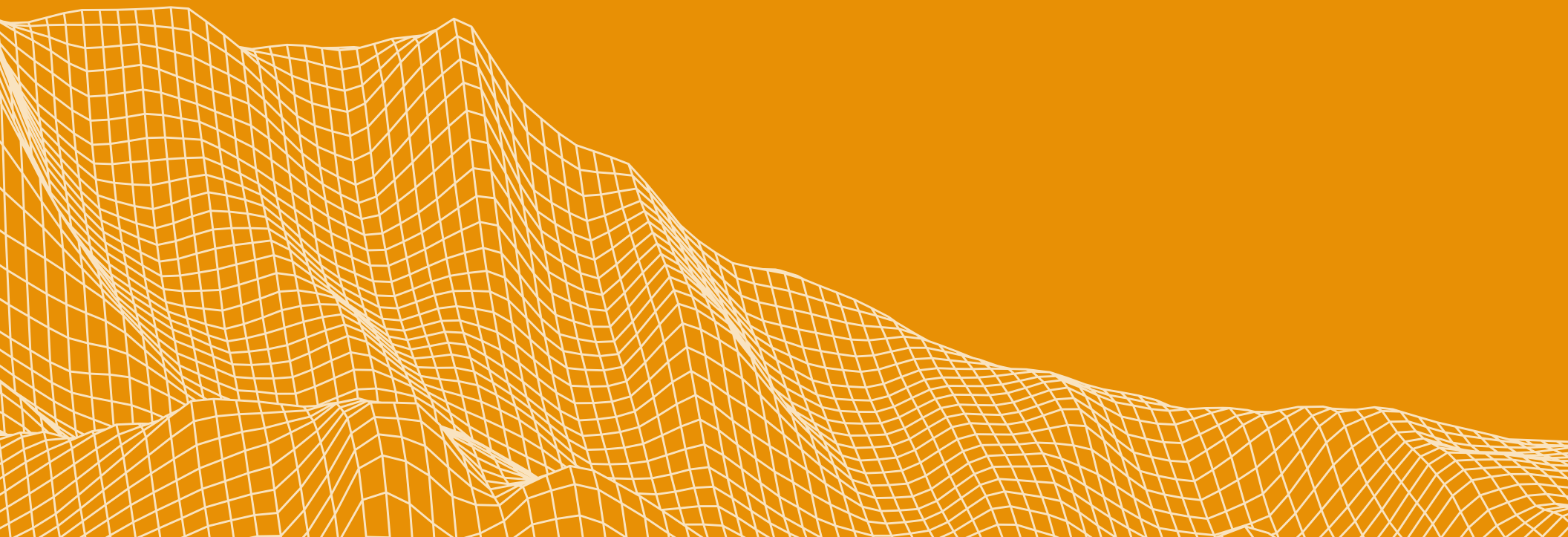
REACH PROJECT

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme: Addressing Food Insecurity with Food and Cash Transfers



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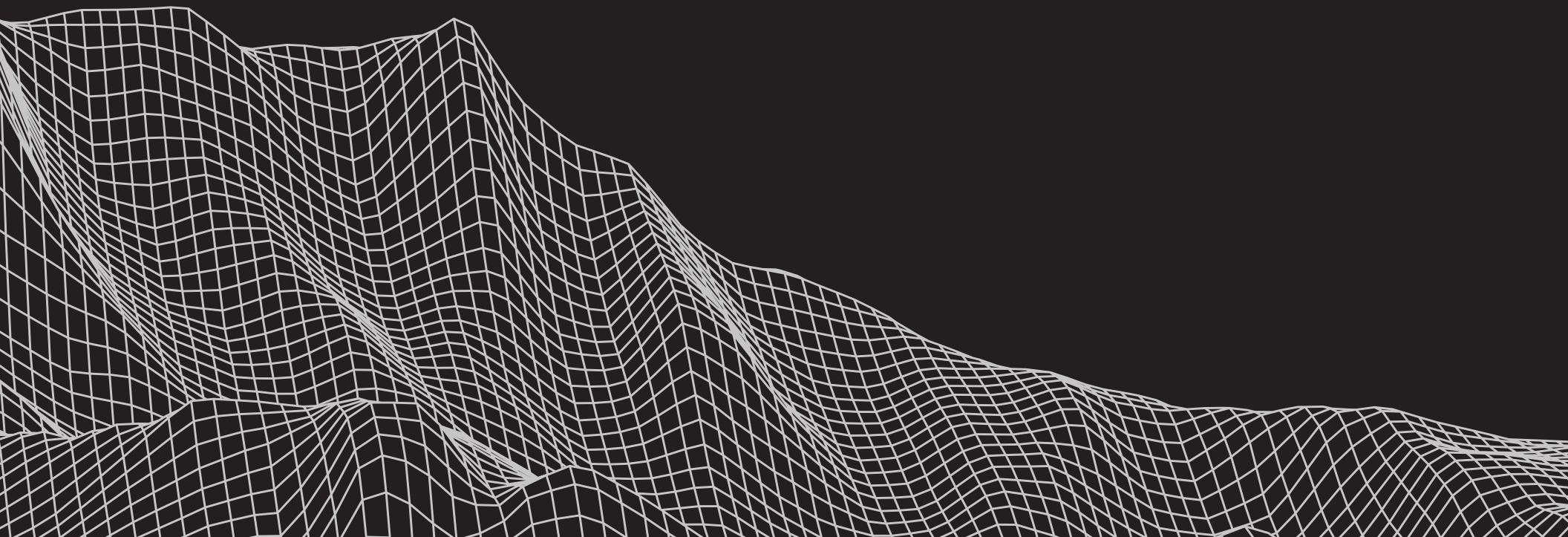
Food Insecurity Solutions in Ethiopia's Recent History



From the early 1970s until the mid-2000s, emergency food aid dominated food insecurity solutions in Ethiopia. While emergency food aid rose exponentially in cost, averaging about USD 265 million per year between 1997 and 2002,[1] approximately one-third of the country's 100 million people still suffered from chronic malnutrition. Emergency food aid responded to famines and saved lives, but it failed to contribute to food security or build resilience in areas that were repeatedly struck by droughts or that suffered from environmental degradation (e.g., soil erosion). Other sources of vulnerability and poverty further compounded these problems, such as operational challenges involved in administering or delivering food aid on an emergency basis, and political discord and conflict stemming from ethnic differences. Key stakeholders (e.g., donor organizations, national and state-level government officials, and nongovernmental organizations) came to a consensus that they needed a different approach—not only to save lives but also to offer a more holistic solution to underlying causes of food insecurity. Emerging from discussions and negotiations among these key stakeholders, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) was officially launched in February 2005.

The PSNP has been lauded as an "international flagship program both in its scope and in its partnership approach"[2] to respond to chronic food instability. Originally designed as a rural safety net program, and more recently adapted and launched in urban areas, it utilizes community-level partnerships with local government to accurately select beneficiaries and provide timely, adequate, and predictable transfers of food and/or cash to these targeted households. Most beneficiaries are required to work on public works programs that typically involve labor-intensive, community-building projects such as road rehabilitation, soil conservation, and reforestation in exchange for the transfer.[3]

The work requirement has had many benefits for both beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries alike. The transfer's predictability has allowed participants to more effectively smooth consumption, meaning that individuals have more stable and predictable access to income. This is important because it reduces the uncertainty of where income will come from on a day-to-day basis, allowing for more efficient and reliable asset and resource planning. The pay-for-work structure offers participants a chance to learn skills and gain valuable experience that is useful in the workforce following graduation from the program. Pay for work also reduces the likelihood that these transfers are seen as handouts—a psychological benefit for both administrators and beneficiaries. Nonbeneficiaries also benefit from these public works outcomes because land productivity improves, soil fertility is restored (and thus land availability increases), market infrastructure from road building and rehabilitation improves, drinking/irrigation water access improves, and even health and education infrastructure improves through the rehabilitation of schools and health centers.[4]

The PSNP has led to several positive outcomes across the country and for people within the regions where the program has been launched. It is a point of pride for all of those involved—the government, international donors, and nongovern-

[1] This average is from 1997–2002. World Bank, "Project Performance Assessment Report, Ethiopia: Productive Safety Net Project," Cr. 4004, IDA Grant H136, TF05603, Report No. 62549, 16 June 2011.
[2] World Bank group, *Designing and Implementing a Rural Safety Net in a Low Income Setting: Lessons Learned from Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program 2005–2009* (World Bank, 2010).
[3] Direct support (i.e., food and/or cash transfers offered unconditionally, without the exchange of work) is offered to beneficiaries who are the most vulnerable and unable to provide physical labor (e.g., pregnant or lactating women, the elderly, the sick and/or mentally challenged who are unable to provide even light work, and orphaned teenagers).
[4] Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, *Productive Safety Net Programme, Revised Programme Implementation Manual* (Addis Ababa: Government of Ethiopia, 2014).

mental organizations (NGOs). While there are many noteworthy aspects of the PSNP's approach and scope, the program has been exemplary in targeting, design, and implementation. Given the various cultural, political, economic, and infrastructure challenges, the program has been rated as the most effectively targeted safety net program in Africa with a very low incidence of fraud or corruption, particularly at the distribution level.[5] In a majority of cases, selected beneficiaries work and receive aid.

This report is the result of a year-long investigation to uncover the key factors that led to the PSNP's success at targeting the hardest to reach. We combined rigorous research along with fieldwork in Ethiopia where we interviewed many stakeholders. We review the key factors and forces behind the PSNP's targeting, design, and implementation process to better identify why the program has been such a success and excellent exemplar of reaching the hardest to reach as well as why the program has fallen short in some areas. Much of the PSNP's success is a result of four key factors.

1. Successful targeting starts with adaptability and flexibility.
2. Successful targeting involves extensive collaboration within and across institutional systems.
3. Successful program outcomes take a forward-looking approach that fosters mechanisms that build capacity and resilience both for individuals and for agriculture and infrastructure, rather than providing emergency relief alone.
4. Accountability increases success at every stage of program implementation (e.g., recipients, *kebeles* [wards], *woredas* [administrative districts], government ministries, donors).

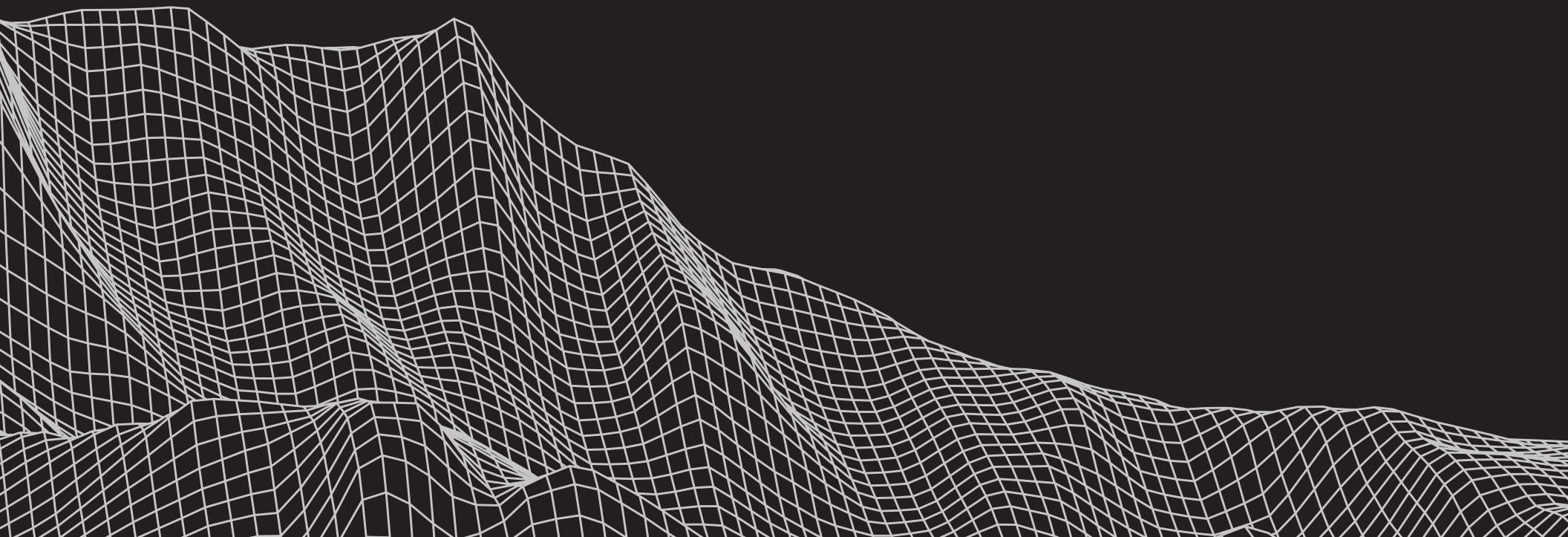
Led by Professor Avni Shah and four student researchers—Siobhan Bradley, Rachel Bryce, Sydney Piggott, and Jillian Sprenger—research was conducted from September 2017 through August 2018, including primary fieldwork in Addis Ababa in April and May 2018.

The team visited Shola Market in east Addis Ababa. Photo: Jillian Sprenger

[5] A leading team of scholars conducted a statistical analysis to rank the PSNP's effectiveness compared to other food-security programs. The analysis assigned a score to each program, with a value greater than 1 indicating progressive targeting, a value less than 1 indicating regressive targeting, and 0 indicating neutral targeting. The higher the score, the more effective the targeting. The results showed that, for the poorest 10 percent of the Ethiopian population (as determined based on households' per capita consumption), targeting received a score of 1.69. For the poorest 20 percent (in other words, the poorest quintile), targeting received 1.46. In other safety net programs, the median global value for the seventy-eight programs summarized in the report is 1.25, indicating that the PSNP has superior targeting to the average global safety net program. It is the highest-rated African-led safety net program, and the second-highest-rated safety net program (African-led or otherwise) across the continent. Sarah Coll-Black, Daniel O. Gilligan, John Hoddinott, Neha Kumar, Alemayehu Seyoum Taffesse, and William Wiseman, "Targeting Food Security Intervention When 'Everyone Is Poor': The Case of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme," International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington DC, 2010.

Context at a Glance

Prior to the introduction of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), food security policy in Ethiopia was largely driven by emergency responses. Ethiopians, particularly in rural areas, suffered for many years from climate-related threats such as droughts, geographic constraints that make it difficult to access resources (for those living away from urban centers), political and civil unrest, and economic fluctuations in the international market prices for food staples.



CLIMATE, GEOGRAPHIC, AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

The country's annual rainfall is marked by times of both drought and downpours, leading to soil degradation and erosion. These cycles make usable land increasingly scarce, which limits the productive assets of households and communities more broadly. Times of drought reduce agricultural production by 25 percent on average, with grain production declining by as much as 75 percent during periods of drought in some areas.[6] Livestock are affected as well, with some regions losing 70 percent of their animals during drought. Because 82 percent of people live in rural areas and rely on agriculture and farming as a livelihood, when climate shocks hit, access to food in rural markets can be limited and the cost of food is prohibitively high.

Geographically, many rural people considered "hard to reach" are frequently located quite far from infrastructure (i.e., far from Addis Ababa or other major cities). Poorly maintained roads limit access to these regions. Local cultural practices compound this "reachability" issue in some regions even further. For example, in the Somali and Afar regions, many people practice a nomadic way of life. Lacking a fixed residence, they have limited contact with the state and its institutions and insufficient access to social services.

Economic fluctuations in the market prices for food staples have also contributed to food insecurity, with historical policy attempts to fix these issues backfiring with the very populations they were intended to help. One example of such policy backfire occurred in the mid-1970s. After the collapse of Emperor Haile Selassie's rule and the beginning of Ethiopia's communist period, the government established the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) to control the price and distribution of grain after civil conflict left millions undernourished. This state-owned enterprise set the price of grain arbitrarily low with the intention of making it accessible and less susceptible to price fluctuations. In reality, setting prices below the cost of production meant that farmers would always produce at a deficit. Restrictions on land ownership eliminated rural wage labor and instead imposed quotas on workers for food redistribution. Corruption led to unequal distribution of food rations to military and urban centers and misrepresented the severity of food insecurity in the country and the misuse of government funds.[7] Rural populations that were already the most vulnerable to famine and malnutrition because of their distance from the center of power in Addis Ababa became even more susceptible to poverty and food insecurity because of these failed economic policies.

One of the most significant periods of famine and food insecurity historically was in the mid-1980s. In 1984–85, Ethiopia experienced a great famine that was directly responsible for the death of an estimated 1 million people, largely from the northern states of Tigray and Wollo (areas that continue to experience high levels of food insecurity today). Although low rainfall caused a sustained drought all over the country, food insecurity was exacerbated by civil conflict and state corruption. The severe levels of malnutrition, particularly among children, attracted the attention of the international community and led to the Band Aid and Live Aid campaigns. While these campaigns generated a lot of funding, 90 percent of the funds accumulated from Western aid efforts were given directly to the government which redistributed less than what was needed to address the level of food insecurity at the time, purposely excluding the areas that were most in need and hardest to reach. Because of ongoing civil conflict, the government misused aid to fund war efforts and prevented the redistribution of food aid to rebel regions in Tigray and Wollo. The rebel groups responded by intercepting the international food aid to other regions, while the famine's severity remained underreported and unaddressed.[8]

In 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)—the current ruling coalition—ended the military regime (called the Derg) that had ruled from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, and took responsibility for addressing food insecurity in the aftermath of Ethiopia's civil war. The EPRDF founded the Ethiopian Grain Trade Enterprise (EGTE), which was focused on neoliberal reform of agricultural markets influenced by World Bank structural adjustment programs (SAPs). This reform program was unsuccessful.[9] Even though the EGTE opened Ethiopia's markets to import for food needs and export surpluses, after nearly twenty years of price setting, markets became volatile to price spreads that shocked the Ethiopian economy. Rural areas—that were already on the periphery in terms of access to food because of a long history of climate-related catastrophes and civil unrest—suffered the worst from these shocks.[10]

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[6] World Bank group, *Designing and Implementing a Rural Safety Net*, 6.

[7] Legesse Dadi, Asfaw Negassa, and Steven Franzel, "Marketing Maize and Tef in Western Ethiopia: Implications for Policies Following Market Liberalization," *Food Policy* 17, no. 3 (1992): 201–13.

[8] Alexander De Waal, *Evil Days: Thirty Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991).

[9] David J. Spielman, Derek Byerlee, Dawit Alemu, and Dawit Kelemework, "Policies to Promote Cereal Intensification in Ethiopia: The Search for Appropriate Public and Private Roles," *Food Policy* 35, no. 3 (2010): 185–94.

[10] Tenkir Bonger, Eleni Zaude Gabre-Madhin, and Suresh Chandra Babu, eds., "Agriculture Technology Diffusion and Price Policy: Proceedings of a Policy Forum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia , March 25, 2002."

This system mostly focused on market-driven causes of food insecurity and not environmental, political, or social threats to food security. For example, the EGTE focused exclusively on easing the importation of agricultural products rather than addressing how agricultural products could be more resilient to these weather-related shocks. Despite good intentions on the part of donors and the new government, it was clear that emergency funding and food aid responses were ripe for gross mismanagement and inappropriate allocations, or they focused on emergency solutions despite food insecurity being a chronic problem. Developing a model that addressed the social determinants of hunger and underlying causes of food insecurity was imperative.

COLLECTIVE PRIDE AND SUBSTATE HETERO-GENEITY: THE ETHNIC FEDERALIST STATE ON THE WAY

Many cultural, national, and state-level considerations needed to be accounted for or leveraged when designing a multifaceted social safety net that addresses the root causes of food insecurity: environmental, political, and societal factors that reduce access to nutritious food. Ethiopia is a highly collectivist society.[11] Ethiopians are loyal to a long-term commitment to their member group, whether family, extended family, close kin, or other community members. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibilities for fellow members of their group.

Politically, Ethiopia is the only country in Africa that has never been formally colonized, despite being the second most populous country. It is also one of the few countries globally to adopt an ethnic-federalist structure in which a central ruling coalition represents all the major ethno-linguistic groups in the country. Ethnically defined substates practice a degree of self-determination within the national system.[12] This system started in 1991 and was solidified with the 1995 constitution that established the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). While there are nine states that make up the FDRE—Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somalia, Benshangul, the Southern Nations, the Gambela people, and the Harari people—many of our interviewees noted that Ethiopian people balanced this national pride with a strong ethnic identity (at the state and substate level).[13]

States and substates have distinct languages, cultures, and—in most cases—have conflicted with other groups across the country. Thus, a one-size-fits-all solution was not enough. Any solution at a national level had to adapt the program at a state or substate level to account for ethnic differences and cultural heterogeneity across and within states. Interviews with various government officials, donor organizations, and NGOs revealed that adapting to these differences across semi-autonomous sub-states was one of the key determinants of whether the PSNP had been successfully implemented or whether the program still needs further adaptation.

[11] Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1991).
[12] Edmond J. Keller, "Ethnic Federalism, Fiscal Reform, Development and Democracy in Ethiopia," *African Journal of Political Science* 7, no. 1 (2002): 21–50.
[13] Peter Gill, *Famine and Foreigners: Ethiopia Since Live Aid* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010).

FIGURE 1. Timeline: Approaches to food insecurity in Ethiopia

When the PSNP was first designed and piloted (Phase 1), it addressed food insecurity and resilience building in Tigray, a highlands region where communities historically play an important role in the societal structure. Unsurprisingly, it has continued to be highly successful in Tigray and other regions, which are mostly highlands as well, where there is a similar communal structure. Lowland communities have entirely different cultural norms, and are particularly different when it comes to the treatment of the poorest of the poor. Lowlands regions (e.g., Somalia and Afar) have more traditional authority structures with clans and clan leaders. Social obligation and cultural practices in lowland communities dictate that wealthier members receive the transfers and redistribute to the poor. Because most communities in the lowlands are migratory rather than sedentary they face different vulnerabilities (i.e., more risk-prone livelihoods as a result of frequent droughts, conflict, market failures, and disease). Previous food aid programs based on money alone are therefore not as helpful, because cash is an efficient medium of exchange rather than a sustaining resource like food that provides nourishment itself.

The determinants of and solutions to food insecurity—an issue plaguing the entire country—needed to be addressed at a deeper level. Donors, government officials, and NGOs all recognized the need for a solution to hunger that encompassed climate resilience, community capacity-building, and rural market penetration in Ethiopia.

THE PSNP: BUILDING COALITIONS BETWEEN DONORS AND GOVERNMENT

In June 2003, the government launched a series of workshops and meetings to develop deeper solutions to food security. This eventually resulted in the New Coalition for Food Security, which involved members of the government, UN agencies, donor organizations, and civil society. All parties agreed that there was a need to increase availability and access to food while designing an approach to improve health outcomes overall. This shift would not be easy.

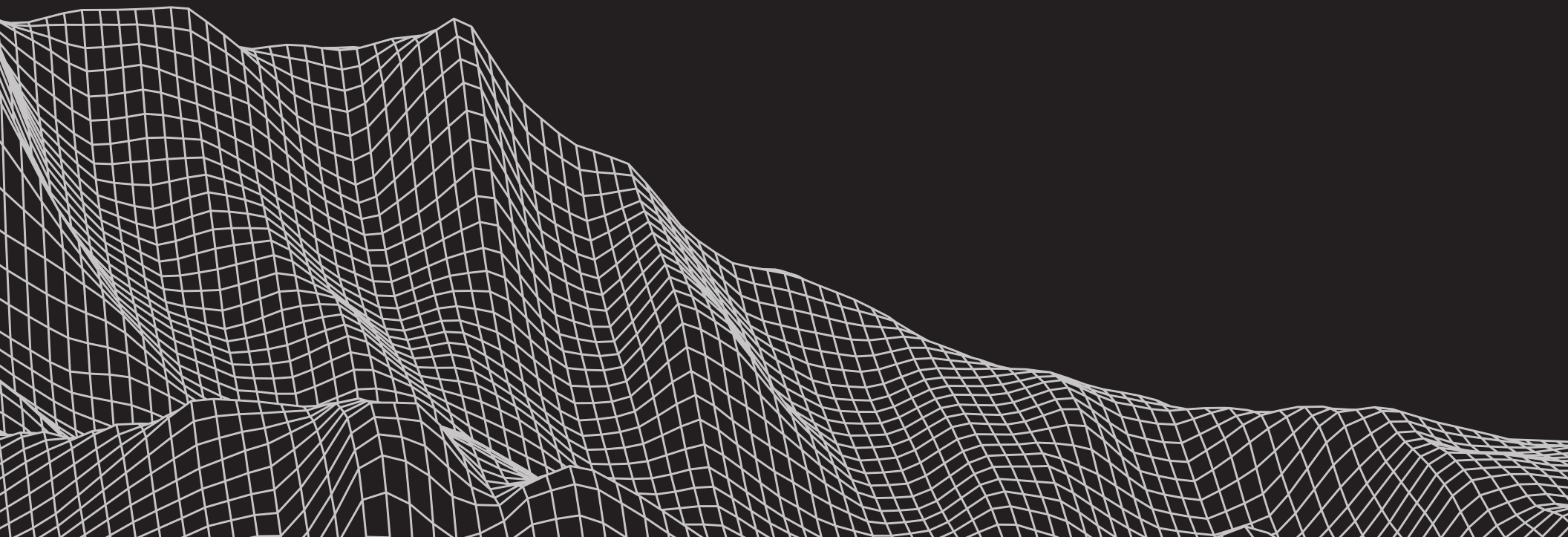
The government wanted to ensure that donors committed to a multiyear safety net that could provide a reliable access to resources, while still providing additional resources for emergency cases. Donors were on board, wanting more tangible results after decades of providing emergency relief. Many of the donor agencies and NGOs had positive experiences with predictable safety nets designed to address chronic food security. A 2005 G8 summit in Scotland called for several of the donor countries to renew their commitment to ending global hunger—with stronger calls made for donor coordination (eventually becoming principles adopted in the Paris Declaration on Aid Harmonization in 2005). Ethiopia was a pilot country, setting the stage for the eventual launch of the PSNP as well as the donor coordination group—an important component of its success.

Social obligation and cultural practices in lowland communities dictate that wealthier members receive the transfers and redistribute to the poor.

SUMMARY

Before the PSNP was introduced in 2005, approaches to food insecurity in Ethiopia did not address the root causes of hunger, leaving hard-to-reach, rural communities without the capacity, resources, or infrastructure to respond to ongoing threats to food security. The effects of climate change, civil conflict, and economic fluctuations over nearly five decades further isolated the already vulnerable rural poor. Now, with a stronger ethnic-federalist state structure and robust international partnerships, the PSNP is targeting the country's hardest-to-reach populations to build resilience against the causal factors of chronic food insecurity.

Implementation Factors Driving PSNP Success



With its ambitious goal to address poverty's multifaceted determinants and the large scale of the intervention necessary to achieve it, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) required a substantial increase in coordination compared to similar food aid programs to accurately identify beneficiaries at every level of implementation. The program was scaled up quickly so coordination was necessary from the level of government and international donors—who provided extensive funding (cash and in-kind) and technical expertise (on operating procedures, design, and resources of a rural safety net) for government administrators and policy-makers—all the way to the community level where regional and local administrators selected beneficiaries, administered food and/or cash transfers, conducted the public works programs, and fostered linkages for beneficiaries to other social programs run by NGOs.

One of the first steps in this process was the introduction and creation of the PSNP Programme Implementation Manual (PIM).[14] The current iteration of this manual, nearly 180 pages in length, provides a uniform message to program implementers throughout various regions. It explains how to target beneficiaries, the level and timing of transfers, how to decide between cash and food transfers, graduation criteria, and other information that guides program implementation. The PIM's modular format makes it easy for program implementers (including community task forces and NGOs) to find the sections they need, rather than having to read the manual from start to finish (which interviewees all noted would be unlikely). The manual also ensures that there is a clear reference point for how the PSNP should operate, decreasing the possibility that knowledge would be totally lost if there is a change in government or staff, or even stakeholder turnover. The PIM is essentially the operational framework for the PSNP. It synthesizes all program components and communicates how implementation should be harmonized across regions. Nine main principles guide the PSNP's efforts to reach the most vulnerable households.

International donors expressed confidence in the strong, central government to administer the program and deliver food aid.

The PSNP should:

1. have fair and transparent client selection;
2. facilitate timely, predictable, and appropriate transfers;
3. value the primacy of transfers;
4. serve as a productive safety net;
5. offer tailored livelihood solutions;
6. be integrated into local systems;
7. serve as a scalable safety net;
8. have a cash-first principle; and
9. foster gender equity.

These guiding principles are integrated throughout the PIM, and contribute to the PSNP's core aim to alleviate food insecurity and build household and community resilience by addressing the underlying determinants of poverty.

COORDINATION ENSURED SUCCESSFUL TARGETING

The importance of the government's leading role in PSNP coordination was consistently highlighted. As a primer, the government has two federal decision-making bodies: the House of People's Representatives and the House of the Federation. The prime minister holds executive power and has historically belonged to the ruling coalition—the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), made up of the four major regional parties. The prime minister and council of ministers are accountable to the House of Representatives and are responsible for the public service. The PSNP falls within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. International donors expressed confidence in the strong, central government to administer the program and deliver food aid. They attributed their continued willingness to contribute to this program to the fact that it was always an initiative of the government of Ethiopia, rather than a Western intervention (i.e.,

[14] Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Productive Safety Net Programme.

PSNP beneficiaries receive their bulk peas, wheat, and cooking oil at a CRS food distribution in East Hararghe, Ethiopia. Photo: Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties

driven by donors alone). Rooting this program in the government deepens ownership and taps into the rich institutional knowledge of individual needs in communities at the *kebele* (ward) level. The decentralized structure was key to the successful and accurate targeting of beneficiaries. Finally, engaging both the agricultural and finance ministries mitigates against past failures when food security interventions focused exclusively on production and emergency food supply rather than resiliency and capacity building to combat chronic food insecurity.

Given the ethnic-federal structure in Ethiopia, the PSNP had to be designed in a way that allowed for regions to have a great deal of autonomy, thereby respecting each level of the government. This structure contributed to the success of PSNP's reach. According to the PSNP Project Memorandum, "the primary targeting objective (of the PSNP) should be to guarantee timely and adequate transfers to the most food-insecure people in the most food-insecure areas."[15] Initial criticisms of this policy claimed that the lack of a unified measure for assets made it potentially difficult to accurately identify the most food insecure. However, our fieldwork and research revealed that this design was left deliberately vague to ensure adaptability and flexibility across a variety of groups. Given the cultural, geographic, and environmental heterogeneity across and even within regions, assets also varied. In some cases, household assets were measured by land ownership. In other areas, livestock or cash holdings dominated. Elsewhere, assets involved accessibility to rich soil to increase the probability of crop growth. The PIM needed to address this range of asset assessment by creating a flexible way for regional and local administrators to accurately select those beneficiaries who were most in need. Heterogeneity in identification of the poorest members of a particular *kebele* meant that administers at the *woreda* (district), *kebele*, and community levels would have greater responsibility for making sure the PSNP went to those who were most in need.

Selection of Beneficiaries and Types of Transfers

Many regions were either riddled with civil unrest or had substantial geographic hurdles that would make transferring resources to recipients too costly or difficult. In these areas, the PSNP was not administered. On one hand, this meant that the program was unable to reach everyone who was affected or qualified for the program. On the other hand, given the fact that so many individuals in Ethiopia were in need, reducing the costs of targeting these hard-to-reach individuals allowed for a greater distribution of resources to many others who suffered from chronic food insecurity. Thus, part of the PSNP's success stemmed from its ability to make efficient tradeoffs to optimize the number benefiting from the program rather than targeting fewer but more resource-costly individuals in those less-accessible geographic regions.

[15] DFID Ethiopia qtd. in Kay Sharp, Taylor Brown, and Amdissa Teshome, "Targeting Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)," 4.

Another efficient aspect is the variation in the type of transfers that beneficiaries received. Compared to food aid alone, cash transfers were more versatile, and gave recipients more flexibility in their spending. In contexts of widespread poverty and chronic insecurity, food was just one of households' multiple unmet needs. Cash provided a way to quickly deliver assistance, allowing households to make decisions about which needs were most urgent for them, and even what food they wanted to purchase.

Given the importance of beneficiary selection and type of transfer that beneficiaries received (food, cash, or a combination of the two), it was imperative to enlist the expertise of those who would understand the constraints and needs of individuals in various regions. The government turned to regional and local organizations, employing several to assist with these decisions. The Kebele Food Security Task force is a community-level body that discusses and agrees on the allocation of client numbers between the different communities, based on the previous years' PSNP allocations, the number of households and household members who have graduated from the PSNP in previous years, serious events that may have affected the number of chronically food-insecure households, and prevailing conditions affecting food security within different areas of the *kebele* (i.e., agro-ecology, access to irrigation, soil quality and degradation). It also reviews and approves the client lists generated by each Community Food Security Task Force and supports the distribution of client cards provided by the Woreda Food Security Desk.

The PSNP has two different types of beneficiaries: direct support beneficiaries and public work beneficiaries. Transfers are given as cash or food, with cash transfers being the equivalent of the price for fifteen grams of cereals and four kilograms of pulses per month. The breakdown of the aid package depends on local markets (i.e., whether it is possible to buy food at a reasonable cost) and ability to deliver services (i.e., if infrastructure permits the delivery of food). The amount and type of transfer can vary from month to month depending on local needs. Government agencies facilitate cash transfers using Woreda Office of Finance and Development (WOFED) cashiers, and sometimes electronic means, while food transfers occur through distribution points or food vouchers. The combination of cash/food transfers and public works projects results in increased food security, graduation from the program, and strengthened climate resilience and disaster risk management in communities via infrastructure changes (e.g., soil and water conservation efforts, planting a broader diversity of plant species, road construction, hand-dug well construction, etc.).

There were some regions with food-specific delivery constraints where the geographic hurdles or distance from infrastructure proved too costly from a resource-allocation perspective. In those instances, cash transfers were utilized. Moving to a model that allowed for choice in the type of transfer was also a way to ensure a more efficient use of resources overall.

At a community level, the Community Food Security Task Force holds the majority of responsibility for identifying which households are within the PSNP and whether these households should participate in public works, temporary direct support, or permanent direct support. The Community Care Coalition assists with the selection process, briefing the community on the final client list and raising awareness about the complaints procedures. The coalition then identifies beneficiaries using wealth ranking—people "graduate" from the program once they've attained a certain security in their income. The coalition also recertifies program clients annually. Finally, the PSNP has a Kebele Appeals Committee that meets quarterly, starting within one month of a new annual listing of PSNP participants. This committee hears appeals related to client selection. It provides a list of appeals and associated resolutions to the Kebele Council, Woreda Council, and Woreda Agricultural Office. They hear any targeting- or graduation-related appeals.

Fundamental to the success of targeting based on this local-council approach is the fact that the culture of Ethiopia is collectively oriented. As many of our interviewees noted, most communities have a very long history together, going back several decades and even centuries. This means that they operate like large extended families and are motivated to accurately identify those in need. Being chosen to be part of the selection council is a responsibility filled with honor and pride. Council members are usually selected for their knowledge and social connection to most households so they can accurately identify beneficiaries regardless of the asset structure. They are also the most informed about households that were hit disproportionally by crop losses or losses of cattle, etc. And because of their long-standing history (and continued future in that community), there is little advantage to fraudulent or deviant behavior (e.g., taking bribes or strategically selecting some households). In fact, corruption by a council member would be akin to betrayal and compromise their participation in the community altogether. The government's decision to pass the responsibility of beneficiary selection to community-based

Work session. The day before their first interview, the team sits down to strategize and organize their research.
Photo: Rachel Bryce

committees was successful, largely thanks to this collective nature of Ethiopian culture.

COORDINATION THROUGH PROGRAM LINKAGES

Another successful example of system-level collaboration and cohesiveness is the PSNP's linkage to other interventions and programs that tackle food insecurity and build assets and resilience. The program efficiently uses pre-existing infrastructure (e.g., roads used for food delivery) and social services. These linkages lower the costs of delivering PSNP services by establishing synergies between the PSNP and other social services and create alternative paths to food security by building households' assets and skills. A representative from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) noted, "even if it is not perfect, the connection to social services is built into the program because of NGOs."

NGOs and specific donors take ownership of connecting the PSNP to systems-strengthening programs, such as livelihoods services. One of the most recent linkages is to the Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI), which provides financial protection in the form of health insurance to informal-sector employees and individuals living in rural areas. For example, UNICEF is pushing for increased access to the CBHI for PSNP beneficiaries to enhance inclusion in social services for the poorest populations, especially since both programs rely heavily on *kebele* and *woreda* input and have geographical overlap in many districts. When food-insecure PSNP beneficiaries do not have health insurance or have a high premium on health insurance, they become even more vulnerable to sudden illnesses or injuries, and in many cases are driven to sell their assets or reduce food consumption to afford healthcare costs. An inclusive integration of the CBHI and PSNP has the potential to reduce the risk of economic struggle in the face of health issues, especially when insurance premiums are waived. UNICEF recommends that PSNP stakeholders become more involved in promoting the CHBI in PSNP districts, and use common systems for targeting, grievances, monitoring, and evaluations.

Program linkages with organizations such as World Vision also provide a livelihood-training component. This aims to diversify the skills of PSNP beneficiaries by providing (voluntary) training on business and financial literacy, as well as employment linkages. One interviewee spoke at length regarding how the link between PSNP beneficiaries and organizations such as World Vision provided access to micro finance and technology that allows farmers to link to markets and sell their crops more effectively and efficiently, preventing waste and increasing asset building. Depending on the region, different NGOs oversee this aspect of the PSNP. This also ensures that organizations such as World Vision, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and USAID, who have expertise on livelihoods training, can contribute their skills and resources. Leveraging these program linkages builds resilient livelihoods that can withstand shocks, tying into the multifaceted aspect of the PSNP.

ADAPTING THE PSNP TO URBAN AREAS

The fourth and current phase of the PSNP involves the urban Productive Safety Net Project (UPSNP), led by the Ministry of Urban Development, Construction, and Housing. The UPSNP promotes inclusive growth across Ethiopia by recognizing the poverty and food insecurity that exists in large measures in urban areas. In addition to retaining the core components of cash transfers and public works projects, implementation in eleven cities including Addis Ababa has adapted to the unique context of urban poverty and food insecurity. For instance, food security in urban areas relies heavily on the affordability and accessibility of markets, issues that are exacerbated by low incomes and the prior absence of a social safety net. The UPSNP supports beneficiaries in accessing economic opportunities through livelihood activities that promote financial independence. It also acknowledges that many of the urban poor are people with disabilities, the elderly, the homeless, and street children, who are classified as direct support recipients. They receive direct transfers and are not required to participate in public works projects.

Since many of Ethiopia's poorest people live in rural areas, many poverty-alleviation programs do not reach the urban poor. Infrastructure, jobs, and services cannot keep pace with rapid urbanization so many Ethiopians face unemployment, air and water pollution, lack of housing, and lack of social services. Many also work in informal sectors. The UPSNP's focus on resilient urban development has the potential to reduce poverty and strengthen economic growth, with public works projects targeting urban beautification and greenery, solid waste management, urban integrated watershed development, preparation of urban agriculture sites, as well as urban social infrastructure and services.

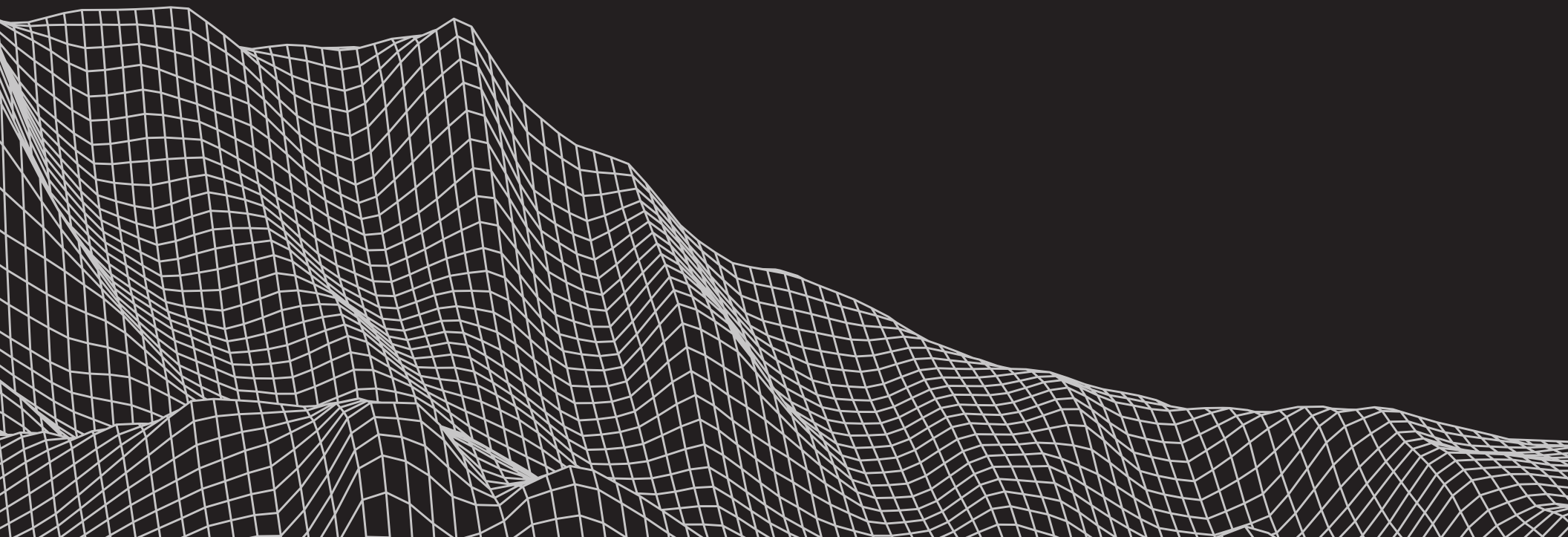
The UPSNP's focus on institutional strengthening, capacity building, and job creation in urban areas is integrated into the government's Urban Food Security and Job Creation Strategy. According to World Bank data, since the UPSNP was launched in January 2016, there have been 448,885 direct project beneficiaries. (The first phase targets 465,600 people by 2020. The final target is 4.7 million people.) Addressing the underlying causes of poverty with income generation and building resilience to shocks, the UPSNP is a promising step toward supporting the most vulnerable and food-insecure individuals in urban areas.

SUMMARY

Planning for the PSNP's successful reach and implementation requires a comprehensive, but appropriately flexible Programme Implementation Manual (PIM), drafted by a team of government officials and development partners (i.e., donors, NGOs, academic/research partners). Coordination in the PSNP's operation, led by the strong central government, taps into the community and institutional knowledge at the *kebele* level to accurately reach the hardest to reach. Flexibility in targeting and transfer type (i.e., food, cash, or both) facilitates the PIM priority of guaranteeing timely and adequate transfers to the most food-insecure people. Multilevel appeals structures further engage the targeted communities to ensure buy-in and confidence in the program. The program's success is magnified through linkages with other government programs and has seen effective implementation in new, urban environments with the UPSNP.

Identifying Challenges and Obstacles

Because of the size of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and its variations in program implementation, success fluctuates across different communities and phases. Criticisms of the PSNP from recipients, academics, and donors are mainly directed at issues of cultural heterogeneity, capacity and funding, and streamlining monitoring and evaluations. However, international donors have a unique role in attenuating, and even avoiding, some of the challenges through a working group committed to implementing changes and improvements that strengthen the program for beneficiaries and communities.



CULTURAL HETEROGENEITY ACROSS REGIONS: HIGHLANDS AND LOWLANDS

The PSNP has had marked success in the highlands, the region where the program was originally conceived. This is a huge achievement given that the highlands contain nearly 85 percent of the population, 95 percent of the cultivated land, and 80 percent of the country's 35 million cattle. They are also home to what is considered the country's cultural and political core.[16] The PSNP was designed to fit the institutional structures and cultural context of the highlands regions, where it was first introduced. In highland communities, the poorest of the poor are targeted as beneficiaries of cash and food transfers, with the condition that able-bodied recipients engage in public works infrastructure projects to build community assets and resilience.

While the PSNP was designed to be adaptive and flexible, at least with regard to asset identification, there is still rigidity at a program-design level when it comes to adapting to different cultural contexts. The PSNP struggles to sufficiently recognize and adapt to heterogeneity across regions, with many regional disparities masked by overall impressive targeting rates. The PSNP has enjoyed much less success in areas that have more top-down governance structures, such as the lowland regions of Somali and Afar. The unique cultural context of the lowlands regions, in terms of family units, mobile ways of life, and forms of social obligation, means the poorest of the poor are not always the direct beneficiaries of the PSNP. One interviewee said, "in a simple cost-benefit analysis—is it acceptable or desirable to reach the hardest to reach when you don't know what's happening?" In other words, even when programmatic design targets the hardest-to-reach individuals, this has to translate to on-the-ground program implementation. The struggle to adapt the PSNP in the lowland regions shows how understanding cultural context in different communities and regions is paramount to achieving high-impact targeting.

The struggle to adapt the PSNP in the lowland regions shows how understanding cultural context in different communities and regions is paramount to achieving high-impact targeting.

When the PSNP began in the lowlands regions, the program's intended effects were compromised for two key reasons. First, lowland communities have different cultural norms related to the treatment of the poorest of the poor. Social obligation in lowland communities dictates that wealthier members receive the transfers and redistribute to the poor, which defies a central tenet of the PSNP—that beneficiaries are the poorest, most food-insecure individuals. Despite this social obligation, there is no evidence that the wealthier community members actually redistribute the transfers to the poorest members. Second, the pastoral lifestyle of lowland communities is not conducive to laboring on infrastructure when communities cannot reap the benefits of their labor. Because of these issues, money is not always preferred relative to food in lowland communities, which stands in contrast to the cash-first principle of the PSNP.

Before program roll-out in the lowlands, the PSNP was not modified to reflect traditional authority structures, the presence of clans and clan leaders, or the migratory patterns of pastoralists. An interviewee from the World Food Programme (WFP) told us, "the core elements of targeting are not present in the lowlands." Between donors, there is a tension around ending the PSNP in the lowlands, redesigning it, or maintaining the status quo. These experiences illustrate how the PSNP needs to adapt its targeting and public works mechanisms to differences in social structures among pastoral, lowland communities.

CAPACITY AND FUNDING ISSUES

The PSNP faces consistent capacity issues in the form of long delays in delivering transfers, high staff turnovers, and low staff wages. The PSNP often struggles to deliver timely transfers, with the average transfer taking six to twelve weeks. (The Programme Implementation Manual or PIM says cash transfers should take no more than twenty days and food transfers should take a maximum of thirty days). Even when targeting is done well, the

[16] FDRE Ministry of Agriculture, "The Main Features and Issues Related to the Ethiopian Domestic Biomass Energy Sector," Woody Biomass Inventory and Strategic Planning Project, Addis Ababa, June 2003.

lack of timely implementation means the PSNP is failing on one of its core principles. A lack of pay equalization for bureaucrats working on the PSNP means people will work on the program only long enough to gain skills, then leave for higher-paying jobs. The frequent turnover of PSNP staff means that a learning curve for new staff translates to slow execution. Donors view timely and predictable transfers as a key indicator for program success, and are collectively pushing for the government to invest in capacity building.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The PSNP has encountered multiple challenges related to monitoring and evaluation. The PIM outlines a monitoring-and-evaluation system based on a combination of progress monitoring, periodic assessments of key program components, and household surveys and impact assessments. However, many PSNP impact evaluations lack accuracy, timeliness, and comprehensiveness. Accurate and routine impact evaluations, and the data that are used to inform decisions, are typically dated. Without clear, community-based indicators, the program's success is difficult to measure. One of the main indicators of PSNP success used to be graduation. However, the graduation process is riddled with irregularities, including lack of adherence to graduation criteria, problematic appeals processes, institutional power dynamics, and a high tendency of graduates to relapse into food insecurity after a couple seasons.

DONOR HARMONIZATION'S ROLE IN ADDRESSING PSNP CHALLENGES

The donor working group (DWG) was formed in 2005 when the European Commission, World Bank, Irish Aid (formerly Development Cooperation Ireland), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), formerly Canadian International Development Agency or CIDA), and the British Department for International Development (DFID) agreed to the terms of reference for donors to the PSNP. The DWG has grown to include all donors to the program and recently added the Austrian Development Cooperation, the embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, German Cooperation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, UNICEF, Danish International Development Agency, and the World Food Programme. However, international donors participate to varying degrees. For example, USAID, DFID, GAC, and Irish Aid are much more active and take on a larger coordination role than the Dutch or Austrian governments.

The PSNP donor working group's role is twofold. In addition to providing financial support, they work through issues between donor priorities and the government. The significant financing gap not only compounds the low capacity issues but has also led to compromises in food transfers (i.e., transfers reduced from a nutritious basket of cereal and pulses to a basket containing only cereal). The design of the PSNP 4 was not matched with adequate funding to follow through with proposed changes, so many aspects of the new PIM were poorly implemented or abandoned altogether (i.e., a management information system, proxy means testing, e-transfers, parts of the livelihoods component, etc.).

To close PSNP 4's funding gap, the World Bank infused USD 600 million into the program. Still, the chronic need for transfers outweighs the PSNP's funding, with the program reaching approximately 8 million out of 11 to 12 million chronically food-insecure individuals. Within the donor working group, there is general agreement that financial resources must increase and be allocated strategically. By 2025, the government wants the PSNP to be fully self-funded, so the government is incrementally increasing its investment in the program. It is not yet clear how the government will fund the full cost.

The Donor Coordination Team (DCT) was started in 2006 to "enhance coordination among members of the PSNP DWG and to facilitate harmonization between the DWG and Government" and it provides both technical and administrative support to donors.[17] The DCT works with the donor chair, a position that rotates on a six-month basis during which one international donor is responsible for all communication and negotiation with the main government ministries responsible for the PSNP, namely the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

The development partners, including donors, the government, and operational partners, all contributed to the revised PIM for phase 4 of the PSNP. Together, they aim to achieve the stated goal of "resilience to shocks and livelihoods enhanced, and food security and nutrition improved, for rural households vulnerable to food insecurity."[18] One interviewee revealed that only a few donors created the initial design. This created acrimony

[17] World Bank group, *Designing and Implementing a Rural Safety Net*, 47.
[18] PSNP Programme Implementation Manual, 2–3.

and confusion for smaller donors who felt underrepresented. Indicative of the PSNP's collaborative approach to planning, implementing, and monitoring, we were informed that all of the donors, old and new, came together in 2015 (at the end of the PSNP's third phase) for a retreat to iron out how to proceed. This resulted in a new-found coherence between donors and a more balanced system that respected the large, powerful donors and empowered the smaller donors.

The larger donors still have a dominating influence, according to the development partners we interviewed (both small and large), but it is effectively tempered by the relatively transparent, regular meetings with equal representation in the DWG and the rotating donor chair position. Each donor present in Addis Ababa sends at least one decision maker and one technical specialist to weekly meetings that monitor program implementation and government relations. Although the donors interviewed emphasized the donor chair's impartiality, they also admitted to an inevitable bias toward the chair country's priorities during the six-month tenure. However, long-term and consistent collaboration appears to remove the risk of nondemocratic behavior, thus remedying past concerns about government inefficiency and opaque program management.

Partnerships with more independent bodies like the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) further support effective monitoring and evaluation to inform a constant positive evolution in PSNP design and implementation. Similarly, the operational partnerships seen through USAID's partner organizations, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, and World Vision, provide greater practical knowledge and implementation experience. This allows for greater capacity building, which was a challenge from the PSNP implementation standpoint.

World Bank HQ. The World Bank plays an essential role housing both the Donor Coordination Team and the main fund into which donor parties deposit PSNP funding and out of which the government of Ethiopia withdraws program resources. Photo: Sydney Piggott

A multistakeholder system faces additional bureaucratic steps that slow progress. Working with the multiple government ministries and an expanding donor group often requires compromise on competing donor and government priorities. But discord among stakeholders also led to a more nuanced understanding of the underlying issues. For example, there are constant disagreements between donors, the DWG, and the government—key priorities that repeatedly conflict include the reduction of expenditure, graduation of participants, expansion of reach, and increased efficiency. While negotiations over such issues might stall immediate progress in the short term, reaching compromises within the DWG, made possible through its equitable, long-term approach, allows a consistent voice to present a clearer argument to the government. Despite disagreements, the donors interviewed applauded the government for how committed they are to the PSNP and food security in the most affected communities through their centralized management of the PSNP in the Ministry of Agriculture and their commitment to fully fund the program by 2025. This commitment also facilitates compromise, better working relationships, and thus greater program success—evident in the constant improvements in PSNP implementation.

Interviewees often mentioned the cash transfers as an example of internal tension and programmatic friction. Because the transfers must travel from the Ministry of Finance to the *woreda*, the *kebele*, and finally to the community, there are many logistical challenges that significantly hamper their effectiveness. One proposed solution the DWG is pushing for the government to implement is an e-transfer system. The same serious political and logistical hurdles that the PSNP faces stymie attempts to implement such a system, especially in the more nomadic, impoverished lowland regions. Looking to neighboring countries such as Kenya and its use of M-PESA might inform future debate about applying the successful mobile money-transfer system to Ethiopia. The interwoven program design and both formal and informal meetings among donors allow for these conflicting priorities to be dealt with diplomatically and in the PSNP's best interest.

In our interviews with members of the DWG and donor coordination team, we consistently heard how positive a role the DWG plays in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the PSNP. Donor coordination is key to the PSNP's success. Interviewees said that the negotiation process allows for diverse priorities to be discussed but also ultimately to reach a conclusion, with a singular voice presenting the whole DWG's democratically agreed-upon priorities to the government. The clarity, power, and efficiency that come from a single and rotating donor chair strengthens the effectiveness of donor-government relations. One interviewee said that the DWG shields donors from being targeted for specific asks by the government.

The donors interviewed perceived that the government buys in fully to this system because it reduces bureaucratic demands and moves the balancing of donor priorities back onto the donors. Simultaneously, the government benefits from a pool of resources and expertise. It receives a larger sum of relatively unconditional money when so many donors are committed to the program. The government also benefits from the institutional knowledge stemming from the donors' previous experience in humanitarian projects.

This resource sharing is similarly seen as a plus among the donor parties. The smaller donor parties explained that they are able to achieve greater outcomes with the pool of funds while still being able to maintain their mandates. The larger donor parties, who arguably could fund the program outside the DWG, explained that it is still in their interest to remain in the group to better achieve their mandate because of the demonstrated results of collaboration and expertise. All donors who were interviewed applauded the group's transparency, commitment, and shared vision of the PSNP.

The donor coordination team received even more praise for its technical expertise and program management. Bringing together technical experts on analysis, data collection, policy, and strategic thinking takes the burden off the DWG and informs governmental implementation directly. One donor party exclaimed that they "had never seen anything like this." The dedicated technical task forces, who are engaged in the areas of "financial management, procurement, public works, pastoral livelihoods, and social protection,"[19] lift the burden from the relatively small teams working on the PSNP under each donor umbrella. Their capacity, development strategy, and collaboration with operational partners like UNICEF stood out to many of the donors we interviewed. Their relative independence from the DWG was considered a significant contributor to effective donor harmonization.

The PSNP is highly flexible and dynamic, with negotiations at every level of delivery that allow for the program's optimization. Negotiations allow each stakeholder to have their voice heard and their objectives made clear, which then leads to the creation and prioritization of key program targets and a more efficient use of resources.

The first round of negotiations occurs among the thirteen donor parties (with some taking a more passive role). Interviewees explained to us that all donor countries have certain predetermined priorities based on their foreign aid policies (for example, Global Affairs Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy prioritizes gender equality and seeks to empower women and girls). As a result, each donor country typically tries to push their individual agenda within the PSNP framework to influence the allocation of funds. However, speaking about these priorities openly ensures that all donors are aware of any disagreements or difficulties, and they then can design strategies to mitigate these tensions. For example, consensus can be built around the order of donor priorities that allows different priorities to be heard while ultimately agreeing on an actionable agenda to present to government. Donors also know they must come to a consensus about how funds will be used. They recognize that collaboration allows a program of this magnitude to exist (as opposed to smaller, piecemeal programs run by individual donors or NGOs). One interviewee said, "when

[19] World Bank group, *Designing and Implementing a Rural Safety Net*, 47.

The PSNP is highly flexible and dynamic, with negotiations at every level of delivery that allow for the program's optimization.

there is a common objective on a program like this, you can get a lot done."

Over time, the donors have made progress in moving away from individual agendas and improving coordination. Several interviewees stated that it is easier to harmonize donor objectives when "looking at the big picture." In other words, all the donors have the same foundational goal: to improve food security and the lives of Ethiopians. Negotiations between donors frequently come back to this central point. The negotiations conclude when they are able to come to a consensus, at which point they can send an elected donor chair to carry on negotiations at the governmental level.

The negotiations between the donor chair and the government are crucial. The Ethiopian government is very strong politically, and according to donors, will "walk away if need be." Having all the donor voices united behind the donor chair helps because the government wants the PSNP to continue as its flagship food aid program. Uniting donor voices gives them more leverage. The donors have a genuine commitment to helping develop government systems.

While community task forces lead community-level targeting, the DWG plays a role in high-level targeting. For example, some donors are pushing for retargeting in the lowland regions following the failure to adapt the PSNP to this region's unique factors and consequent poor results. The World Food Programme (WFP), the main implementing partner in the lowland regions, is leading this discussion by proposing targeting that takes the differences of the lowlands into account. For instance, the WFP wants to integrate a bottom-up approach that integrates clans and subclans into the targeting process, thereby addressing the specific risks and vulnerabilities that these groups face. To reach the poorest in the lowlands, targeting mechanisms must acknowledge customs of social obligation and wealth redistribution that exist in lowland clans. The WFP highlighting this issue has made it a prominent agenda item for the DWG.

Donors' coordinating their retargeting efforts might drive a redesign of the PSNP. In the past, this was exemplified in the redesign of the PSNP 4, which addressed the multifaceted dimensions of poverty, integrated gender as a cross-cutting component (i.e., ensuring both men and women have decision-making power and access to resources, and acknowledging women's responsibility for productive and reproductive work), and invested in livelihood transfers and market linkages. In the development of the PSNP's fifth phase, donors want to emphasize retargeting, public works among mobile populations, financing of cash instead of food, and overall funding for the program.

The government wants to fully fund the PSNP by 2025. As the government moves to take ownership, the voice and leverage of the donors will change. The majority of donors believe government ownership is welcome and necessary because it shows the government is committed to strengthening systems. Government ownership of the PSNP's vision, direction, and expectations gives the government greater legitimacy. While the donor working group will have to adapt their engagement one thing is very clear: the unique role and harmonization of the donors has been a subtle yet vital force for the PSNP's successful design, implementation, and evolution.

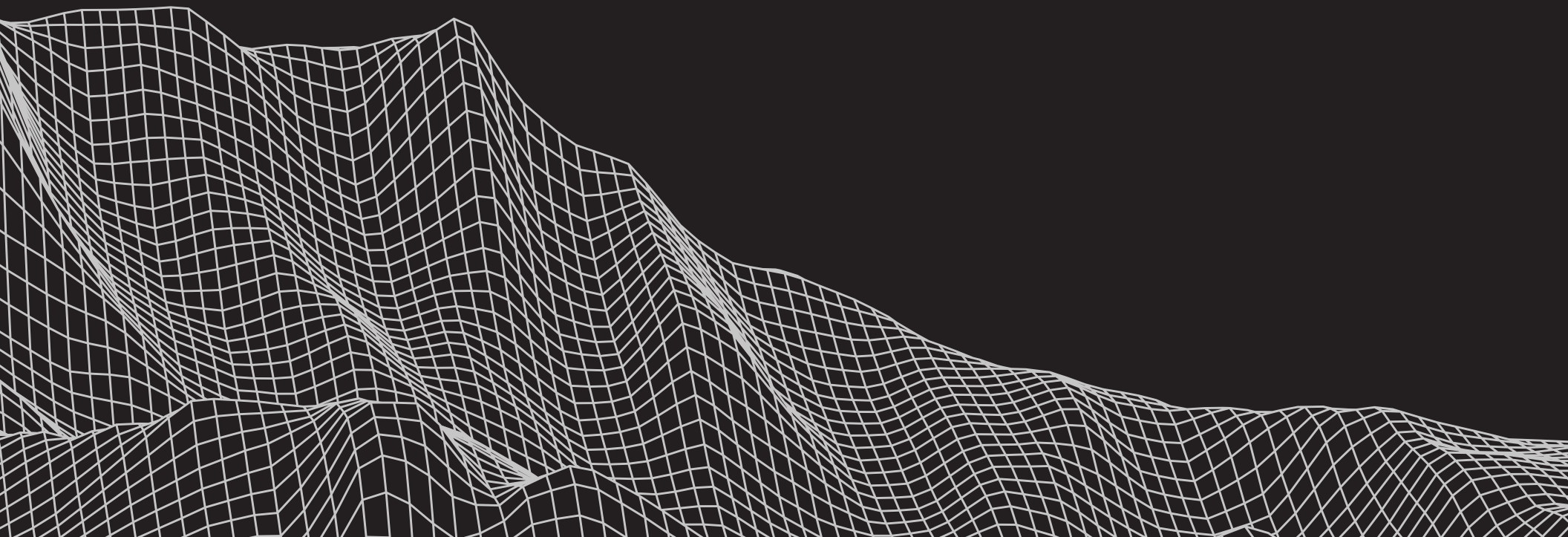
SUMMARY

As the PSNP grew in scale and reach, the challenges and obstacles that emerged underscored the need for increased coordination. The PSNP is unique in its harmonization within the DWG—an assembly of international donors created to guide its design and implementation that also provides technical expertise and transparent oversight. Through negotiation processes and commitment to the program's goals, the DWG addresses issues like cultural heterogeneity across regions, low capacity and funding, and problematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The collaboration and dialogue that exists at the highest levels of the PSNP help to ensure the program is effectively responding to chronic food insecurity.

Lessons Learned

Given the growing international consensus that national-level social-protection programs are a key, if not a necessary component of poverty reduction at a global level, it is imperative to determine effective strategies for designing and implementing rural safety net programs.

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) effectively maximizes the reach of its cash and food safety-net program through innovative design, delivery, and collaboration with key stakeholders. Four key lessons emerged from our work that might be applied to other safety net programs and humanitarian aid efforts to reduce food insecurity (particularly in areas that have suffered from chronic insecurity).



"The program was successful because it allowed communities to flexibly respond to changes in their food security status."

—Interview participant from donor organization

1. ADAPTIVITY AND FLEXIBILITY

The PSNP was born out of an understanding that emergency responses to food insecurity were inadequate. Given that a third of the population was considered food insecure and with no immediate end to this plight in view, the government of Ethiopia recognized that something had to be done quickly. Moving to scale the PSNP (despite limited piloting in just the highland regions) required the government, donors, NGOs, and other stakeholders to be adaptive and flexible which in turn led to all parties being much more willing to compromise. This flexibility was seen even in how the PSNP Programme Implementation Manual (PIM) sought to identify the "poorest of the poor." Given the variety of assets across communities and regions, the PSNP combined geographic targeting with community-based selection processes to ensure that the most vulnerable and food-insecure people receive benefits.

Adaptability and flexibility were apparent even where the PSNP was less successful. When the PSNP was designed, it operated using predominantly cash-based transfers given directly to the poorest highland citizens in exchange for working on public structures that would improve that area's resilience. In contrast, lowland regions had more clan-based, top-down structures, with wealth residing with the leadership and then trickling down to their members. These regions were also nomadic. As a result, there was pushback between administrators and lowland community members about who should get the beneficiary transfers as well as little incentive for beneficiaries to invest in an area that they weren't planning on residing in. Cash-based transfers were undesirable because there weren't always guaranteed markets to purchase food and so lowland PSNP beneficiaries ended up being disadvantaged relative to other PSNP beneficiaries who received food directly.

While the government and many international donors looked at this situation as a program failure and discussed potentially abandoning the PSNP in these lowland regions, some donors who work specifically in this area (e.g., World Food Programme) noted that there wasn't conclusive evidence that the PSNP had failed in its implementation. Rather, the failure lay in not adapting and offering versatility to the various cultural orientations and facets of communities that needed to be considered. For example, PSNP pay-for-work structures might have higher uptake and thus be more successful if there were group-based resilience training to build a critical mass of highly skilled personnel within the clan itself (e.g., first aid health education and training, skills training that could be used in a variety of environmental conditions), allowing for clan-based benefits rather than region-specific benefits.

2. EXTENSIVE COLLABORATION WITHIN AND ACROSS INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEMS

At every level of the PSNP's institutional framework, there was clear collaboration and dialogue. It instituted a more harmonious and collaborative, community-level targeting system via regional (*woreda*) and local (*kebele*) councils and task forces, giving local administrators more responsibility, flexibility, and jurisdiction rather than leaning on a more rigidly defined federal-level system.

Harmonization was necessary across international donors and NGO programs to ensure comprehensive delivery of aid to better prepare and equip individuals to reduce their vulnerability as well as manage and bounce back from inevitable environmental shocks. Collaborations between the government and donors were essential for negotiations, as was pushing more efficient but costly initiatives forward (such as the call to digitize monitoring and evaluation and offer mobile transfers). Collaborations between government and the private sector allow organizations with the necessary expertise and infrastructure to provide technical services (such as e-transfers or systems that could record skill progress or real-time updates), thus improving the cost efficiency of transfers and bolstering success by providing skill management. Donors and private-sector partners provide technical services beyond the scope of the government's organizational expertise. Taken together, collaboration among humanitarian organizations and the government creates cost savings and helps to ensure that citizens receive the most holistic support possible.

Partnerships with local and regional government administrators as well as partnerships with private-sector organizations are a key feature of the program. This allows for better identification of those in need and more holistic training and skills development overall, ensuring a much higher likelihood of participants' postprogram "graduation."

These partnerships have allowed the PSNP to put to use existing technology, infrastructure, and expertise to enhance cost savings; deliver adequate and timely transfers; reduce fraud and waste; and increase the benefits for even nonbeneficiaries.

At all levels, this push toward collaboration allowed parties to leverage the others' skill sets and expertise (e.g., technical skills from donors and NGOs, community-level awareness of who were the poorest of the poor), while also better understanding the barriers and challenges that each stakeholder faced. This collaborative effort also ensured success since the program was less likely to fall by the wayside or crumble with a shift of government or as a result of staff turnover (e.g., employees or even international donor changes).

"Invest in something that is going to last—something that is going to be sustainable."

—Interview participant from the World Bank

3. BUILDING CAPACITY AND RESILIENCE

The marked shift from emergency aid to emergency and chronic aid signaled a need to develop productive and sustainable solutions while still accounting for shocks in dire circumstances. Moving to a chronic *and* emergency aid model also meant recognizing the multifaceted nature of food insecurity. In other words, there was deliberate and conscious development of solutions aimed directly at addressing the determinants of food insecurity in a particular location or community rather than delivering food aid alone. This focus on building capacity and resilience was highlighted by (a) providing one year of transfers to selected beneficiaries to smooth consumption and allow for a safety net of support; (b) providing skill development—not just meeting food-based needs but providing alternative paths out of poverty; and (c) developing a successful public works program where beneficiaries could work to improve infrastructure that would build resilience to environmental shocks and provide resources in the future. This in turn benefited the community at large which was imperative given that many individuals were in need, beyond those who were selected as beneficiaries in a given year. The PSNP's community-level success fostered a sense of collective pride which was very much consistent with the Ethiopian cultural ethos.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS ALL LEVELS

The final key to the PSNP's success was the level of accountability for everyone involved. Given the move to a multiyear funding commitment, international donors were accountable to effectively design and implement a program that addressed the multifaceted nature of food insecurity. Key stakeholders recognized that the program would need a future that wasn't driven by donors alone if it was going to be sustainable. A safety net would need a home-driven approach that was government implemented and owned to ensure a future that could be independent of donors altogether. A move to a more government-led accountability model created a feeling of legitimacy and ambition. To create a more accountable and independent framework the government introduced the PIM and ran workshops that helped to formalize how the PSNP could be implemented in various sectors and for various groups. These actions also helped to decrease knowledge loss in cases of employee turnover or during times of administrative change. The federal government also increased the responsibility of *woredas* and *kebele*-level administrators to accurately select the right number of beneficiaries and target and verify the poorest of the poor. The collective culture of Ethiopian *kebeles* meant that councils knew the beneficiaries personally and thus felt a responsibility to their collective "family." Allowing these councils to make decisions was a factor in the remarkably low rates of appeals or even reports of dissatisfaction for those who were not selected.

"If you want to do something right, you have to invest in it."

—Interview participant from the World Food Programme

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Avni Shah is an assistant professor of marketing in the Department of Management at the University of Toronto Scarborough, and cross-appointed to the marketing area at the Rotman School of Management. Her research examines how paying with different forms of payment influence purchase behavior, how paying a surcharge on unhealthy food items influences unhealthy food consumption, how nudges and mobile payment can influence retirement contributions, and whether peers influence how households make mortgage decisions. Avni's work has been published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, and *Psychological Science*.

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Siobhan Bradley recently graduated with a master of global affairs from the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. She now works as a consultant at UNICEF Lesotho, designing a home fortification program for young children using micronutrient powders. Siobhan also has experience working on projects in Thailand, Taiwan, Israel, Ethiopia, and Belize.

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Rachel Bryce is in the second year of the combined JD/MGA program at the University of Toronto. She earned her bachelor of International Economics (BIE) at the University of British Columbia. In 2016, Rachel volunteered with refugees and migrants in the Calais Refugee Camp. She acts as co-chair of the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers (CARL) U of T chapter and as co-chair of the Global Migration Lab at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. Rachel recently researched and wrote on migration law as an intern with the International Migration Law unit at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Geneva.

SYDNEY PIGGOTT

Sydney Piggott is the manager of programs and projects at YWCA Canada and a recent graduate of the Master of Global Affairs program at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. She holds an undergraduate degree in international development studies from McGill University and has over five years of professional experience in gender advocacy, corporate social responsibility, and social policy. Sydney also volunteers with several organizations serving youth and equity-seeking groups locally and nationally.

JILLIAN SPRENGER

Jillian Sprenger is majoring in global health and minoring in contemporary Asian studies and immunology. She interned at the Antimicrobial Resistance Secretariat at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. Her previous research focused on innovations to address child malnutrition in Myanmar, sustainable environmental governance models in Ecuador, and strategies to address antimicrobial resistance in Taiwan. She has also worked for the SickKids Centre for Global Child Health on several projects pertaining to newborn health in rural Pakistan.

REACH PROJECT

Development is about delivery—the will and ability to deliver interventions to very poor and vulnerable people to help improve their lives. The development "space" is filled with great ideas and innovative solutions, from technological interventions to new policy initiatives. But the effects of these potentially game-changing ideas are severely mitigated if they do not actually get to the people they are intended to benefit. We think of this challenge in terms of "reach." Solutions can solve problems only if they reach those who need them most.

The Reach Project focuses on the delivery of services and interventions to those who are hardest to reach. We are a research initiative supported by a partnership between the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto and the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth. The Reach Project is led by Professor Joseph Wong. The commitment of student researchers and faculty mentors from across the University of Toronto drives our work. Together, we examine the delivery of services and interventions to those who are hardest to reach in countries around the world.

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