

## Final findings

### Social protection in the Afar Region, Ethiopia

The two-year joint research project ‘Social Protection for Inclusive Development in Afar (SPIDA)’ was conducted with the aim of devising an alternative social protection policy that addresses the gaps in the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). Ethiopia is one of the leading providers of social protection in Sub-Saharan Africa through the nationwide programme – the PSNP. However, the PSNP has shown mixed results in terms of building resilience, capacity and poverty reduction. In particular, the Afar pastoralist region has lagged behind other regions in terms of poverty reduction. The study evaluated the PSNP to determine how well it addresses poverty, food insecurity, and household asset building and to what extent it promotes the equitable redistribution of income. It mapped out challenges and explored policy alternatives based on the 2,423 sampled Afar pastoral and agro-pastoral households. The following are the overall findings and policy messages.

#### Final findings:

- The Afar pastoralist are known for living in a climatically harsh environment in the Horn of Africa. They have been able to survive in such conditions for centuries due to their mobile livelihood systems and informal social networks, which enable them to cope with natural and manmade disasters. However, frequent droughts, coupled with the recent El Niño effect, have greatly challenged their traditional informal social networks and resilience to shocks, making them very vulnerable.
- According to our findings, compared to the national and Afar regional state figures of 2015/16, which are 23.5% and 23.6%, respectively, there is a high incidence of poverty (47.6%) and alarming income inequality ratio of 0.592 within the sampled districts in the Afar region. There is a higher incidence of food poverty among the pastoral nomadic communities than the agro-pastoral communities, and PSNP non-participant households have a higher number or head count index than their counterparts.
- Gender, education levels, family size, access to credit, mobility, participation in safety nets, distance to market areas and remittances were among the statistically significant variables determining the level of poverty in the Afar region.
- The Afar pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities have a tradition of cooperation, social support and resource sharing, mostly through kinship networks of reciprocal solidarity. This informal system, which is not considered by the PSNP, could be diminishing the impact of the programme in terms of reducing food insecurity and hindering the programme's effect on enhancing household food consumption and protecting household assets.
- The PSNP's public works component employs the target group in labour-intensive projects for six months (between January to June) during the long dry season in order to create and enhance community assets (such as social services and infrastructure) and to reverse the severe degradation of the environment. Such a programme suits the sedentary farming communities in the highland areas. However, in the pastoralist context, some public works that focus on soil and water conservation, terrace building, and deep trenching have failed to consider the climatic conditions and pastoralists' extensive seasonal mobility during January to June. In addition, the programme does not consider the real food gap that households face and the socio-economic patterns of the community during the long dry season (January to June) when pastoral communities may be most vulnerable.

Many of the Afar pastoralist communities prefer PSNP support to be provided during the winter rains (October to February), which fits their mobility patterns.

- The PSNP fails to properly consider the number of unemployed youth in the Afar region and the appropriate timing of social services provided through the public works component.
- The PSNP has not been mapped and integrated well with other development programmes, such as the Household Asset Building Programme and other alternative income schemes, which households can participate in to enhance PSNP contributions and achieve the intended objectives of the programme.

## Policy messages:

- **Appreciate the significance of informal social networks:** State-supported social protection interventions like the PSNP should take into account existing traditional informal social networks and recognize the relevance of traditional resource-sharing practices and coping mechanisms among the pastoral and agro-pastoral people in the Afar.
- **Understand community systems and settings:** To have an effective impact and help lift households out of poverty, improvements need to be made to the overall programme planning of the PSNP in terms of targeting, the transfer period, the public works schedule and activities, and the payment of transfers – all of which should be tailored to pastoral and agro-pastoral communities' cultural, economic and social systems, along with their environmental and infrastructural settings.
- **Target and update list of beneficiaries:** The PSNP should regularly update its list of beneficiaries, taking into account the elderly and disabled households, as well as addressing ways in which polygamous households can benefit from the PSNP to increase their level of food security.
- **Emphasize alternative income-generating approaches:** As the resilience of pastoral livelihoods is declining due to climate change, drought and lack of sustainable investment, serious consideration should be given to the establishment of financial and credit institutions that reflect the Afar people's values, norms and perceptions, and that promote alternative economic sectors, including by promoting micro-businesses, small enterprises and entrepreneurial skills.
- **Emphasize youth and gender:** Beside some attempts to prioritize female-headed households in its public works component, the PSNP has failed to address youth employment and gender-specific issues. It is, therefore, recommended that the PSNP include a package that reflects the specific needs of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist youth and women, who have not greatly benefited from the PSNP to date.
- **Consolidate social protection measures:** The Ethiopian government has taken several social protection policy measures to tackle drought-affected areas on a fragmented and ad-hoc basis. A move needs to be made towards a more systematic approach that integrates the PSNP, emergency and relief responses, and the Household Asset Building Programme, and that consolidates the multiple efforts of state and non-state actors working in the Afar.
- **Fill in the methodological gaps:** Participatory development methods, including participatory rural appraisal, are applicable for use with those with a sedentary livelihood in the highlands of the country, but there is a need to design a more tailored, qualitative methodological approach relevant to pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households.

## Knowledge products:

- Araya, S. T., Tsegay, B., Negash, Z., & Weldesilassie, B. (Forthcoming, 2019). *The impact of the productive safety net on livelihoods among the Afar pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in Ethiopia: key findings and policy directions*. SPIDA Working Paper Series.

- Fre, Z., & Dixon, N. (2017). [\*Social protection among the Afar pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in Ethiopia: critical reflections on the multi-partner efforts, achievements, challenges and some lessons learnt\*](#). SPIDA Working Paper Series, ADU/PENHA/DPUUCL, SPIDA/WPS/104/2017.
- Fre, Z., Negash, Z., Temesgen, G., Tsegay, B., Teka, A. M., Weldesilassie, B., Araya, S. T., & Kenton, N. (2018). [\*SPIDA conference proceedings: social protection as a pathway for inclusive development among the pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in Africa\*](#). SPIDA Conference Proceedings , ADU/PENHA/DPU-UCL, SPIDA-PR/02/February 2018, London, UK.
- Fre, Z., Temesgen, G., Negash, Z., Araya, S. T., Tsegay, B., Teka, A. M., & Weldesilassie, B. (2017). [\*Social protection for inclusive development in Afar Region of Ethiopia: participatory rural appraisal report\*](#). SPIDA Working Paper Series, SPIDA/WPS/102/2017, September, 2017.
- Fre, Z., Temesgen, G., & Weldesilassie, B. (2017). [\*Report on the consultative workshop of SPIDA Research Consortium and regional stakeholders on PSNP in Afar Regional State, Ethiopia\*](#). SPIDA Report, ADU/PENHA/DPU-UCL-SPIDA-PR/01/June 2017.
- Fre, Z., Tsegay, B., Temesgen, G., Araya, S. T., & Kenton, N. (2017). [\*Social protection among the Afar pastoralist communities in Ethiopia: beyond survival towards transformation\*](#). SPIDA Policy Brief, ADU/PENHA/DPU-UCL, November 2017.
- Kenton, N. (2018). [\*Beyond survival – rethinking safety nets for pastoralists in Ethiopia\*](#). Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA) Blog.
- Teka, A. M., & Temesgen, G. (2017). [\*Exploring the implications of formal and informal social protection practices among the Afar communities in Ethiopia\*](#). SPIDA Working Paper Series, ADU/PENHA/DPU-UCL, SPIDA/WPS/101/2017, London, UK.
- Teka, A. M., Temesgen, G., & Fre, Z. (2018). [\*Status and determinants of poverty and income inequality in pastoral and agro-pastoral communities: household-based evidence from Afar Regional State, Ethiopia\*](#), SPIDA Working Paper Series, ADU/PENHA/DPU-UCL, SPIDA-WPS/105/February 2018, London, UK.
- Tsegay, B. (2017). [\*Critical reflections on safety net policies and practices with respect to social protection among pastoral peoples in Sub-Saharan Africa\*](#). SPIDA Working Paper Series, ADU/PENHA/DPU-UCL, SPIDA/WPS/103/2017.

## Contact:

Dr Zeremariam Fre, research project leader, [z.fre@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:z.fre@ucl.ac.uk)

## Weblink:

<http://includeplatform.net/research-group/social-protection-inclusive-development-afar-region-ethiopia/>