

## Interim findings

### Social protection in the Afar Region

‘Social protection for inclusive development in the Afar Region of Ethiopia’ (SPIDA), a two-year joint research project that started in August 2015, evaluates the impacts of social protection interventions on ensuring social security, enhancing livelihoods and reducing economic problems in the Afar Region of Ethiopia. The study aims to assess policies and practices already in place, such as the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), and create alternative policy options that ensure inclusive development to speed up the process of livelihood improvement in Afar pastoral communities. The research team found the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) work and research exercise among the Afar pastoral peoples in Ethiopia educational, engaging and inspiring.

A lack of rain during mid to late 2016 led to serious drought throughout the Horn of Africa, including the Afar and Somali pastoral areas in Ethiopia. Several thousand livestock populations were decimated by the drought, weakening the pastoral economy and making the pastoralists more vulnerable. Our research team will be in a much better position to discuss the short and long-term consequences of the drought on the PSNP after the final analysis is carried out and research findings produced. Interim findings and policy messages follow.

#### Interim findings

- 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, 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 unique 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.

## Policy messages

- **Consider significance of informal social networks:** Social protection interventions should consider the relevance of the already built-in informal social practices (e.g. mutual sharing) and whether they support or compromise the effectiveness of transfers. The critical relevance of traditional resource-sharing practices and coping mechanisms should be recognized. This is an ongoing effort.
- **Understand pastoral livelihood production system:** The transfer period, public works schedule, activities and payment of transfers should be tailored to the pastoral communities.
- **Target and update the list of beneficiaries:** To increase the level of food security, the PSNP transfer beneficiary list should be updated to include newly born children and polygamous households.
- **Emphasize alternative income generation approaches:** As the resilience of pastoral livelihoods declines, serious consideration should be given to the establishment of financial and credit institutions that reflect greater understanding of pastoralist needs.
- **Highlight youth and gender:** It is recommended that PSNP include a package that reflects the needs of youth and women.
- **Circulate preliminary findings at the local level:** As part of our engagement strategy, preliminary findings and key messages will be presented in local languages and distributed to local authorities and other interested parties. As part of this process, a one-day consultative workshop will take place in Samara (the capital of the Afar Region) during April and will be reported at the next INCLUDE meeting, to be held in the Netherlands at the end of May 2017. We have produced a three-page summary on the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) findings for this purpose.

## Knowledge products

- Fre, Z; Negash, Z; Woldu, GT; Araya, ST; Tsegay, B and Teka, AM. (2017 pending). PRA report on social protection for inclusive development in Afar Region in Ethiopia. Currently under peer review. To be completed in May 2017 and distributed soon after.
- Teka, AM (2017 pending). Exploring the implications of informal and formal social protection practices among the Afar communities in Ethiopia. Peer review has been completed and the document will be widely shared in May 2017.
- Tsegay, B (2017 pending). Critical reflections on safety net policies and practices of social protection among pastoral peoples in Sub-Saharan Africa. Peer review has been completed and the document will be widely shared in May 2017.
- Fre, Z. Reaching out to policy makers and other stakeholders in Afar Region and others concerned. Three-page summary on the PRA findings.
- Stakeholder mapping on the social protection actors in the Afar Region of Ethiopia.
- Questionnaire for quantitative survey, available in Amharic and English languages. Produced by the whole research team.

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