Security in Ethiopia: Opportunities and Challenges" Bahir Dar, Ethiopia	2010	2
Presentation "Household's Experience of Graduation from Safety Net Programmes and the Implication for Household Food Security"	Second World Conference on Humanitarian Studies, Boston	2011	2
Presentation "Coping with Food Insecurity and Food Aid Intervention within the Framework of the PSNP Programme"	First World Conference on Humanitarian Studies, Groningen	2009	1
Presentation "Food Insecurity and Environmental Migration in Drought Prone Areas of Ethiopia"	UNU-EHS Summer School on Social Vulnerability/ German	2010	3
B) General research related Competences			
Orientation course	CERES	2008	5
Presentation tutorial	CERES	2008	5.5
Research methodology 1: From topic to proposal	MGS/WUR	2008	4
A practical course on the methodology of fieldwork	CERES	2008	2
Field Research Methods: Methods and Tools for Qualitative Data Analysis	CERES/Consumer Studies Group/WUR	2008	2.3
Research Seminar Disaster Studies	WUR	2010	1
C) Career related competences/personal development			
Long-term dynamics of food and human development	WGS/WUR	2008	2.5
Techniques for Writing and Presenting a Scientific Paper	WGS/WUR	2011	1.2
Total (minimum 30 ECTS)			43.5

*One ECTS on average is equivalent to 28 hours of course work

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