



Report on: The Consultative workshop of SPIDA Research consortium and regional Stakeholders on PSNP in Afar Regional State, Ethiopia



The Afar livelihoods, Anderkelo, Ethiopia – Photo credit: Bereket Tsegay, PENHA

“Social protection for Inclusive Development in Afar Region in Ethiopia”

May 3rd 2017

Hosted by: Samara University, Samara, Ethiopia.

By Zeremariam Fre, Gabriel Temesgen and Bisrat Weldesilassie

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Acknowledgment

The Social Protection for Inclusive Development in Afar of Ethiopia (SPIDA) team is very grateful to Samara University and its senior staff for warmly hosting and kindly facilitating the one-day workshop. We are also so grateful to the representative of the Disaster Prevention and Food security program (DPFSP) of Afar Regional State presented his reflections on the experiences of the PSNP program implementing agencies.

We highly appreciate of the financial support and solidarity of our main funder NWO in the Netherlands.

The authors of this brief report are responsible for any errors or misrepresentations of fact which may not necessarily reflect the views of the people who attended the workshop, the consortium members of Adigrat University (ADU), the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA) and the Development Planning Unit (DPU) of the University College London (UCL) and the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

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1. Introduction

The consultative workshop of the SPIDA Research consortium and regional stakeholders on Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in the Afar Regional State took place at Samara University, Samara, and the capital of Afar Regional State, Ethiopia on 3rd May 2017. The workshop was co-organized by the SPIDA research Consortium (consisting of Adigrat University, University College London and PENHA), Samara University and the Disaster Prevention and Food security program (DPFSP) of Afar Regional State.

The primary objective of the workshop was to engage with policy makers, academics and NGOs through knowledge exchange and mutual learning, thus increasing the participation of relevant stakeholders and enhancing the validity of the SPIDA study outcomes.

The second objective was to prepare for the forthcoming national conference in November 2017 by directly engaging with the policy makers, academics and other actors at the Afar State level and nationally in Ethiopia.

The third objective was for the SPIDA researchers to collect additional (published and unpublished) information on the PSNP from the various stakeholders in order to fill any knowledge gaps in the present SPIDA study.

The workshop was attended by the SPIDA research team members, government authorities from different sectors of Afar region, Samara University staff and some NGOs. (See annex one for the workshop program and annex two for the list of workshop participants). The SPIDA team was able to share the preliminary findings of



Samara SPIDA Policy Dialogue Participants

the SPIDA study from the first year. The representative of the Disaster Prevention and Food security program (DPFSP) of Afar Regional State presented his reflections on the experiences of the PSNP program implementing agencies on the gaps identified in the implementation of the PSNP program and actions so taken so far to address such gaps.

Mr. Ali Hussein, Academic Vice president of Samara University, Mr. Bisrat Weldesilassie, Adigrat University representing the SPIDA team and Mr. Kedir Abdella representing Samara University welcomed the workshop participants. Mr. Bisrat briefly introduced the aims, objectives and expectations from the workshop and its significance to policymakers and the Afar communities.

Speakers underlined the need to evaluate the implementation and impact of PSNP program critically to ensure benefit of the different livelihood and sectors of the wider community in the Afar region—agro-pastoralists, pastoralists, nomads, women, youth, etc. The speakers highlighted the importance of such seminars which helps to bring together researchers, policy makers and implementers, and conducting an informed dialogue with relevant experts, thus, effectively enriching the ongoing policy dialogue.

2. Presentation and Open discussions and reflections based on specific themes.

2.1. First session: Welcoming Participants and Introduction about SPIDA

Mr. Ali Hussein, Academic Vice president of Samara University, Mr. Bisrat Weldesilassie, Adigrat University representing the SPIDA team and Mr. Kedir Abdella representing Samara University welcomed the workshop participants. Mr. Bisrat briefly introduced the aims, objectives and expectations from the workshop and its significance to policymakers and the Afar communities.

Ato Kedir Abdalla, representative of the Disaster prevention and Food Security program (DPFSP) of the Afar region, stated that PSNP in Afar region started its second phase in 2008 with the launching of a government-donor joint initiative; the PSNP-Pastoral Area Pilot (PSNP-PAP) in 6 woredas, including Awash woreda and Berahle woreda by government and the remaining four woredas by the joint initiative of government and NGOs. With the inclusion of woredas rolled-out since then, the program coverage has progressively expanded. In phase three the program covered all the 32 woredas in the Afar region.

The program in Afar region unlike the other regions in Ethiopia has not fully achieved its objectives, probably because it was not joined with the household asset building program (HABP) and other programs of food security and was not tailored to the livelihood system of the Afar region. Currently, the program is in its fourth phase.

The representative of the Disaster Prevention and Food Security program of the region, Mr. Kedir Abdulla said that PSNP program is helping the poor to prevent disaster, enhance food security and leave the dependency syndrome behind. Through

the public works component of PSNP, people work on development of social infrastructure, natural resource protection, range land management, animal health and similar interventions, thereby helping themselves while contributing to the development of their localities. He gave an insight in the government's specific approaches to contextualize and make PSNP program effective through regular evaluations. Mr. Kedir stated that women are firstly, part of the beneficiary community and secondly, they are participating in all committees at all levels. He claimed that PSNP plays a positive role in empowering women.

Yet, in line with most of the SPIDA research findings, Mr. Kedir also mentioned the different challenges they are facing. The main ones being: the problem of implementation modality which did not adequately considered regional context, shortage of the yearly support span (6 months), less participatory approach while planning, ineffectiveness and malfunctioning of institutional arrangement, shortage or absence of alternative income sources, etc. Lastly, he proposed the potential of off-farm and on-farm activities that can benefit the youth and the community.

The first part was chaired by Mr. Abu-Bakr Yassin Gedro Public relations director at Samara University.

2.2. Session Two: SPIDA Aims; Objectives, Main findings; and Lessons learned

Gabriel Temesgen representing the SPIDA team, made a 25-minute PowerPoint presentation spelling out the aims, objectives, main findings, lessons and recommendations. The research team recommended: extension of PSNP program in terms of beneficiaries (to include newly born children and polygamous households) and time from 6 to 10 months; identifying locally relevant types of public work: understanding the effect of informal social networks as well as provision of alternative income generation mechanisms for the pastoral and nomadic communities program to achieve its goals.

Gabriel Temesgen summed up the interim findings from the first year of the PRA work based on the SPIDA research as follow:

- The Afar pastoralist communities are known for coping with natural and man-made disasters in a climatically harsh environment; this is mainly due to their mobile livelihood systems and the informal social network they practice. However, frequent droughts (including the current drought) are clearly challenging the Afar resilience to shocks.
- There is emerging evidence that the Afar are diversifying their economy and adopting new survival strategies including petty trade, wage labour, urban employment, and charcoal production and so on. Economic diversification and alternative sources of income among the Afar communities should be investigated further, but during the initial stages of our study we have only been able to collect anecdotal evidence.

- The Afar communities have traditional social obligation mechanisms in which better-off households assist disadvantaged groups of the community, mostly through kinship networks of reciprocal solidarity. Such traditions are worth investigating, but they have been undermined by the current drought situation, which is also adversely affecting pastoralist livelihoods and economy.
- The PSNP's public works beneficiaries work on labour-intensive projects for six months of the year (January to June) to build community assets and reverse severe environmental degradation. However, some public works activities, such as soil and water conservation and terracing, seem to have been introduced from nearby highland models and may not be appropriate to Afar conditions in the arid lowlands.
- The household asset building programme (HABP) part of the food security policy in Ethiopia has not yet been implemented in the Afar region. The reasons provided include the risk associated with loan default (from the government side) and religious beliefs that oppose interest-bearing lending and borrowing practices.
- The existing PSNP includes youth and women in public works activities as well as transfers; however, the programme doesn't give specific emphasis to youth and women. The revised questionnaire for phase two of the research will refocus on youth and gender. The team has added substantial questions to ensure full inclusion of women and youth based on lessons from phase one of the study.



Anderkelo, Chifra, Afar – Ethiopia, *Photo credit: Bereket Tsegay, PENHA*

The SPIDA presentation was generally fairly well received but drew a number of questions, criticisms and observations from the participants and the main ones are listed below:

- **On study aims, outcomes, SPIDA researchers' composition and partnership with Samara University:**

- Is the aim of this study to improve **or** replace the existing PSNP policy?
- Why wasn't it possible to involve key partners like Samara University in the study more seriously from the very beginning?
- Why the composition of the researchers is so limited and social scientists are under-represented?
- **On the rationale in selecting the research sites, underrepresentation of nomadic communities in the Afar Lowlands and research thematic bias**
 - Why are the Lowland areas and nomadic groups underrepresented? And how were sites and participants selected?
 - The title is about social protection and social protection has many components - PSNP being one of them. Yet the findings are only about PSNP -Why?
- **Other key policy related issues on PSNP targeting, Afar social fabric, climate change, grazing and villagization.**
 - Targeting is often raised as an issue by the communities. What are your findings about this issue?
 - As they are crucial to Afar communities, attention should also be given to issues of grazing land, climate change and villagization?
 - How is the Afar culture of sharing resources to be seen in relation to effectiveness of PSNP?

2.3. Session Three: Assessment of four thematic issues during the implementation

This session, chaired by Dr. Zeremariam Fre, Consortium leader, focused on four thematic issues, which are outlined below;

A. Gaps that have been identified in implementation of PSNP program in the region and measures taken:

The gaps mentioned by the participants are summarised as;

- Problem of Policy design and implementation modality: didn't consider the context of the Afar.
- One way (top down) approach) i.e. PSNP based on a highland model
- **Poor institutional arrangement that resulted in malfunctioning.**
 - Lack of commitment and synergy among relevant stakeholders.
 - Limited resource and capacity the sector offices have at their disposal.
 - The focus on highland areas while neglecting nomadic and remote lowlands areas.

- ***The new measures that the government has been initiating need to be considering the following;***

- Proper evaluation of the policy design and revision are needed
- Ensuring popular participation with emphasis on Community Care coalitions (CCCs).
- Proper consideration of the pastoralist conditions in the lowlands and marginal areas inhabited by pastoral peoples.
- Identifying locally relevant public work activities rather than simply copying what is done in highland: specifically, water and soil conservation.
- Attention to household size and periods of food shortage (seasonality issue).

B. Role of PSNP in reaching and benefiting Afar youth and empowering women;

- PSNP is benefiting especially women and the youth but it is not to the level needed and more can be done on this.

C. Do the informal social networks among the Afar support or compromise effectiveness of PSNP program?

- Some participants commented that such culture of sharing the PSNP benefits among the Afar beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries may not necessarily hinder achieving the PSNP program goals.
- However, it was agreed that the question of the role of “informal social networks among the Afar whether they support or compromise effectiveness of PSNP program needs to be properly investigated.

D. The need of alternative income generation approaches among the pastoral Afar in light of the multiple challenges they face in sustaining their livelihood.

- PSNP is just one pillar of food security and by itself it cannot enable the poor to prevent disaster and build assets in their own right.
- Thus, it has to be linked with supporting interventions like emergency and development programs.
- Alternative income generating activities are necessary.
- Off-farm alternatives: petty trade, small and micro enterprises, mining, salt processing and distribution, incense, construction, etc.
- On-farm alternatives: dairy products, animal feed processing, livestock marketing etc.
- Employment alternatives: in construction, in factories.
- Pursuing these alternative demands strong microfinance institutions, enabling environment, skill training, and synergy among the actors.

3. Workshop Recommendations and Concluding Remarks

3.1 Recommendations

- Addressing Program design problems: the PSNP is designed for settled communities and it has to reconsider and modify its approach for the dispersed and mobile community of the Afar region
- Critical evaluation of the program participation: i.e. in terms of policy design and impact. Not only has the PSNP but social protection package in general has to be evaluated. Many issues linked to mainstream livelihood of Afar people like grazing land, climate change and villagization have to be examined.
- Participation of the all relevant stakeholders in such evaluation/study is crucial. However, there is lack of commitment from NGOs (coordination, collaboration and synergy is lacking) and other stakeholders.
- The PSNP transfer is in wheat. But it has to be given in rice as well since rice can be eaten directly and children can eat it as supplementary food. But wheat needs additional *watt/ tsebhi* meaning sauce and it has to be ground to be eaten. This needs some additional cost for grinding and there is also infrastructure problem in most villages.
- The people's attitude towards PSNP is not positive and thus it is difficult to achieve the goals. Thus, a series of campaigns and awareness sessions have to be considered by the government.
- PSNP activities so far are labour intensive. But it would be important to consider some capital intensive methods that help provide crucial infrastructural facilities like potable water, roads, etc.
- PSNP is providing the returns (like food) for the work but less change is seen in the ground, which impedes the [sustainable] development part of the program. Hence, this needs serious attention.
- Credit facilities and rural credit and saving associations have to be given credit to underwrite the success of the program.
- The institutional arrangement that is in place needs to be examined and activated. It is not functioning properly
- Capacity problems both physical resource shortage and human capacity problem in the Afar Region need to be addressed.

3.2 Filling knowledge gaps in the present SPIDA study.

- The SPIDA study has to be inclusive enough in terms of participants (agro, pastoralists, and mainly nomadic groups) and agro-ecologies to include marginalized areas like lowlands, remote areas and villages.

- There are different forms of sharing resources, among members of Afar communities, mainly among members of extended families, which may have both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Thus, the effect has to be studied.

3.3 Concluding remarks

At the end of the workshop, Dr. Zeremairam Fre appreciated the substantive contributions from all the participants and thanked Samara University for hosting the workshop. Underlining the importance of the issues discussed during the workshop for the Afar pastoralist communities and the wider Horn of Africa region, Dr. Zeremariam asked the participants to contribute papers based on their firsthand experience as a contribution to the forthcoming conference to be held in Samara in November 2017.

Annexes

Annex I: Consultative Workshop on: Social Protection for Inclusive Development in the Afar region, Ethiopia, Samara University03 May, 2017

Organized by: Adigrat University, PENHA, UCL, Samara University and Disaster Prevention and Food Security Programme

Time	Activity	Presenter	Chairperson	Secretary/ Moderator
9:00- 9:10 AM	Welcome Remarks	Ali Hussein, Academic Vice President, Samara University.	Kedir Abdella	Bisrat W/silassie
9:10- 9: 25 AM	Opening Remarks: Reflection on PSNP activities in the Afar Region	Mohammed Hussein, Chair, Disaster Prevention and Food Security Program	Kedir Abdella	Bisrat W/silassie
9: 25- 9:45 AM	Presentation of the preliminary findings and recommendations	Gabriel Temesgen, Associate researcher, Adigrat University	Kedir Abdella	Bisrat W/silassie
Tea Break for 15 minutes				
10:00- 11:00 Am	Thematically based Discussions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What gaps have been identified by the implementing agencies/actors and what measures were taken to fill the gaps in order to make the PSNP programme benefits the Afar pastoral nomadic communities. Discuss the role of PSNP in reaching and benefiting Afar youth and empowering women. Discuss the significance informal social networks including the <i>Zakat</i>. Reflect on the on significance alternative income generation approaches among the pastoral Afar in light of the multiple challenges they face in sustaining their livelihood: 			
			Dr. Zeremariam Fre	Gabriel Temesgen
11:30- 11: 45 AM	Closing Remarks and the way forward	Dr Zeremariam Fre, Principal Investigator and Consortium leader from University College London (UCL).		

Annex II: List of SPIDA members and Samara University staff that organized the workshop.

No	Name	Office/Responsibility	Responsibility at the workshop
1	Dr. Zeremariam Fre	Principal investigator and leader of the consortium	Key note Speaker & closing remark
2	Mohammed	Vice president for Research and Community Services, Samara University	
3	Ali Hussein	Academic Vice president, Samara University	Key note Speaker
4	Gebriel Temesgen	Research associate	Presented interim finding
5	Bisrat Weldesilassie	Survey coordinator	Moderator & Secretary
6	Abu-Bakr	PR, Samara University	Chair person

Annex III: Samara SPIDA Policy Dialogue Participants

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26	Abu-Bakr Yassin Gedro	SU	PR Head	0913528292	

For further readings on social protection and safety nets on Africa and other global initiatives please visit the Social Protection Digital Resource section of PENHA Website.
www.penhanetwork.org

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