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Performance Evaluation of Title II Funded Development Food Assistance Programs in Ethiopia

Agriculture Knowledge, Learning, Documentation
and Policy project (AKLDP Ethiopia)

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Cover image: Well constructed dam near Sekota

All photos by AKLDP Evaluation Team

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Agriculture Knowledge, Learning, Documentation and Policy (AKLDP) project

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States government.

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- h. “Statement of differences”
- i. Data compiled and analyzed by IFPRI

ACRONYMS

CFI	Chronically Food Insecure
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DA	Development Agent
DFAP	Development Food Assistance Program
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
EBF	Exclusive Breast-Feeding
Eth Birr	Ethiopian Birr (1 USD = 22 Eth Birr)
FFP	Food for Peace
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FH/E	Food for the Hungry Ethiopia
FSTF	Food Security Task Force
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
GPS	Graduation Prediction System
GRAD	Graduation for Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
HABP	Household Asset Building Program
HEW	Health Extension Worker
HH	Household
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IGA	Income-Generating Activity
IP	Implementing Partner
IPTT	Indicator Performance Tracking Table
JEOP	Joint Emergency Operations Program
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCHN	Mother and Child Health and Nutrition
MFI	Micro-Finance Institution
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resource Management
ORDA	Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara
PDSB	Permanent Direct Support Beneficiary
PIM	Program Implementation Manual
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women
PREP	Pipeline Resource and Estimate Proposal
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Program
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
RuSACCO	Rural Savings and Credit Cooperative
SBCC	Social Behavior Change Communication
SCI	Save The Children International
SO	Strategic Objective
T2CG	Title II Coordination Group
ToT	Training of Trainers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WASH	Water and Sanitation for Health

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This qualitative performance evaluation was designed to:

- Evaluate the individual effectiveness of each of the four Development Food Assistance Programs (DFAPs) with regard to achieving program objectives and targets, including their crosscutting objectives, and evaluate their contribution to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) effort to improve the food security of the target population in the project areas;
- Evaluate changes (results) produced by the programs—intended and unintended, direct and indirect;
- Provide specific recommendations on aspects of design, sustainability strategies, and implementation approaches that the Food for Peace (FFP) and USAID Mission should consider in the design and development of future programs in Ethiopia.

The evaluation report responds to 17 questions posed by the Scope of Work. The methodology was designed to generate findings for each question, draw conclusions, and derive recommendations. The evaluation covered 20 *kebeles* (the smallest administrative units in Ethiopia, similar to wards) in 15 *woredas* (administrative districts) across three regions (Oromia, Amhara, and Tigray) and one administrative region, Dire Dawa Administration, within Ethiopia. The evaluation team held discussions with focus groups, key informants, agents of Implementing Partners (IPs), and counterparts in government, and reviewed any available quantitative data. The fieldwork was undertaken in October and November 2016 after the DFAPs had closed out. The evaluation report is divided into three sections: findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Background

The Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) is a key element of the government of Ethiopia (GoE) Food Security Program (FSP) and plays a critical role in building resilience of chronically food-insecure communities through transfer of resources and building of community assets in vulnerable areas across Ethiopia. The four DFAPs were USAID's contribution to the PSNP. They shared a common goal of improving food security amongst target populations through various mechanisms, including predictable transfers, community asset development, capacity building, and livelihood development (including Water and Sanitation for Health—WASH—and Mother and Child Health and Nutrition—MCHN—practices). In doing so, the DFAPs contribute to Development Objective

1: “Increase Growth with Resilience in Rural Ethiopia” of USAID's Country Development Cooperative Strategy. They were implemented by NGO (non-governmental organization) partners in different regions of the country: Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Dire Dawa and Oromia; Food for the Hungry Ethiopia (FH/E) in Amhara; Relief Society of Tigray (REST) in Tigray; and Save the Children International (SCI) in Oromia (Borena Zone) and Somali Regions.

Effectiveness of the DFAPs with regard to achieving program objectives and targets

Goal—Improved Food Security: DFAPs temporarily increased food sufficiency (i.e., for as long as beneficiaries remained within the program), but improved food security, as defined by the PSNP Program Implementation Manual (PIM), was not commonly achieved.

Objective—Improved MCHN: MCHN/WASH was improved amongst almost all pregnant and lactating women (PLW), but the limited qualitative nutritional evidence was extremely variable and generally inconclusive.

Objective—Increased Resilience: Transfers enhanced resilience during the DFAPs, but sustainable improvements were less evident and were limited to beneficiaries who had benefited from income-generating activities (IGAs) or irrigation, or who were able to apply MCHN/WASH messaging. In Borena, widespread concern about potential impacts of failure of *haggaya* autumn rains suggests limited improvements in resilience.

Objective—Enhanced Gender Equity: Respondents reported improvements throughout all DFAPs.

Objective—Capacity Building: Some capacity development was achieved, but current approaches to training are not appropriate to circumstances of high staff turnover.

The evaluation found that the DFAPs delivered the program goal of enhanced food security through the transfer of resources. Program design to achieve enhanced resilience was constrained by optimistic government-determined graduation rates, standardized transfers, and a strong emphasis on watershed development that was not universally appropriate. The program design in pastoral areas in particular needed a different emphasis. Interventions in MCHN and WASH required complementary infrastructure development. The gender sensitization inputs had been well designed, as had cascaded trainings to build community and government

capacity in places where staff turnover was not too high. The key weakness of program design (which was largely conditioned by the DFAP's status within PSNP) in the pastoralist areas was the narrowness of its interventions and the absence of program components (or linkages to other programs) in areas such as livestock marketing, natural resource management, and land policy.

Changes produced by the programs

Enhanced food sufficiency outcomes were reported for genuine graduates, but these were few. For most beneficiaries and forced graduates,¹ ongoing food sufficiency will require further transfers. Dietary diversity was minimally improved; understanding of MCHN/WASH messages was substantially improved, even if the application of messages was variable; improvements in gender equity and empowerment, and development of local capacity were consistently reported but were variable in their extent. Some transfer of skills was reported during public works construction in Borena, and there were very few reports of contradiction between public works and pastoral mobility.

Under the programs, community assets were developed across all *woredas*. Watershed conservation activities dominated the public works to develop such assets, although roads, schools, and other aspects of community infrastructure were also constructed. In the pastoral areas, *birkas* (underground tanks constructed to capture and store runoff water) were a popular new technology, as were *kalos* (communal enclosures) that provided benefits for young stock, reduced labor demands, and secured benefits for stockless households through rights to sell cut fodder. DFAPs delivered improved community/local government capacity development, procurement systems, and commodity management, including the timeliness of transfers.

Profiling showed a widespread improvement in women's access to and control over resources and benefits, but these could have been attributable as much to the political and administrative system and education as to the DFAPs. In the pastoral component, gender activities were diffuse but did include Save The Children International (SCI) and government gender officers promoting gender equality, school gender clubs, and awareness creation.

The sustainability of DFAP outcomes varied with program components. Community asset development may be sustainable where committees, bylaws, savings groups, and budgets have been established to ensure maintenance, but this process of establishment is not yet complete. Livelihoods supported under DFAPs lacked the economic

analysis to demonstrate commercial sustainability. The sustainability of progress made under MCHN and WASH is dependent upon training, additional manpower/resources, and expertise, which may not be available after the DFAPs end. In the pastoralist areas, the public works and the associated bylaws that made them pro-poor interventions, and the transfer of management skills to local government and communities, had promising prospects for sustainability. The stabilization/increase in household assets (livestock) is much less likely to be sustained without continued food transfers under PSNP.

Lessons learned

Design and effectiveness: The effectiveness of the program was constrained by the limited capacity of IPs to influence its two most critical aspects: beneficiary numbers and graduate numbers. Standard and contingency resources budgeted under the program were not adequate to completely cover potential beneficiary needs. As a result, program goals lay beyond manageable interests.

Natural Resource Management (NRM)-based community asset development offers few benefits for landless youth. Livelihood development activities are essential for landless households. Such activities will require further attention to:

- Business planning and value chain analysis;
- Adequate investment (long-term loans or grants);
- A casework approach, with individually tailored mixtures of financial assistance and vocational training;
- Follow-up and mentorship.

Despite concerns expressed in studies of other pastoral regions, for Borena the fundamental design of the DFAP around targeting of the poorest (in livestock terms) and public works is sound and accepted by beneficiaries and broader communities. The DFAP intervention directed at the poorest can form one part of a range of interventions to address the very complex development problems of Borena.

Savings groups have proved effective in contributing to the development of awareness and livelihoods and should be replicated where possible.

MCHN/WASH: DFAP messaging has proved effective in changing attitudes. The use of facilitators and animators has improved the efficiency of this process, but while MCHN/WASH knowledge components have been

¹ Genuine graduates are those who have achieved food sufficiency, while forced graduates are those obliged to leave the DFAP due to the application of a quota, without having achieved food sufficiency.

achieved, practice and sustainability require adequate infrastructure in both cases.

Capacity development: Current approaches to capacity development, although much appreciated, are constrained by staff turnover. New approaches are required to address this constraint. The effectiveness of training is limited if it is too general or inappropriately targeted. IPs need to be more proactive in the selection of trainees.

Graduation: For the poorer households, progress towards graduation is slow and not dramatically enhanced by community assets or MCHN/WASH activities. Small-scale irrigation and the development of IGAs have the greatest potential to hasten graduation. IPs should be involved in the implementation of the Graduation Prediction System (GPS) and the validation of graduation so that they have the manageable interest to meet program goals. In this regard, monitoring and follow-up of graduates (including the assessment of costs) is a necessary aspect of future program implementation.

Gender equality and empowerment: Progress is inherently gradual; nevertheless, repetition and a diversified “multichannel” approach have proven effective, especially when Health Extension Workers (HEWs) and schools have been involved. A five-year period is enough to achieve sustainable change, but not to the desired extent in all regions. Sustainable gender empowerment requires more than the DFAP program timeframe. Some initiatives/changes may prove to be sustainable but depend on conducive political environment/regulations and perhaps on continued presence of NGOs.

Program management and sustainability: The capacity of management to coordinate different interventions within a layered approach has definitely enhanced program outcomes. Nevertheless, while coordination with government is critical, a policy of absolute alignment with government principles should be carefully assessed. In particular, a policy that restricts manageable interests of DFAP IPs in key areas (such as graduation and targeting) should be scrutinized to ensure that it is in line with DFAP goals.

Knowledge management should not be external to each DFAP but should be integrated within each M&E (Monitoring and Evaluation) component, as well as linked between IPs and with the USAID Mission. Lessons learned are best shared through field study visits.

The sustainability of future DFAP achievements can be enhanced through the adequate provisioning of resources, including not only transfers but especially financial resources for the development of IGAs and the expertise to ensure appropriate practices are followed for both on- and off-farm IGAs.

Recommendations

To achieve program goals and objectives:

- Consider the reinstatement of full family targeting and fortified vegetable oil in the ration, as well as the introduction of variable month transfers (3–6–9), depending upon household needs. (It is recognized that these two aspects of the DFAPs are stipulated by the PSNP procedures, but the issue might nevertheless be addressed through pilot schemes, trials, or more intensive advocacy).
- Increase program emphasis on commercially viable IGAs to support the poorest/landless youth, including the provision of adequate training, financing, and analysis of proposed activities.
- Increase water point development in tandem with WASH messaging and strengthen appropriate nutritional livelihood activities (such as poultry rearing) to enhance MCHN capacity.
- Continue long-term gender equity development initiatives through existing mechanisms, developing linkages with GoE to strengthen sustainability.
- Investigate possible ways to address and mitigate GoE staff turnover as a constraint to capacity development, including computer-based training modules and graduated training to enhance professional development as well as social infrastructure construction (i.e., the construction of on-site accommodation and office facilities for DAs and HEWs) and promote staff retention.
- Develop linkages between PSNP and other programs/activities in pastoralist areas, including early warning, supply of animal health inputs and emergency feed, and nutrition and WASH programming. For livelihood diversification in Borena, the two-way choice between training and grant support needs to be replaced by a case-based approach more tailored to individuals, backed by greater knowledge of local training capacity and local labor markets. Community asset improvement should be more pragmatically selected, especially in pastoral areas where the effectiveness of the watershed approach is limited.

To enhance the graduation process:

- Advocate for a more comprehensive role for IPs in the graduation process from which they are currently excluded, especially in the application of the GPS and targeting processes.

- Follow-up support and mentorship of graduates should be provided under DFAPs. Monitoring of graduates should be an essential aspect of future DFAP M&E, which should monitor success rates and costs of success.

To strengthen the DFAPs' contribution to gender equity:

- DFAPs should continue the process of empowerment, reaching out to both men and women through social behavior change communication (SBCC), while strengthening girl's and women's education. Men in particular should be well informed of the purpose of the gender empowerment activities. Interventions should be designed to encourage the participation of men and the use of male peer pressure to reinforce change. M&E systems should monitor male attitudes throughout the program.

To strengthen program management:

- M&E units should reduce the number of output indicators and increase the use of small KPC (Knowledge, Practice, and Coverage) Surveys and other assessments to guide management on a more frequent basis. Information gathered should be analyzed and the results both used to inform management and shared with other IPs and the Mission. This will require additional resources dedicated to the process at all levels including the Mission, so as to achieve an integrated knowledge platform rather than one that is external to all parties.

To enhance program sustainability:

- Increased emphasis is required on family planning.
- Future PSNP work should be supported to work closely with customary institutions in pastoralist areas and take account of seasonality in work demands. It should also be linked to research-informed work at legal/policy level and at community level on appropriate models of land tenure and natural resource management that serve both environmental sustainability and equity/poverty reduction.

I INTRODUCTION

I.1 Description of the Development Food Assistance Programs

The Development Food Assistance Programs (DFAPs) are USAID's contribution to the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in Ethiopia. This program plays a key role in building resilience of chronically food-insecure (CFI) communities through the transfer of resources and building of community assets in vulnerable areas. The four DFAPs have a combined budget of approximately USD 587 million over a five-year period. They are implemented by non-governmental organizations (the Implementing Partners (IPs)) in different regions of the country: Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Dire Dawa and Oromia; Food for the Hungry Ethiopia (FH/E), working either directly or through the Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA) in Amhara; Relief Society of Tigray (REST) in Tigray; and Save the Children International (SCI) in Oromia (Borena Zone) and Somali Regions. The programs ran from FY 2012 to FY 2016.

The PSNP has been implemented in Ethiopia since January 2005. It was originally intended to replace a sporadic appeal and relief process with predictable transfers of food and/or cash to CFI households. Numbers of beneficiaries started at 4.5 million but increased to more than 8 million with the gradual growth of the program to include pastoral areas. The program is now in its fourth iteration, running from 2016 to 2020. As USAID's contribution to the PSNP, the DFAPs closely follow PSNP program implementation procedures, including the adherence to a pattern of six monthly transfers of food or cash to targeted CFI households. The nature of the transfers may vary in their food-to-cash ratio according to the productivity and market accessibility of *woredas*. In some areas, beneficiaries may receive five transfers of food and one of cash, while others may receive four of food and two of cash, or three months of each.

Under DFAP programs concurrent with PSNP3, it was expected that households would receive full family targeting and that the ration would be 15 kg of cereal, 1.5 kg of pulses, and 0.45 kg of oil per person, per transfer.² Under PSNP4, the ration was altered to 15 kg of cereal and 4 kg of pulses, and was provided to only five members per household. In most cases, rations are distributed in exchange for work performed by members of each able-bodied household in the development of community

assets. Five days' work was required to receive one transfer. The maximum number of days that an individual could work was limited to 15 per month. Allowances were made to reduce the burden of work on women from female-headed households and for women who were pregnant or lactating (PLW) to not work. Disabled and old people were also able to receive transfers without working as "Permanent Direct Support Beneficiaries" (PDSBs).

The four DFAPs had a common goal and similar but not identical Strategic Objectives (SOs). The common goal was closely aligned with that of the PSNP and was to enhance food security amongst targeted CFI households (REST's goal also stipulated that the enhancement should be sustainable). The achievement of this goal was to be derived from the SOs, which differed amongst the four IPs. The differences reflected the differing circumstances under which the IPs operated, as well as the different developmental philosophies, strengths, and weaknesses of each institution.

Relief Society of Tigray (REST)

The overall goal of the DFAP managed by REST was to sustainably increase the food-security status of chronically food-insecure households (initially 705,177 beneficiaries) in targeted *woredas* of Tigray. The REST DFAP's results framework was based around three SOs and did not mention the concept of resilience. Its first SO was based around watershed management, and aimed to improve production, smooth consumption, and increase availability and accessibility of food. The second provided complementary support to food security through the development of health and nutrition. The third focused on capacity building at all levels (household, community, and institutional).

Save The Children International (SCI)

The overall goal of the DFAP managed by SCI was reduced chronic food insecurity of 112,688 PSNP beneficiaries in seven *woredas* of Somali and Oromia Regional States. The results framework of the SCI DFAP included one SO, focusing on resilience—to be achieved through improved natural resource management, community services, and the reduction of the hunger season. Gender and capacity development were crosscutting themes as were "Do No Harm" and improved drought cycle management.

² PSNP3 *woredas* received 15 kg of cereals only. The PSNP PIM included specific recognition of USAID's right to this variation.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

The overall goal of the DFAP managed by CRS was to have reduced food insecurity of chronically food-insecure households (HHs) in seven *woredas* in Oromia Region (six *woredas*) as well as Dire Dawa City Administration (one *woreda*) of Ethiopia, initially totaling 287,688 beneficiaries altogether. The CRS results framework contained two SOs. SO1 focused on resilience but excluded health and nutrition from the concept, having improvement in those areas as a separate objective (SO2). The achievement of SO1 depended upon asset development and protection as well as the transfers themselves, while intermediate results under SO2 included specific references to WASH, diet, health and nutrition services, and improved behaviors. In addition, CRS had a “Private Objective,” which was for chronically food-insecure households in seven *woredas* to have improved livelihood capabilities through promotion of improved farming practices. Crosscutting themes were not mentioned, although gender empowerment was in fact a strong element of the CRS DFAP.

Food for the Hungry Ethiopia (FH/E)

The overall goal of the DFAP managed by FH/E was to improve the food security status for all members of food-insecure households in 12 *woredas* of Amhara Region (415,031 beneficiaries). The FH/E DFAP results framework contained two SOs, one focused on resilience and the other covering health and nutrition. The SO of improved resilience was dependent upon results in a range of areas, including reduced food gaps, asset protection, improved natural resource management, and improved local capacity (including disaster risk management (DRM)). The SO of improved health and nutrition included MCHN and WASH components. A crosscutting theme was improved gender relations.

I.2 Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the performance evaluation was to measure performance of the four DFAPs, specifically to:

- Evaluate the individual effectiveness of each of the four DFAPs with regard to achieving program objectives and targets, including their crosscutting objectives, and evaluate their contribution to USAID’s effort to improve food security of the target population in the project areas;
- Evaluate changes (results) produced by the programs—intended and unintended, direct and indirect;
- Provide specific recommendations on aspects of design, sustainability strategies, and implementation

approaches that the FFP and Mission should consider in the design and development of future programs in Ethiopia.

The evaluation exercise and this report have been structured around the following key questions. The reporting of findings focused on the italicized questions that were used to inform the bulleted issues. The bulleted issues were assessed as conclusions and recommendations.

1) Design and Effectiveness

- To what extent was the design of the DFAP’s programs well suited/matched to deliver the planned objectives/resilience-building goal of the programs?
- How well were DFAPs able to achieve desired results against the project goal and objectives?
- Were there key value additions that the DFAPs delivered in terms of building resilience?

a. How well did DFAP food transfers and livelihood support activities protect or reduce distress sales of household assets, and/or facilitate household asset creation?

b. What outcomes³ have the DFAPs achieved in the different program components: food security, livelihoods, WASH, MCHN, and other components (gender, capacity development)?

c. How are the quality, frequency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the livelihoods, WASH, and MCHN services/components perceived by the community?

d. How do households perceive the quality, benefit, and functionality of the community assets?

e. To what extent are community assets developed through public works appropriate to contributing to food security outcomes at the household level?

f. How effective was the use of contingency resources in terms of efficiency in identifying the needs, targeting, and timeliness of delivery? Any lessons?

2) PSNP Graduation

- How effective was PSNP graduation to improving resilience of targeted households?
- Did the DFAPs improve the PSNP graduation process?

³ Based on the monitoring data.

a. To what extent were the targeted households graduated from the PSNP per the eligibility criteria defined in the PSNP PIM?

b. What was the level of DFAP engagement and follow-up with graduated households and how effective was this follow-up? Is there evidence of a difference in the food security status of graduated households compared with households remaining in the PSNP in the DFAP woredas?

c. Were there any variations or lessons observed in the different DFAP regions and implementation woredas?

3) Gender Equality and Empowerment

- To what extent have DFAPs contributed to gender equality and empowerment in terms of: access and control over resources; decision-making roles and opportunities; participation in community and social institutions; and freedom of speech and movement?
- What has been done to sustain the positive gender-related outcomes that are achieved by these programs? What are the lessons learned?

4) Program Management, Implementation, and Sustainability

- What are the key lessons learned in terms of:
 - a. Program management, coordination, and implementation;*
 - b. Sustainability of program outcomes, critical services, or conditions necessary to sustain and strengthen the outcomes?*

I.3 Methodology

The evaluation was a qualitative exercise. The methodology was designed to answer the questions given in the Scope of Work (listed above) through interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) at a scale and resolution that would be both comprehensive and meaningful. The original number of DFAP *woredas* varied between IPs. A qualitative evaluation, which, as in this case, seeks to compare performance between IPs requires a minimum sample size per IP in order to generate meaningful results.

Accordingly, a minimum number of three *woredas* was chosen. In the highland areas, the number of *kebeles* visited was eight in Tigray, four in Amhara, and six in Oromia/ Dire Dawa. (NB: Although some *woredas* in the latter areas are less elevated than those in Amhara and Tigray, the term “highlands” is used throughout this report to include the *woredas* in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and Dire Dawa, while “lowlands” denotes the more pastoral *woredas* of Borena).

The SCI DFAP was conducted in the lowlands. The evaluation could only be undertaken in the Borena Zone of Oromia as security conditions and logistics did not allow evaluation of activities in Somali Region. Both these areas are predominantly pastoral in terms of livelihoods and land use. There are also important differences in the design of this DFAP relative to the three others (hereafter referred to as the “highland” DFAPs), which required some modification to the focus and the approach of the evaluation.

The areas in Table 1 were visited during the meher harvest period in October and November 2016.

Table 1. Areas visited for DFAP evaluation

Region	Zone	Woreda	Kebele/Tabia
Tigray	Southern Tigray	Samre Saharte	Waza
			Finawa
		Raya Azebo	Ebo
	Eastern Tigray	Gulo Mekeda	Marta
		Hawzen	Frewoyni
			Debreselam
	Central Tigray	Kola Tembien	Bega Sheka
		Tanqua Abergele	Sheka Teli

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Region	Zone	Woreda	Kebele/Tabia
Amhara	Wag Hemra	Sekota	Hamusit
	North Wollo	Lasta	Shumsheha
			Bilbala
	South Gonder	Simada	Engudad
Oromia	East Hararghe	Meta	Haqabas
			Hawi Bilisuma
		Kersa	Kufazik
			Dhoke
	Borena	Yabello	Elwayi
		Arero	Hallona
		Dhas	Cholkassa
Dire Dawa		Dire Dawa	Adada
			Halla Bussa

In each *kebele/tabia* (*tabia* is the term, equivalent to *kebele*, used in Tigray Region), FGDs were held (one each) with the following groups: male beneficiaries, female beneficiaries, graduates (male and female together), and PDSBs (male and female together). Groups were stipulated to be between seven and ten respondents, but in some cases, more were present. In addition, key informant interviews (KII) were held with:

- *Kebele* Food Security Task Force (KFSTF)
- *Woreda* Food Security Task Force (WFSTF)
- *Woreda* Disaster Risk Management (DRM) staff
- Health Extension Workers (HEWs)
- Development Agents (DAs)
- Implementing Partner DFAP field agents

In addition, the evaluation team made observations of public works and case studies of individual beneficiaries. Interview guidelines were drawn up to elicit the information necessary to answer the evaluation questions from appropriate respondents (see Annex E). A mapping of evaluation questions onto focus group and key informant questionnaire questions was also undertaken to confirm that all aspects were covered, and a matrix was used as an aid in the compilation of the report.

The overall approach of the checklists drawn up for the highland DFAPs was followed in the lowlands DFAP, but with a number of changes. The principal changes were:

- The question of targeting clearly has increased importance in the pastoral area in connection with a) the definition of the chronically poor in a pastoral system characterized by high rainfall variability and b) the acceptability to communities of an exclusive targeting to the very poor, so these issues had an increased prominence compared to the generic/ highland checklists.
- The nature, efficacy, ownership, and sustainability of the community assets generated by the public works programs are particularly important and complex questions in pastoral areas, and their prominence was therefore increased vis-à-vis the generic/ highlands checklists.
- As the concept of Do No Harm has been promoted as a crosscutting issue in the design of this DFAP, certain questions on conflict were added to some checklists.
- Mainly to get independent views on the above three issues, and any other issues arising from the interaction of PSNP/DFAP design with pastoral livelihoods and culture, one additional FGD was carried out with traditional elders.

- A separate FGD for graduates and questions on graduation used in other FGDs were dropped as not relevant.
- Livelihood support activities were only implemented by SCI on a pilot basis from 2015 and were of a very different nature from those in highland areas. They were only carried out with youth. As a result, the highland checklist was not used, and the separate FGDs with youth were dropped.
- There were no seed distribution activities, so this topic was not included.
- There was no MCHN component, so this topic was not included.

A key aspect of the evaluation was the direct observational assessment of the activities that had been undertaken, taking note of the quality and sustainability of community works and activities, as well as their relevance to different sections of the community. A check sheet of questions was prepared, field tested by the entire team working together in the first *kebele* and subsequently used when assessing such interventions.

Qualitative responses were analyzed by a group discussion process, according to which each of the key questions raised in the original statement of work was discussed in turn by the entire evaluation team. A balanced response based upon all interviews and group discussions was agreed upon and regional differences noted where these were relevant. The draft balanced response to each question was circulated to all team members to ensure that it correctly captured their observations. This process was repeated for each of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations sections of the Evaluation Report.

Quantitative data were derived by IFPRI for a limited number of *woredas* assessed as part of an ongoing PSNP monitoring exercise every two years. These data were used to reinforce observations and conclusions when relevant. Unfortunately, however, it did not include all IPs. The data are presented as summarized tables in Annex I.

I.4 Limitations of the Evaluation

A qualitative performance evaluation will almost inevitably be subject to limitations. The most evident limitations are listed below, together with the measures taken to reduce their impact:

- Potential bias in the selection of the areas and projects to be assessed was avoided by asking the

woreda agricultural officers to select appropriate *kebeles*, and the community assets that were seen were assumed to be the most effective and assessed accordingly.

- It was recognized that there would be considerable variation between *kebeles* in terms of program intensity and livelihood diversification. To better gauge this variation and its impact, assessment teams specifically looked for “best and poorest” *kebeles*. Using government staff rather than NGO field agents also avoided selection bias.
- Within individual focus groups, when certain respondents tended to be dominant, they were asked to allow others to speak and pressure was applied upon the remaining group members to respond.
- Respondents (including some field agents) will not always know which interventions are parts of DFAP and which are derived from other programs, such as Graduation for Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development (GRAD) or Household Asset Building Program (HABP). Continual triangulation with field agents and/or project management was required in order to ensure that responses referred to DFAP interventions and not to other project activities. Reference to project documents was sometimes required to clarify ambiguous responses.
- Respondents tend to answer according to their context and company (in one meeting graduates stated that they sold food transfers; in another meeting with the KFSTF, 32 kms away and 20 minutes later, with some of the same people present, it was firmly denied that food transfers were ever sold). Responses have to be evaluated with regard to the status of those present, the subject matter, and the interaction between the two.
- Translation into local languages can distort questions and/or responses, especially when questions must be translated through three languages.⁴ To avoid this, all translators were graduate-level agriculturalists who had participated in FGDs before and had been briefed on the importance of direct translation without their own embellishment of responses.
- The timing of the evaluation, which took place after some contractors had left the field, meant that some key informants were no longer available for interview. This was true for both project and

⁴ In some instances, questions were first translated from English into Amharic and subsequently into Tigrigna or Oromifa—the language of the respondents—before the answers could be translated back.

government staff. DAs and HEWs in particular were often new to the *kebeles* and not always able to respond to questions. Unfortunately, the evaluation also coincided with the harvest time, and some respondents were unwilling to participate in focus groups, or when they did come could only stay for a limited time before returning to the fields.

- Attribution of outcomes to specific activities under the DFAP was sometimes difficult, not only because of interactions between these activities but also because of the integration of these programs with other interventions outside of DFAP. For example, extensive soil and water conservation activities were carried out in some areas by other programs prior to DFAP implementation. Thus, outcomes that appeared to be due to the more-recent DFAP interventions were sometimes also dependent upon previous activities. Particular care was taken to assess the history of community works, including not only soil and water conservation works but also other watershed developments, including dams and canals.
- Widespread unrest and the consequent imposition of a national state of emergency reduced survey coverage in Oromia Region. In particular, it was not possible to visit the *woredas* of Dodota and Melka Bello as originally planned. This limited the scope of the evaluation insofar as the CRS DFAP was concerned.

Despite these limitations, the evaluation team is confident that it was able to obtain an accurate and sensitive determination of the circumstances and issues prevailing in each DFAP. By the completion of the fieldwork, team members consistently reported that the responses had become quite predictable, suggesting that adequate coverage and understanding had indeed been obtained.

2. FINDINGS

2.1 Design and Effectiveness

The four DFAPs share a common goal, that of improving food security amongst target populations. Individually, they focus on:

- CRS: CFI HHs in seven *woredas* of Ethiopia to have reduced food insecurity;
- FH/E: Food security status for all members of food-insecure households (in 9 *woredas* of Amhara Region) improved;
- REST: Food insecurity of chronically food-insecure households sustainably reduced;
- SCI: Chronic food insecurity of 112,688 PSNP beneficiaries in seven *woredas* of Somali and Oromia Regional States reduced.⁵

The four DFAP programs are embedded within the framework of the PSNP and therefore follow the key design precepts of this program, namely:

- a) There would be a continual decline in beneficiary numbers from the levels assessed by government at the conclusion of the previous program in 2009/10;
- b) Once graduated, beneficiaries would not be readmitted to the PSNP;
- c) Shocks would be accommodated on a temporary basis through the use of 5% and 15% annual contingency resources.

A further critical aspect of the PSNP design, clearly articulated within the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), is the targeted reduction of beneficiaries in highland areas from 5.0 million in 2011/12⁶ to 1.3 million

in 2014/15; i.e., the anticipated graduation of 3.7 million beneficiaries at a rate of 28% per year.⁷ Anticipated annual graduation rates expressed in the DFAP Pipeline and Resource Estimate Proposals (PREPs) were substantially more conservative than those of the PSNP: 10% (CRS), 6.5% (FH/E), 5% (REST), and 2% (SCI).

2.1.1 How well did DFAP food transfers and livelihood support activities protect or reduce distress sales of household assets, and/or facilitate household asset creation?

In the highland areas, almost invariably beneficiary focus group participants and key informants involved in the implementation of PSNP stated that the food transfers were not enough,⁸ but equally invariably their subsequent remarks were more nuanced. Four factors were important:

1. The size of the household;
2. The endogenous capacity of the household to feed itself;
3. Exogenous factors affecting production capacity (drought, disease, etc.).
4. Access to distribution points and the cost of transport of food to homes from distribution points.

Larger households reported that under PSNP3 they had often received transfers according to the number of household members.⁹ They noted that under PSNP4 they were now restricted to five transfers per household and complained vigorously that this would not meet their needs.¹⁰ Smaller households did not face this restriction.¹¹ PDSBs did not originally receive year-round transfers under PSNP3 but will do so under PSNP4. This new arrangement is better suited to the productive capacity of the poorest (such as PDSBs), but it was widely reported

⁵ This was the original Goal, in the event the project was implemented in seven *woredas*.

⁶ GTP 2010/11 Annual Report shows that from an initial total of 5.1 million highland beneficiaries, 150,000 graduated in the first year of PSNP3, leaving just under 5.0 million at the start of 2011/12.

⁷ In the final analysis, GoE reported that they had graduated 3.5 million beneficiaries under PSNP3, an average annual graduate rate of slightly over 25%.

⁸ E.g., in Samre Saharte, Raya Azebo, Gulo Mekeda, Hawzen, Tanqua Abergele, Simada, Lasta, Sekota, Haqabas *kebele* (PDSB focus group), and Hawi Bilisuma *kebele* (women's focus group) in Meta, as well as Dire Dawa PSNP Technical Committee.

⁹ Men FGDs at Bilbala *kebele* in Lasta, Ebo in Raya Azebo, and Hamusit in Sekota.

¹⁰ Youth and men FGDs at Engudad *kebele* in Simada; men and KFSTF at Haqabas *kebele*, Meta *woreda*.

¹¹ Women's focus group, Dire Dawa.

that some PDSBs have rights to land and would share those rights with others in exchange for a proportion of the production (varying between 30% and 50%).¹² Thus, some PDSBs would in fact require less than 12 months' support since they had at least some productive capacity. In such instances, they would be able to sell a proportion of their transfers or their own production in order to buy other food or assets. However, in some areas (e.g., Haqabas *kebele* in Meta), the transfer was not enough, and even with their own production PDSBs reported that they were food insecure for part of the year.

In some areas, a high proportion of DFAP beneficiaries was landless youth¹³ who lacked regular asset-based productive capacity and were obliged to subsist from casual labor or off-farm IGAs.¹⁴ Their food gap could be as much as 12 months according to the availability of other sources of income. For those in the most extreme situation, the DFAP transfers were clearly inadequate. Other beneficiaries with access to at least some land would have a food gap that might be as much as nine months, but this could be less depending upon the extent of their production. The assumption under DFAP (in alignment with the PSNP guidelines) was that it would be no more than six months, but this was not always the case.¹⁵ It was often reported that PSNP transfers alone are not sufficient to address challenges faced by youth. As indicated in Oromia, Meta *woreda*, members of the youth group are seeking livelihood support initiatives.

The DFAP transfer programs assumed that circumstances would be generally favorable to production so that food gaps would not increase (or so that if they did, they could be met from contingency resources). In practice, while this was indeed the case in some of the DFAP *woredas* throughout

the initial period from October 2011 to October 2015,¹⁶ the drought during the 2015 *meher* season resulted in severely diminished production and extended food gaps in almost all highland DFAP *woredas*.¹⁷ Even before the start of PSNP distribution in 2015, some households had already sold their assets to cope with food shortages.¹⁸

Summary findings on asset protection in the highlands:

- For those areas and seasons in which productivity had been adequate, DFAP transfers did facilitate asset protection and even a degree of asset accumulation amongst the better-endowed beneficiaries. Some households reported, "We ate our own production and sold the transfers to buy assets."¹⁹
- For those households with more than five members, transfers were not always adequate to protect assets,²⁰ and in some areas members of CFI households with more than five members had migrated to find work.²¹
- For those non-PDSB households that have limited productive asset capacity (i.e., those who are almost or completely landless or have few or no livestock or any means of support other than their own labor), the transfers have not been enough. Some have sold assets, while others have migrated.²² In the last year, even households with productive capacity have not been able to produce six months' worth of food. The transfers have not met the food gap, and there has been asset depletion, depending upon the extent to which reserves have been accumulated in previous years.²³ Better-off households have been able to get by, but not all DFAP households have been able to do so.

¹² Reported by the ORDA/FH/E *Woreda* Manager in Lasta.

¹³ Youth FGD at Shumsheha in Lasta *woreda* and Hamusit *kebele* in Sekota *woreda*.

¹⁴ This was observed in Dire Dawa and elsewhere. The proportion varied from about 10% to almost all non-PDSB beneficiary households (as at Engudad in Simada). Youth in Oromia (Meta *woreda*) said that, "We had no specific benefit so far, but in the future we have a plan to work on fattening of livestock and beekeeping using the conserved hills."

¹⁵ Men, PDSBs, and youth at Finawa in Samre Saharte. Also in Hawzen, Sekota, Lasta, and Simada.

¹⁶ Some *woredas* in Amhara and Tigray experienced significant crop failures during these years.

¹⁷ Women and youth FGD as well as KFSTFs at Shumsheha and Bilbala in Lasta *woreda* and Hamusit in Sekota *woreda*, also Meta *woreda*, Hawi Bilisuma *kebele*.

¹⁸ E.g. in Oromia, Meta *woreda*, Haqabas *kebele*, the KSTF reported such sales.

¹⁹ Raya Azebo, Ebo *kebele*: men FGD; also Hawzen, Debreselem *kebele*: graduate FGD.

²⁰ Youth and men at Engudad in Simada; also Bilbala in Lasta.

²¹ PDSB focus groups in Engudad, Simada, and Shumsheha, Lasta. Bahir Dar KII, ORDA Regional Manager. Engudad, Simada, graduate FGD. PDSB FGD at Ebo *kebele* in Raya Azebo *woreda*.

²² Simada, Engudad, youth and graduate FGD.

²³ Youth, women, and KFSTFs in Sekota, Lasta, and Simada *woredas* in Amhara Region.

2. FINDINGS

- In all highland areas, grain was generally preferred over cash. Respondents noted that the grain was of better quality than that available locally, and it could be sold for more than the cash transfer. (implying that the cash transfer was not adequate to buy an equivalent amount of grain). Nevertheless, this general preference was nuanced. In some areas, cash was preferred in the first months of the year when grain prices were low. Other respondents suggested that transfers of grain and cash should alternate. There were no respondents, however, who indicated a preference for cash when they had been receiving food before.²⁴
- Most respondents did not consider the timeliness of transfers to be an issue, although it was reported to be not yet 100%. The introduction of PSNP4 had resulted in delays in some cases,²⁵ but there were no reports of asset sales as a result of delays. Beneficiaries generally borrowed to bridge any gaps,²⁶ suggesting that they had confidence in the system. The predictability of transfers for those households included in the DFAPs was thus perceived to be adequate, even if imperfect. (By contrast, the predictability of remaining within the DFAP from one year to the next was much lower for many households, and it is this aspect of predictability that appeared to be of greater concern than that associated with the timeliness of individual transfers.)
- Due to limited program resource allocation, compared to the number of CFI households within target *kebeles*, there are large number of households excluded from PSNP.²⁷

In the lowland DFAPs, the results differed. In the pastoral context, the significant household assets that people aim to build up are more or less limited to livestock, which they speak of as a measure of prosperity and which can be sold to cope with crises. Selection of DFAP beneficiaries, it is universally agreed, focused on households with no or very limited livestock. Some informants used the Oromifa term

qollee to refer to such people: the team was told it literally means those without livestock: “not even one chicken.” Although it became clear that the term was not used literally, there was general agreement that the bulk of beneficiaries had sheep and/or goats only, and the absolute maximum livestock wealth of beneficiary households was five cattle. This figure is itself well below the indigenous Borena perception reported by PARIMA (Pastoral Risk Management Project) research²⁸ that 10–15 cattle per household is a threshold value below which households are regarded as very poor, unlikely to be able to restore themselves to an independent herding livelihood, and unlikely to benefit from indigenous livestock loan institutions.

There was general agreement, from beneficiaries and from key informants, that DFAP food transfers had allowed households to *protect assets* by avoiding distress sales of their livestock. In some interviews, this was expressed negatively in such terms as “If the project ends, the poor will go into further destitution, those with fewer animals will start selling.”²⁹ The general consensus in Arero was that household asset levels were remaining static, though some were more positive. There was more qualified agreement that transfers had enabled households to *increase* their assets. Dhas female beneficiaries reported that previously they had been forced to sell livestock at unfavorable rates to buy cereals, which with DFAP transfers they no longer needed to do. Dhas male beneficiaries reported that over 80% of the community (which presumably includes some project beneficiaries) had been able to increase livestock numbers over the last few years, and prevention of distress sales had played a part in this. In Yabello, one vocal female beneficiary talked of her holdings going from one heifer to ten goats, though this community stressed the importance of hard work (in occupations like selling tea at local markets) in escaping destitution as much as they did DFAP transfers. Male beneficiaries in Yabello also felt livestock numbers had increased and mentioned other assets people were acquiring (mattresses, wooden doors for houses, even small solar panels), though this was also attributed to better harvests of the cereal crop *teff* in recent years.

²⁴ E.g., women’s focus group responses in Dire Dawa, Zuria, Meta *woreda*, Haqabas and Hawi Bilisuma *kebeles*.

²⁵ Women FGD in Hamusit in Sekota; Shumsheha and Bilbala *kebeles* in Lasta *woreda*.

²⁶ Widely reported across all highland areas including by Women FGD in Ebo *tabia*, Raya Azebo; Hamusit *kebele* in Sekota; Shumsheha and Bilbala *kebeles* in Lasta; also in Meta, Kersa and Dire Dawa.

²⁷ Reported by Meta *woreda*, Haqabas *kebele* FSTF, but common to all areas, including Dire Dawa.

²⁸ P. Santos and C. Barrett, 2011, Persistent Poverty and Informal Credit, *Journal of Development Economics* 96 (2): 337–347.

²⁹ Arero male beneficiaries.

2.1.2 What outcomes have the DFAPs achieved in the different program components: food security, livelihoods, WASH, MCHN, and other components (gender, capacity development)?

Food security—outcomes

The model upon which the PSNP and DFAPs have been based assumes that under these programs, beneficiaries will move towards *food sufficiency* (i.e., having enough food for survival), and that, upon graduation from the safety net, they will progress further under the HABP or similar programs to *food security*—a state in which they can reliably feed themselves despite modest shocks.

Under the DFAPs, the *food sufficiency* of a substantial proportion of the beneficiaries has been increased. Those who have benefitted most have been those beneficiaries in the smaller households who have been able to receive full family targeting over the duration of the program. In practice, this was up to 49% of the original caseload in Tigray, 73% of those in Amhara, and 68% of those in Oromia/Dire Dawa.³⁰ Many of those who graduated early in the programs experienced little subsequent increase in food sufficiency.³¹ In some cases, early graduates experienced reduced food sufficiency but were allowed back into PSNP4 when retargeting took place³² as of 2016. Prior to that, some graduates and other CFI households were also able to benefit from contingency resources as Transitory Beneficiaries.³³ Nevertheless, many forced graduates continue to be excluded from PSNP4 in some areas, resulting in extended food insecurity for these households.

In terms of *food gap*, most households reported a reduction, but not one that was comparable to the six months of transfers that had been provided.³⁴ To some extent, the difference might reflect the cash element of the programs, which was invariably reported to be inadequate to purchase the amounts of food provided at other times. It

is also possible, however, that the observed discrepancy (between reported 4–5 months' reductions in food gap and actual transfers over six months) reflected inadequate/discontinued full family targeting as well as some redistribution of food amongst a wider needy community than was actually in receipt of assistance.³⁵ In the case of Oromia and Dire Dawa premature graduation, low purchasing power of cash payments and partial family targeting were the main factors reportedly exacerbating food gaps.

Although all households reported a reduction in food insecurity as a result of food transfers, most also reported that they still experienced a food gap. This varied considerably between agroecological zones; e.g., in Meta, Hawi Bilisuma *kebele* the women's focus group reported that the food gap could be up to six months in bad years and 3–4 months in good years. The food gap varied both by demographics and with geography. Notably, landless youth reported larger food gaps due to their inability to produce their own food, while in Meta *woreda* in Oromia, and in Dire Dawa it was reported that even for those with access to land, the dry conditions restricted production. Family size in these two areas is large, so the food gaps reported are generally larger than elsewhere. It was observed that the fixed program of six monthly transfers was not universally appropriate and that limited food resources could be used more effectively if the program could be varied according to ecological zones,³⁶ the availability of work, population density, etc.

In terms of *dietary diversity*, PDSBs most often reported that their diets had increased from one food group to three with the inclusion of pulses and oil in the transfer;³⁷ they were unhappy that oil was no longer included in the ration. Other beneficiaries reported that sale or exchange of some part of the transfers had allowed them to obtain other food groups.³⁸ Overall, it was evident in all regions that the transfers had resulted in an increase in dietary

³⁰ Data compiled from IP PREPs and annual reports.

³¹ FSTF and graduate FGD at Engudad *kebele* in Simada *woreda*; graduate FGD in Debreselam *tabia*, Hawzen *woreda*.

³² It was reported that in some *woredas* in Tigray and Oromia (Samre Saharte, Tanqua Abergele, Gulo Mekeda, Meta, Kersa, as well as Dire Dawa), graduates from PSNP3 were not allowed to be retargeted into PSNP4. Only in a few areas (Simada, Lasta, Hawzen) was it reported that this retargeting of graduates had occurred.

³³ Raya Azebo, Tanqua Abergele, Sekota, Lasta, and Simada *woredas* in Amhara and Tigray, Dire Dawa and Meta (Oromia).

³⁴ E.g., graduates, youth, and men at Ebo *kebele* in Raya Azebo.

³⁵ E.g., at Finawa in Samre Saharte or Hamusit in Sekota.

³⁶ As has been done in Tigray.

³⁷ Samre Saharte, Waza *kebele*: PDSB FGD, also PDSB FGD, Kersa and Meta *woredas* of Oromia and Dire Dawa Administration.

³⁸ Men and women FGD in Simada, Sekota, Lasta, Raya Azebo, Hawzen, Samre Saharte, Kola Tembien, and Tanqua Abergele *woredas* in Amhara and Tigray Regions.

diversity, although, as might be expected, the increase was small and consistently less than the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-recommended level of five food groups.³⁹

It was found that not all CFI households received transfers under the DFAPs for one of two reasons. Either they were not originally targeted as beneficiaries despite being chronically food insecure because the regionally-specified targeting process had been quota based and the quota was not adequate to cover all those in need in the *kebele*, or because they had been prematurely graduated from the DFAPs, most frequently as a result again of the application of quotas. It was not possible to quantify the proportion of households falling into this category, but it was regularly reported in most of the *kebeles* visited.⁴⁰

Livelihood development activities—outcomes

The initial DFAP designs did not include a major livelihood development component. It was expected that livelihood development activities would be mainly supported by HABP or GRAD and that the DFAPs would link with these programs. In practice, however, *woreda* FSTFs and DFAP field staff reported that resources for the implementation of HABP were sparse and that in the majority of areas visited, there was little evidence of the program on the ground. In particular, there were widespread complaints of the limited availability of financing for the development of income-generating activities—an issue that had been expected to be addressed under HABP. Consequently, linkages between the DFAPs and HABP were not well developed, since there was only limited HABP infrastructure or activities for the DFAPs to link with. As far as most beneficiaries were concerned, the distinction between the DFAPs and HABP/GRAD was blurred, and in some cases (especially in Tigray, but observed to a lesser extent in all regions), the DFAP programs had become the *de facto* supporters of livelihood development.

Livelihood support activities have promoted asset development through the direct provision of productive assets, either as grants and/or loans (e.g., in Amhara and Oromia), or as loans (in Tigray). Assets include the

provision of forage, fruit, and vegetable production inputs, poultry, and beehives. In other cases, training activities have promoted business capacity with the intention of increasing household incomes and the eventual purchase of assets, although these have been limited in extent and duration. The respondents who noted they had been able to develop small businesses included small-scale irrigated vegetable producers, forage producers from gully areas and area closures, poultry producers, backyard gardeners, and beekeepers. In addition, savings/self-help group members reported that they had taken credit from their groups to undertake petty trade and earn additional income. In almost all of these cases, it was noted that the additional income was small and generally used for day-to-day expenditures.⁴¹ Only rarely were the amounts earned sufficient to purchase assets. Irrigated vegetable production appeared to be the most profitable livelihood support. In some cases, it had empowered farmers to purchase small pumps.⁴²

It was evident that considerable efforts had been made by the DFAP IPs to provide livelihood support, but in most cases their resources were limited to a small number of beneficiaries, so their impacts were local rather than broad-based. Overall, livelihood supports have contributed more to the smoothing of consumption than to any significant increase in assets.⁴³ Specific examples were as follows:

Vegetable production—usually on a small scale (i.e., backyard or even keyhole gardening)—was achieving limited outcomes in the *kebeles* visited. Respondents noted that it was not practical to maintain gardens all the year round due to a shortage of water in the dry season, but in those places where they were being tended regularly, backyard gardens were contributing to dietary diversity. The women respondents noted that they and their children did indeed consume the vegetables that they had produced. In some cases, vegetable production exceeded household needs, and the excess was being sold to augment household income.

Small-scale irrigation—mainly of vegetables, but also of cereal crops during the rainy season—clearly had a major impact on household income and increased both resilience

³⁹ USDA food group recommendations are available at www.healthyeating.org/Health-Wellness-Providers/Nutrition.../MyPlate.aspx.

⁴⁰ This was most marked in Simada and other *woredas* in Amhara, where a large proportion of early graduates had rapidly lost food sufficiency (if indeed they had ever achieved it). It was also widely reported by communities and KFSTFs in Meta and Kersa in Oromia and in Dire Dawa.

⁴¹ DFAP agents KIIs in Samre Saharte, Raya Azebo, Hawzen, Sekota, Lasta, Simada; also reported in Meta and Dire Dawa.

⁴² Hawzen, Frewoyini *kebele*, field observation.

⁴³ E.g., womens' focus groups in Haqabas and Hawi Bilisuma *kebeles*, Meta *woreda*.



Child whose school costs were met in part by the keyhole garden in the foreground.

and food security. In some cases, yields had tripled and in other cases reportedly increased ten-fold (especially if three crops were produced each year). In most cases, DFAP beneficiaries who were able to access small-scale irrigation were able to graduate quickly, and with a high degree of food security and resilience, although the risk of market-related shocks was not well addressed in any of the *kebeles* visited. A special case of small-scale irrigation was seen in both Amhara and Tigray, where hillside terraces and associated irrigation infrastructure had been constructed and small plots had been allocated to landless youth. The results of this labor-intensive exercise were impressive, and, provided the water supplies were consistent, such plots could be expected to make a substantial difference to the food security of the households that depended on them.

Sheep and goat rearing/fattening (usually associated with HABP) was one of the most popular livelihoods to be adopted by potential graduates. In some cases, this extended to cattle fattening also. In practice, the DFAP component of this livelihood was often restricted to training in the initial business plan and assistance in

obtaining financing. Credit was provided under the HABP but was often a constraint. It was also observed that the very popularity of the enterprise tended to reduce its profitability since so many households took loans and bought sheep or goats at the same time, thus pushing up the purchase price; and sold them at the same time, thus depressing the sale price. Moreover, the limited availability of veterinary services and medicines meant that in the event of disease (such as an outbreak of *pasteurella*), it was possible to incur severe losses.⁴⁴ Finally, it was also reported that the availability of forage could be a constraint to sheep and goat production.⁴⁵

Poultry production was enthusiastically taken up by a limited number of mothers who were given birds, primarily as a source of animal protein for young children. In general, the number of birds (and the capacities of households to keep them) was too small to make a difference in terms of income or food security, but it was claimed by DFAP staff and beneficiaries that the nutrition of young children had improved.

⁴⁴ Men FGD in Engudad, Simada *woreda* and Nebar Hadnet *tabia* in Samre Sehart *woreda*.

⁴⁵ Graduate FGD in Ebo, Raya Azebo.

Forage production from area closures and reclaimed gully areas developed as a livelihood as a side effect of the public works. The rights to develop and maintain cut and carry forage production enterprises on these areas have been generally given as a priority to the landless youth. The income derived from the sale of forage has augmented other income streams and contributed to resilience, but amounts appear to be small. One group of 14 youth reported revenues of Eth Birr 20,000 in a year; i.e., Eth Birr 1,425 per person.

Fruit and timber production were two other activities carried out on reclaimed lands, again mainly by landless youth. It was too early to see any benefits from the timber production or indeed from most of the fruit trees, although some of the papaya plants provided to youth in Amhara were already bearing fruit and providing a contribution to income.

Apiculture was observed to provide a significant increase in household income, especially in Tigray (although in some parts of Amhara it had failed, reportedly because the winds were too strong). Youths who had been assisted to form cooperatives and who had been provided with beehives were earning significant revenues and were looking to expand into processing, but they lacked financing. This livelihood support activity required initial investment and was not common under the DFAPs.

Other livelihood support implemented under the DFAPs included sand and stone selling (i.e., the setting up of youth associations to sell sand and stones from river beds, mainly to commercial builders) and the construction and sale of fuel-efficient stoves. In both cases, there appeared to be increased income from these activities, but no analyses had been conducted to determine whether or not they represented the best use of the labor resources that they employed.

Overall outcomes of livelihood activities were limited by the scope of the interventions. Nevertheless, where beneficiaries had been targeted for one or more forms of livelihood support there was self-reported evidence of improved nutrition and of improved quality of life, including being able to keep young children at home rather than placing them under the care of better-off households, as well as the capacity to afford school expenses and to cope with minor crises (such as illness or accident). These

beneficial aspects were generally corroborated by IP staff, but appeared to be primarily due to the transfers more than any other intervention.

WASH and MCHN—outcomes

In most of the programs, the WASH and MCHN interventions were based around messaging, with some supported through appropriate public works. For both, the delivery of messages appeared to have strong positive outcomes in terms of knowledge and understanding, although these were not always well reflected in actual behavior change.⁴⁶ WASH/MCHN messaging had been delivered through a variety of channels (e.g., drama, coffee ceremony,⁴⁷ group savings/self-help groups), especially in Amhara and Oromia/Dire Dawa.

Exclusive breast-feeding (EBF) and appropriate complementary feeding of infants were now understood and increasingly practiced, although the limited data available from only one IP suggested that progress had been erratic, and it would take time to overcome traditional attitudes. A specific positive MCHN outcome that was reported in a number of *kebeles* was the greater numbers of women who were giving birth at health centers as a result of improved road access, as were the women's post-delivery rest rooms, both constructed under the community works programs. These public works were often given a low priority by communities in the initial selection process, but where they had been constructed, benefits were regularly reported.⁴⁸

WASH outcomes were constrained by limited infrastructure, particularly the availability of water for sanitation. Beneficiaries had in some cases reached the point of cynicism; in one instance, they told the evaluation team that the water containers outside latrines had been filled for the occasion. Where spring-capture or dam projects had been implemented or water pumps installed, there was a definite increase in WASH implementation capacity. This was observed in Amhara and Oromia and to a lesser extent in Tigray and Borena Zone.

There was little evidence of regular information exchange between GoE health authorities and the DFAPs on MCHN and WASH, and the limited quantitative data collected by the DFAPs themselves were too inconsistent to draw sound conclusions. While subjective assessments of beneficiaries and DFAP agents were generally positive,

⁴⁶ Despite positive responses from FGDs and HEWs in Bilbala *kebele*, Lasta *woreda*, open defecation was still observed around the health center, where the newly constructed communal latrines lacked water, while HEWs in Meta, Hawi Bilisuma *kebele* observed mothers who failed to prepare a diversified diet for under-two children using locally available food during their home-to-home visit.

⁴⁷ A traditional Ethiopian practice in which coffee is prepared and served exclusively by women.

⁴⁸ This response was particularly prevalent in Amhara (e.g., Sekota and Lasta) and in Oromia.

HEWs tended to be more realistic/pragmatic, and the evaluation team was not able to discern consistent positive change from the responses given in any region.

Gender—outcomes

See section 2.3 below.

Capacity development—outcomes

- Trainings sometimes covered subjects that trainees had already been taught. This was especially the case for DAs who had recently graduated and were well versed in some of the subjects⁴⁹ (especially watershed development) since this had been well covered in university courses.
- Training in some subjects was too theoretical and general.⁵⁰ It was reported by DAs in Lasta and Simada that it did not relate to specific conditions at the *kebele* level.
- Training sessions were too short and numbers of trainees per session were too large for trainees to be able to absorb all of the material.
- Turnover of staff meant that in a number of *woredas*, those who had been trained had left and were unable to provide further cascading of trainings to *kebeles* or communities. This was observed across all highland areas.
- Training budgets were reported as limited across all highland areas, meaning that when staff turnover occurred, it was often not possible to undertake repeat trainings in order to fill the gaps.
- GoE, rather than DFAP staff, selected trainees. This sometimes resulted in the selection of trainees for reasons other than aptitude. In some cases, it was reported that training was seen as a perk (as a result of the attached *per diem*), and training opportunities were distributed equitably amongst staff. In others, training opportunities were restricted to senior staff, who considered them to be a perk of their position.
- As a result of such irregularities, some staff were reportedly unable to undertake the cascading of the lessons that they had learned before they had embarked upon the next training session.

At the same time, there were also many positive responses:

- It was regularly reported across all highland areas that DFAP trainings were more focused and more useful than GoE training sessions.
- Training in the PSNP PIM was regarded as very important, and the DFAP courses in this area were particularly appreciated in all highland areas. One *woreda* official remarked that GoE regulations with regard to the PSNP were constantly changing and that it was important to be aware of the latest developments. DFAP training was seen as the best way of keeping abreast of the situation.
- At the WFSTF level, training in commodity management was regarded as useful, although DRM officers gave very mixed responses regarding their training. Some considered it useful, but others appeared to find no value in it since they knew the subject well enough already. Some could not remember it at all.

Training in climate change was widely appreciated by those who had taken part in the course. While none could indicate how it might be of significance to their work, they generally indicated that the training had been very interesting and had contributed to their professional development.

Overall, it was found that cascading training was effective in developing capacity at *woreda* and *kebele* level to a limited extent, but was inefficient in three main areas:

- Selection of trainees;
- Limited response capacity in the event of high levels of staff turnover;
- The quality of training received (and passed on to *kebele* or community members) was variable and rarely assessed.

One specific aspect of capacity building was the enhancement climate awareness. Beyond the impact of the specific climate change training sessions for individual DRM officers, such enhancement was found to have been minimal. The subject appears to be of little perceived relevance to either the IPs⁵¹ or the beneficiaries. The bemused responses of DRM staff when asked to describe the impact of improved climate information reinforced the

⁴⁹ Specific reference was made to erosion control measures, bund and deep trench construction, afforestation, area closure, fruit and vegetable production, and reservoir siting and protection.

⁵⁰ HEWs in Meta, Kersa, and Dire Dawa.

⁵¹ Despite the fact that references to “climate” occur 34 times in the original REST DFAP proposal, subsequent annual reports contain only 4 references to the subject (twice in 2013 and twice in 2014). Climate is not mentioned in either the 2012 or the 2015 annual reports.

perception that at the grassroots level, enhanced awareness of climate change has not been a significant component of capacity-building measures.

Positive capacity development outcomes from the DFAPs were reported at both community and *kebele* and *woreda* levels. At the community level, farmers in some areas had mastered the art of hillside and on-farm terracing⁵² and were confident that they could construct their own soil/water conservation structures in the future. KFSTF and WFSTF members indicated that they had developed infrastructural expertise as a result of DFAP training as well as commodity management skills and improved knowledge and understanding of the PSNP PIM in particular. Positive responses also came from respondents who had learned by doing, without specific workshops or training sessions. Skeptical community members had been taken by the IP from Amhara to Tigray to see the benefits of the watershed development approach.⁵³ Once they had experienced the techniques at first-hand, they became enthusiastic supporters of the concept and had dramatically enhanced the productive capacity of their local watersheds through the introduction of an integrated watershed management approach.

DRM staff on the WFSTFs reported that the training they had received in drought cycle management had been especially useful in the 2015/16 drought and had contributed to their effective response, and increased their awareness of factors affecting climate change. The course was widely reported as having contributed to professional growth: “This was something that we did not know before.” It was observed, however, that the training lacked local context since a single module was provided for all officers within the region, irrespective of the agroecological zone that they might serve.⁵⁴

In both Oromia and Tigray, the DFAPs had conducted HEW training programs. The HEWs themselves reported that the training had improved their knowledge and skill. Beneficiaries reported improved services from the health post and were adamant that the difference was associated with the DFAP.⁵⁵ In Amhara, HEW capacity had been increased through the provision of facilitators and animators who supported community conversation groups and helped to spread the same health and sanitation messaging. HEWs reported that this had reduced their workload and allowed more households to be reached. Overall, it was evident that the DFAPs had increased local authority and service

capacity through trainings and other mechanisms but that the impact of the DFAP trainings was continually eroded by the high rates of GoE staff turnover.

Outcomes specific to the pastoral areas DFAP

Discussions of food security in Borena took place in the context of considerable concern about the new policy imposed from early 2016, which limits transfers to five beneficiaries per household. This was raised at an early stage of most interviews and meant that subsequent questions on food security were answered with the implicit or explicit caveat that food security had not been achieved for many households that are larger than that threshold. With that caveat, the overall finding from all three *woredas* was that the level of food security *during the transfer period of each year* has improved and that this is attributable to the DFAP. This was stated most strongly by Dhas male and female beneficiaries and least strongly by Arero male beneficiaries, who saw little improvement from the DFAP and spoke of being at a level of subsistence only. They also spoke of being dependent on rains even during the transfer period.

In all three *woredas*, male and female beneficiaries expressed concern about the remainder of the year (“Now the problem is July to December,” Dhas male beneficiaries said). Yabello beneficiaries were more positive about year-round food security, especially as more of them are engaged in cropping, but they were clear that this also depends on favorable rainfall, as they feel they have experienced in the last four years, but which they fear may not come this year. Male beneficiaries in Dhas and female beneficiaries in Yabello both mentioned that improved food security attributable to the DFAP has improved child nutrition and therefore school attendance: “A child with a starved stomach cannot go to school.” Some lessening of illnesses amongst children was also reported. There were also positive reports about dietary changes. In Yabello, male beneficiaries were positive about the switch away from coarse ground maize, but attribution is difficult here, as there also appears to have been a shift towards cultivating the cereal crop *teff*.

The livelihoods component in the pastoral areas DFAP was introduced at a late stage as a relatively small pilot, with a more restricted view of its objectives than in other DFAPs. The component, launched in October 2015, was designed to provide either training or a monetary grant to get 3,000 youth into non-pastoral employment.⁵⁶ In Borena Zone,

⁵² Shumsheha farm visit.

⁵³ Shumsheha field observations.

⁵⁴ This tended to reinforce the criticism voiced elsewhere that such trainings were too theoretical.

⁵⁵ E.g., HEW interview: Samre Saharte *woreda*, Waza *kebele*.

⁵⁶ There was also a small literacy and basic numeracy component, but this appears to have had little impact.

this operated in Yabello and Arero *woredas*. Seventy-five percent of beneficiaries were drawn from DFAP beneficiary households. Overall, satisfaction of beneficiaries with the component was low, for reasons discussed below.

There are no formalized WASH or MCHN components in the Borena DFAP.

In the lowlands, the capacity-building of community and government was in logframe terms an Intermediate Result of the DFAP and was implemented in practice with a wide range of beneficiaries, including women, school girls and boys, men, user committees, community elders, customary institution leaders, and KFSTF and WFSTF members.

Training took place on a great variety of topics, including:

- Program orientation and formal training on PIM procedures, M&E, etc. for FSTF members;
- Program management, planning, implementation, and monitoring and follow-up strategies training sessions for both communities and government staff;
- Technical training on natural resource management in connection with public works given to communities and DAs and at *woreda* level;
- Do No Harm, conflict sensitivity, and community management strategy training;
- Some DFAP contribution to training and capacity-building on community-based early warning, though this was mainly a Joint Emergency Operations Program (JEOP) responsibility in Borena;
- Experience-sharing visits between *kebeles* within the zone on implementation, access, management of natural resources, particular technologies (especially *birkas*), and public services;
- Awareness creation with regards to program objectives and compliance with donor requirements, rights and obligations of clients, transfer entitlement, gender issues, etc.;
- Training of community members, DAs, extension workers, and FSTF members on the PIM guidelines, and their engagement in needs assessment and selection of beneficiaries. This was done at different levels. Formal and informal modes of capacity building were employed. SCI staff, *woreda* technical teams, and DAs carried out capacity building;

- On-the-job training for community public works participants on technical skills, particularly on bush thinning techniques;
- Gender-related training promoting equitable access for women, men, girls, and boys to food of sufficient quantity and quality; promoting equitable access and use of communal assets and public services; and empowering women through provision of literacy classes, establishment of mother-to-mother discussion groups to improve their decision-making role, campaigns in schools to promote girls' education, establishment of gender clubs at school, and community sensitization on gender equality.

2.1.3 How are the quality, frequency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the livelihoods, WASH, and MCHN services/components perceived by the community?

Livelihood support perceptions—highlands

In the communities visited, the perception of the DFAPs was almost exclusively focused upon public works/community assets, rather than livelihood support activities. When questioned, a limited number of respondents were able to comment on livelihood support activities. Communities perceived the quality of tangible assets provided to support livelihoods (hoes, watering cans, poultry, vegetable seeds, etc.) positively. Only rarely was any criticism voiced (compost culture in Amhara was not seen to have any benefit, rope and washer pumps in Tigray were not considered appropriate).

A frequently voiced criticism was that the availability of financing was extremely limited, thereby reducing the effectiveness of many livelihood activities to increase incomes substantially. In some cases (e.g., in Tigray), a very limited amount of financing was actually made available through the DFAP, but in general the DFAP's role was to facilitate access to financing from Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs) and Rural Savings and Credit Cooperatives (RuSACCOs). In some instances, especially in Tigray,⁵⁷ this was effective, but the overall perception was that financing was a critical constraint that reduced the effectiveness of other livelihood support interventions.

The savings/self-help groups were generally perceived to have been effective interventions. Training in their formation was reported to have been adequate, and failure rates were also reportedly low. The groups made small amounts of financing available to members for petty trade, but the amounts were not adequate to cover larger investments (e.g., sheep or goat rearing). Small-scale

⁵⁷ In Tigray, REST had used grants received from other sources to finance RuSACCOs. They were then able to make loans to DFAP beneficiaries for the purpose of small business development. Poultry (up to 50 birds) was one of the most popular enterprises financed through this means.

irrigation was considered an extremely effective livelihood development, but beneficiaries who had been able to access irrigated land voiced their need for further training in irrigated agronomy.

In terms of community views on the sustainability of the interventions: for poultry production, it was noted that the breed of cockerel selected was too large and ate too much, while the hens themselves were not good scavengers or sitters and required a specialized diet to be productive; backyard gardening was sustainable only if water was available, and there were concerns over the availability of good vegetable seed (in Amhara, DAs had been tasked⁵⁸ to travel to urban centers to obtain seed for resale to rural households); in Oromia, seed was offered by the DFAP program but the community was not linked to local seed suppliers, and did not know where to buy seed. Physical observation in Hawi Bilisuma and Haqabas *kebeles*, Meta *woreda* confirmed that none of the beneficiaries had vegetable growing in their keyhole gardens at the time of the evaluation. In contrast, the savings/self-help members considered their groups to be very sustainable.

Livelihood support perceptions—lowlands

Two focus groups were held (in Hallona, Arero *woreda* and Elwayi, Yabello *woreda*), with around 10 beneficiary participants in each. There were no negative perceptions from beneficiaries themselves, wider communities, or government on selection of beneficiaries or the management of the component in the narrow sense of administration of training bursaries and grants. Those who had received training at the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) centers or pastoral colleges spoke favorably of course content, but they also complained that they “had not got the chance to practice the skill acquired.” The accounts of current work they were involved in were mainly of sporadic or part-time work. In Arero, one young man had trained in construction but apparently only worked for five days in the last three months. Another was charging mobile batteries with a generator on market days, rather than working in auto repair as he had been trained. A young woman trained in sanitary installation gave a more favorable report. A young man in Yabello who had been trained in furniture making had been unable to start a business. Those interviewed who had been given financial grants had generally set up in livestock fattening, but the actual level and profitability of their activity was marginal.

The constraints perceived by the beneficiaries included insufficient capital and lack of linkages with existing finance institutions. Under the component design, those receiving training received no grant, and for those receiving a grant it was insufficient. Lack of provision of appropriate tools (for construction, auto repair) was raised by the Hallona FSTF. Those engaging in fattening complained of lack of land, lack of training in basic animal health care, high costs of feed, especially supplementary feed brought from feed mills outside the zone, and lack of extension on using available feed resources. One comment indicative of poor implementation was that the young man trained in furniture making had made this choice in the expectation of mains electricity that had not yet materialized.

Government staff felt the component had ended before it had become effective, that assistance to beneficiaries would not have impact in the long run, and that the closure of the component at the end of the DFAP had been poorly communicated. It is significant that we were unable to interview beneficiaries in Surupa town, as there appeared to be a widespread resentment about the non-continuation of the component.

WASH/MCHN perceptions—highlands

The community rated the MCHN training as being effective, and awareness creation was very good, as shown by some local surveys.⁵⁹ Moreover, the activities of animators and facilitators in Amhara had assisted in strengthening MCHN message delivery, and the community was aware of the improvement. Focus group and HEW responses, however, suggested that behavioral change was not fully in place, at least partly because of a lack of access to the required foods (confirmed by limited quantitative data reported in some IPTTs (Indicator Performance Tracking Tables) and by observation). WASH interventions were also well received insofar as delivery of WASH messages was concerned, but again actual change on the ground was harder to see, with communities reporting difficulties in implementing WASH activities due mainly to the limited availability of water. Mixed animal and human water point use remained an issue in some areas,⁶⁰ as did the availability of water for hand washing outside latrines.⁶¹ These constraints were observed in almost all *woredas* visited, including Samre Sahara, Raya Azebo, Lasta, Simada, Meta, Kersa, and Dire Dawa.

⁵⁸ Including the provision of a *per diem* and transport expenses.

⁵⁹ In a useful Knowledge/Practice/Coverage assessment, FH/E found more than 80% coverage of PLW and a better than 90% understanding of MCHN principles taught to them.

⁶⁰ E.g., at Ebo *kebele* in Raya Azebo.

⁶¹ E.g., at different community latrines in Bilbala *kebele*, Lasta *woreda*.



Terracing, to be irrigated by spring capture in Tigray

It should be noted that the community rarely appreciates these components of the DFAP well. They are layered with many other, different programs implemented either by IPs or by government and funded through a range of mechanisms. It would be unusual to find any beneficiary with a sound understanding of the actual extent to which the DFAP has contributed in these areas. Such confusion was observed in Samre Saharte, Meta, Kersa, Dire Dawa, Simada, Sekota, Lasta, and other *woredas*.

2.1.4 How do households perceive the quality, benefit, and functionality of the community assets?

Community assets—highlands

Able-bodied members of all of the highland communities visited were expected to contribute a certain number of days of “free labor,” undertaking public works as a matter of course irrespective of the DFAPs. Community assets created under the DFAPs normally fit within the framework of public works activities, although the additional resources of expertise and financing mean that the community assets created under the DFAPs are more capital intensive and less reliant upon labor alone for their completion. Thus, while small earthen dams and hand-dug canals might be produced through public works, larger projects requiring a higher degree of expertise

contract labor—the use of gabions and concrete dams to feed concrete-lined canals—are more likely to be undertaken under the DFAPs. In almost every case, beneficiary communities perceive DFAP-created community assets to be of inherently higher quality than those created using “free labor.” Within this context, most households are proud of the community assets derived from the DFAPs, and few were willing to criticize or even prioritize different assets in terms of benefits. The phrase “all are good” was a response repeated at almost all focus groups. There was also an understanding of the value added to public works by the DFAPs.

The community assets that were most highly rated were the soil and water conservation measures for improving agricultural production. It was noted, however, that the benefits were recited almost as a mantra: “improved soil water, reduced soil erosion, reduced gully encroachment, reduced flooding,” with little explanation of what those differences actually meant in terms of increased productivity or hectares of land saved. In some instances, after probing, increased productivity was estimated by focus groups in Bilbala (Lasta) and Engudad (Simada) to be of the order of 10%, but the impacts of reduced flooding or reduced gully erosion appeared impossible to quantify.

2. FINDINGS

Although the majority of communities appreciated the watershed development activities, in most communities the response was qualified. In particular:

- Most of the benefits of the soil/water conservation activities were felt by households with land closest to ground or surface water sources. Such households were generally not PSNP/DFAP beneficiaries.⁶²
- The beneficiaries of small-scale irrigation developments were also sometimes food-secure households. In Amhara, one large scheme was observed to service 64 households, of which only 4 were DFAP beneficiaries.

In Amhara (Lasta and Sekota), bench terrace developments were particularly well appreciated where they resulted in new land for landless youth. Similar appreciation was observed in Tigray. In Dire Dawa, area closures and check dams were most highly rated since they provided essential protection from flooding in an otherwise highly susceptible area.

It was confirmed that the selection of community assets was not completely community based. In one instance, KFSTF members noted: “Activity plans are coming from the top, but we made selection in terms of site selection.” The provision of a list of options from which the community selected one or more projects sometimes resulted in developments that did not appear appropriate. This was reported by the KFSTF at Finawa (Samre Saharte) and at Ebo (Raya Azebo). Typically, communities situated in dry, rocky areas with poor soil or limited water retention capacity were more interested in the development of watering ponds, tanks, or other catchment systems and placed a high priority on the construction of roads, grain storage facilities, clinics, and schools. These priorities had not always been respected, leading to dissatisfaction. The issue was confirmed by REST DFAP agents. Watershed development projects made up approximately 85% of all community assets, with the remainder being schoolrooms, community latrines, roads, animal health posts, and clinics. Of these, roads and school construction appeared to be the most appreciated by focus group respondents. Local infrastructure that supported service delivery was also highly rated, especially that which enabled DAs or HEWs to stay in the area by including accommodation within human or animal health posts.

The community reported that overall, DFAP community assets compared well in terms of functionality with public

works from free labor contributions. DFAP assets experienced fewer design problems and greater functionality. In one location, Frewoyi *tabia* (Hawzen *woreda*), six out of seven check dams constructed under DFAP were working, while only one out of three built by the government was partially performing. Some specific community assets were not well appreciated. Round ponds lined with heavy-duty polythene “geo-membranes” that were prone to dry out in the dry season attracted rodents that would rapidly puncture the membranes so that the ponds became effectively useless. Similarly, sub-surface dams (“sand dams”), although effective in Somali Region,⁶³ were of little benefit in Tigray, reportedly because of a reluctance to source water from the sand behind the dams.

Community assets—lowlands

A range of community assets had been constructed under the DFAP: open water ponds, *birkas*, *kalos*, and additional school classrooms. *Kalos* originally referred to small grazing enclosures for calves, but has come to refer to any area of grazing land enclosed by a thick hedge to exclude livestock. There has been a strong trend in Borena for the establishment of large-scale private *kalos*, effectively privatizing areas of the range, but following a decision by the traditional leaders, the establishment of new private *kalos* has ceased. Communal *kalos* are a very important category of community asset under the DFAP. However, enclosure is frequently done in combination with bush thinning (removal of woodier species, some of them considered invasive) and/or soil and water conservation measures to prevent soil erosion and encourage regrowth. This diversity of *kalos* as a form of public works activity makes systematic comparison of *kalos* with other types of public works rather difficult.

In the focus groups where it was asked (five involving beneficiaries, seven with *woreda* or *kebele* staff), the most popular answer to the question of which category of community asset generated the most employment was the construction and rehabilitation of ponds. But the most popular answers to questions about which brought most benefit to the community (once completed) were those around bush thinning, which is normally organized within *kalos* and in other projects involving *kalos*. Focus groups, both of beneficiaries and government staff, were very unwilling to single out categories of community assets that had lesser benefits. The Yabello *woreda* FSTF mentioned access roads in this connection, and the Cholkassa *kebele* FSTF and the DAs in Dhas mentioned ponds.

⁶² The Household Economy Approach analysis supported by USAID in 2006 and repeated by SCI in 2016 has demonstrated that most CFI households owned only limited land, often of poor quality. Such households are rarely able to benefit from interventions that develop assets that they either lack or possess in limited quantity.

⁶³ Sand dams were constructed by the USAID projects, RAIN (Revitalizing Agricultural/Pastoral Incomes and New Markets), PLI II (Pastoral Livelihoods Initiative II), and PRIME (Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion). They now form part of the PSNP pastoral guidelines.

The identification, design, and construction of community assets are key issues for the DFAP, and more generally for the PSNP in pastoral areas.⁶⁴ Community assets need to fit with collective management of grazing resources, which remains an important response to environmental variability. More arguably, they need to fit with some degree of pastoral mobility. Full-household movements with herds are becoming less significant in Borena, and this was generally not seen as an issue, including by traditional elders, but SCI staff in Arero noted that it was sometimes difficult to mobilize work for this reason. There is also the possibility that different communities (the Borena themselves, the Gabbra, and potentially some Somali groups) may have overlapping patterns of pastoral mobility, with at least some potential for conflict, which must not be exacerbated.

The team's overall conclusion was that SCI's use of the participatory Community Action Program process and the Do No Harm principles has successfully avoided these problems. The SCI Do No Harm principles were successfully employed in Dhas to site and construct a *birka* serving both Borena and Garre (a sub-group of the Somali). Arero male beneficiaries reported that Borena and Gabra were living, and receiving transfers, side by side. There were no serious issues associated with the consultative processes by which community assets were approved for inclusion in the DFAP, with the exception of Pastoral Training Centers. SCI staff are skeptical about the benefits of the centers, which they claim are inserted into the Community Action Plans by the DAs, bypassing participatory processes. There were also no significant issues of technical design. The following paragraphs report in more detail on specific categories of community asset.

Birkas are large water storage structures. Concrete walls capture run-off, which passes through simple settlement chambers to remove sediment into a large excavated tank covered with an iron roof. Most have an outlet pipe leading to a concrete-walled water collection point, with faucets, a few meters downstream. *Birkas* are recognized, in a positive way, as a relatively new technology that the DFAP (and other projects) have introduced to Borena from Somali Region. *Birkas* as a community asset were discussed in depth with the Arero *woreda* FSTF, who saw them as both the most employment-generating category of community asset and the one with the most benefits. In Arero, the *birkas* can store water for six months, bridging the gap between the rainy seasons. The FSTF saw their utility, given that they can be placed at a useful distance from other water points. Benefits are multiple and are particularly experienced by women: the supply of clean water (compared to open ponds) gives health benefits, women and girls have reduced workloads, children are less likely to drop out of school, and households that previously paid for water no longer have to.

Water is also used for calves and kids. *Birkas* are reported to have reduced conflicts between communities and incidents of community members begging or stealing water from water bowzers. While the labor requirements are high compared with other community assets, they can be managed. For example, women are assigned lighter work like carrying soil. In addition, skills acquired in *birka* construction can be used profitably in other work. The Arero FSTF would like to see three *birkas* per *kebele*—three times the current number.

Despite being a traditional development intervention in the area, ponds were mentioned more negatively as a category of public works. The Dhas DAs felt that pond construction had not benefitted the community, other than through employment, and had not solved problems of water shortage and long hours spent collecting water and watering livestock. Compared to other community assets, pond construction did not allow acquisition of new, useful skills.

Kalos were discussed in detail with the Arero DAs, with the KFSTF, and with the female and the male beneficiaries in Dhas, all cases where bush thinning had been carried out within the enclosure created. In other *kalos*, soil and water conservation measures such as contour bunds and micro-catchments had been implemented, rather than bush thinning. Thinning is mainly practiced against recognized invasive woody species such as *Acacia drepanolobium*, which form thorny thickets. It encourages the growth of grass and makes nutritious vegetation more accessible, as well as reducing cuts to the skin and eyes of livestock. Enclosure makes these benefits more sustainable and is generally accompanied by laws that bar access to livestock in general, or all livestock except calves. Fodder can be cut and carried; in some cases, this right is preferentially reserved for youth or households without livestock who can then sell the fodder. The work of thinning has to be maintained, but after the first cutting and splitting of trees, the periodic control of new shoots is easier, and thinning skills useful elsewhere are acquired. There was in all cases optimism about the community's ability to maintain bylaws in the future and the general sustainability of benefits. *Kalos* created under the DFAP occupy sufficiently small areas that they are not seen as limiting the pastoral mobility that still exists or harming inter-community relations.

Building additional classrooms for schools was discussed with the Dhas *woreda* FSTF. It was seen as a beneficial activity, especially for girls, as it made more school places available in easy reach of the communities involved. Parents are concerned about girls walking long distances to school early or late in the day. It also eased fears about earth-built classrooms collapsing.

⁶⁴ For example, Behnke, Desta, and Kerven, 2014, Final Report on PSNP Re-Design for Lowland Ethiopia.

2.1.5 To what extent are community assets developed through public works appropriate to contributing to food security outcomes at the household level?

In some *kebeles*, the conservation-focused community assets directly enhance the food security of a significant proportion of DFAP households by increasing crop production capacity. In others, they contribute less obviously but nonetheless significantly by reducing the frequency of negative impacts such as flooding or gully erosion. Generally, such benefits are greatest for those households that are closest to the water source. In the best case observed (Waza *tabia* in Samre Saharte *woreda*), check dams and canals have been able to provide irrigation for 300 hectares of land, benefitting more than 50% of the community, who are now able to produce up to three crops, including high-value vegetables, from their lands each year. Other areas experiencing widespread benefits from community asset development to DFAP households included Bilbala in Lasta and Frewoyini in Hawzen.

In other areas, such as Finawa in Samre Saharte, Debreselem in Hawzen, Ebo in Raya Azebo, and Engudad in Simada, the impacts of conservation-focused community assets have been somewhat fewer. Flood and spate irrigation systems have allowed farmers to channel water from strongly flowing watercourses but do not impound water. Their main benefit is therefore to enhance the supply of water to fields during the rainy season, while simultaneously reducing the risk of floods downstream. Farmers suggest that in a normal rainy season, such systems can at least double the levels of production from the fields that benefit from the additional water, while in a dry season, or one in which the watercourses flow only weakly, they are of little benefit. Again, the benefits accrue mainly to those farmers with lands that can be reached by the canal systems branching from the watercourse. In still other areas, the benefits from conservation activities are much fewer. In those areas where soils are thin or the underlying geology is permeable, check dams may only hold water for three months beyond the rains, if at all. In such areas, those farmers close to the dams may be able to pump water to adjacent vegetable plots, but the volume of water may be insufficient to cover more than a few hectares.

REST programs have targeted landless youth in two ways: first, by making enclosed and rehabilitated lands (e.g., gullies) available to such youth for productive activities. These include beekeeping, commercial tree production, and cut and carry forage production. The benefits that can be derived from these activities are very variable. In 2015, beekeeping proved to be a resilient IGA that was not

significantly affected by drought. Cut and carry forage production was less remunerative and might augment a livelihood but would not of itself provide one. The fruit trees (e.g., avocado, mango, and citrus) as well as other commercial trees (e.g., eucalyptus, leucaena, sesbania, and neem) have yet to generate commercial returns and can have no significant impact upon food security outcomes until they do so.

Second, in Tigray landless youth (including 50,000 returning migrant workers from the Gulf States) have been encouraged to participate in the construction of irrigated terraces. These activities have been extremely labor intensive but have resulted in the creation of approximately 10,000 hectares of new land. These areas have been allocated to more than 20,000 landless youth.⁶⁵ The benefits to be derived from such lands are very dependent upon the availability of water. Provided the water supplies remain constant, the irrigation systems have been correctly designed, and the new farmers are adequately trained in intensive crop production and marketing, the allotted areas have the potential to substantially enhance the food security of the youth to whom the lands have been allotted.⁶⁶

Overall, while some community assets significantly improved the food security of a limited number of beneficiaries, the wider impacts of the public works were more generally experienced by better-off households than by DFAP beneficiaries while, for poorer households, food security was more affected by the transfers than the projects themselves. The community assets that most directly benefited the poorest included the development of water points (reservoirs, shallow wells, and dams), small-scale irrigation (where poor households could access it), and gully reclamation and area closure (again where it provided access for poor households to land for cultivation). Those seen to benefit the better off included the soil and water conservation measures (bund and deep trench construction) to reduce erosion and flooding, as well as check dams and canals for irrigation when poorer households were largely excluded from access to the irrigated areas.

Some beneficiaries reported that the undertaking of public works activities was burdensome and a constraint to their potential food security development. One focus group of youth in Waza, Samre Saharte noted that the difference between DFAP beneficiaries and graduates was that graduates had the time to engage in profitable IGAs, while DFAP beneficiaries were obliged to devote most of their time to public work. Others, especially women, suggested that even with the reduced workload (including late arrival

⁶⁵ Information provided during the in-briefing presentation by REST staff.

⁶⁶ At the time of the evaluation, the new terraces had only recently been constructed, and intensive crop production had yet to begin.

to public works and early departure) that was required of mothers, it was impossible for women from female-headed households to do all of the public works activities and look after their own households as well.

One group of youth in Bilbala, Lasta reported: “We are free labor—every time, every place we get used—and if we refuse we may be fired from the program. We don’t have enough time for our own work. Especially the women are pushed to do it all.” For such respondents, community works and associated transfers were of marginal benefit, and some had indeed graduated prematurely despite being food insecure, in order to earn more money from more remunerative, albeit less certain, occupations. Public works programs have been considerably amended to try to reduce the overall burden on female-headed households especially, but in some communities more needs to be done if the effort involved in community works is to be justified by the food security benefits of the transfers.

In the lowlands, beyond the general benefits of the public works as discussed above, *kalo* construction, bush thinning, and soil and water conservation measures (usually implemented in combinations) are perceived as benefitting the food security of poor households with very small numbers of livestock, by ensuring the survival of young livestock.

2.1.6 How effective was the use of contingency resources in terms of efficiency in identifying the needs, targeting, and timeliness of delivery?

Under PSNP3, *woredas* had access to 5% contingency resources and were able to call upon a further 15% that was allocated at the regional level. The DRM staff would undertake pre- and post-harvest assessments of need in each *kebele* and would use these to determine beneficiary numbers. These were approved at the *woreda* level for the disbursement of the 5% contingency and/or would be passed via the zonal administration to the regional level for the disbursement of the 15% contingency. Once approved, *kebeles* would draw up lists of beneficiaries based upon the resources that had been provided. In almost every case, the 5% contingency was fully utilized in each year. In fact, potential beneficiary numbers regularly exceeded the 5% limit so that access to the contingency was based upon relative need and the effective 5% quota.

Highlands

When asked why the contingencies had been used so regularly, two responses were given in all highland areas: first, that the actual number of beneficiaries had been underestimated so that there were more people who were CFI than would be covered by the planned level of resources. Second, in subsequent years, forced graduates were identified as being food insecure, but could not be allowed back into the DFAP. They could, however, be

treated as Transitory Beneficiaries and would receive six transfers for one year only (although they might also be targeted in a similar manner in subsequent years). As a result, contingency resources were used almost every year to cover additional beneficiaries (rather than to increase the size or number of transfers), due to the effective underestimation of actual beneficiary numbers.

Under PSNP3, the decision to distribute the 15% contingency to *woredas* was made at the regional level. Some *woredas* (but not all) reported that they generally received the 15% without difficulty and that it was used in a similar manner to the 5% contingency, i.e., to increase the number of households receiving transfers. Within a *woreda*, contingency resources might be allocated to different *kebeles* according to need, so that not all *kebeles* would receive additional 5% or 15% resources. In some cases, *kebeles* received nothing extra if needs were perceived to be greater elsewhere within the *woreda*, while other *kebeles* might have received more than the 5% or 15%. Some *woredas* also reported that female-headed households had been prioritized amongst the additional caseload to be covered through contingency resources. This was not universal, however.

In every area that was canvassed, DRM staff and WFSTFs reported that 5% contingency resources had arrived on time and been distributed in a timely manner, i.e., at the same time as normal transfers were distributed. Overall, it was evident that the smaller contingency resources had been drawn down as a matter of course by all of the *woredas* visited and that this had been in response to beneficiary caseloads that had exceeded expectations. The fact that this had occurred, even during years of relatively good production prior to the 2015/16 drought, suggests that there was a major gap between the communities’ and DRM officers’ own estimates of need and the official PSNP data. The 15% contingency was not as frequently obtained, and some *woredas* reported that the resources had been diverted to other *woredas* in greater need. Use of the 15% contingency was not as uniform as that of the 5% contingency.

Under PSNP4, the 15% contingency was reduced to 11%. It was made available to *woredas* subject to federal determination on the recommendation of *woreda* DRM staff. In general, it was also distributed on a relative need and quota basis within the *woreda*. Not all *kebeles* that had expected additional resources received the 11% contingency in 2016, reporting that other *kebeles* or *woredas* had been preferred due to their greater need.

Lowlands

In Borena, developing the contingency plan has been a collaborative exercise involving joint assessment by the WFSTFs and the SCI joint food security assessment team. SCI provided full operational and technical support to the

woredas. During the assessments, indicators such as availability and accessibility of water and pasture, human and livestock health conditions, and climatic conditions and associated risks were assessed. Community-based and regional early warning systems were linked to develop contingency plans to prepare for the implementation of timely responses that protect household livelihoods. Collaborative effort and the support of the JEOP program helped improve on early warning data collection. The development of the contingency plans at *woreda* level also enabled development of more comprehensive contingency reporting. Within the PSNP, and thus the DFAP, the response is necessarily limited to food supply; however, more comprehensive contingency plans enable *woredas* to be better prepared to request resources from the region, federal government, and funding agencies.

Verification of beneficiary identity took place at multiple points of the targeting and distribution process. During contingency transfers, SCI ensured the verification of beneficiaries against beneficiary master rolls. Food distribution was carried out in the presence of government representatives, who acted as observers. Beneficiaries acknowledged receipt through signatures and/or thumb impressions collected by SCI food distributors. This system of multiple checks was originated by the DFAP, but subsequently rolled out to other, non-DFAP *woredas* in Borena Zone.

As far as the consultants could observe, the DFAP has established effective grievance and complaint mechanisms in all three *woredas* visited (Dhas, Arero, and Yabello). These involve community conversations, increased presence of staff not involved in distribution, and working with appeals committees to formulate better approaches that can curb suspicion and concerns of anonymity. A broader community-level awareness raising on entitlements meant effective targeting. The 5% contingency resources were effective in identifying and addressing transfer issues related to the DFAP beneficiaries whose regular transfer was not adequate, or those who were excluded during the initial targeting.

However:

- a) Delays were noted in effecting transfer of the 5% contingency resources. It took a longer time than expected to make the final listing and submit the request.
- b) Not all *kebeles* in need received the 5% contingency resources. For example, in Arero only 5–7 *kebeles* received any resources, due to prioritization decisions made by the WFSTF.

- c) Different approaches have been used to transfer the 5% contingency resources by government and NGOs implementing the program. At the non-DFAP PSNP locations, rigorous assessment work has not generally been done prior to the release of the 5% contingency, while in DFAP locations it has been done on evidence of need following a thorough assessment by SCI and partners.⁶⁷
- d) There are concerns about the use and application of contingency budgets. Given the caseload challenges, the inclination by the government partners is to use the numbers to fill the gaps in caseload with a focus on full-family targeting. However, responsiveness of the Humanitarian Requirements Document (HRD) process has been a challenge, and *woredas* remain wary of going ahead without further guidance from the regions, and of utilizing the resources with the risk that the HRD will not cover the need.

2.2 Graduation

2.2.1 To what extent were the targeted households graduated from the PSNP per the eligibility criteria defined in the PSNP Program Implementation Manual (PIM)?

The PSNP3 PIM definition of graduation is: “A household has graduated when, in the absence of receiving PSNP transfers, it can meet its food needs for all 12 months and is able to withstand modest shocks.” There is some similarity between this and the USAID definition of resilience: “The ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.” The similarity suggests that, when properly implemented, graduation should be inevitably associated with increased resilience, albeit not to the extent of achieving full food security.

In practice, four types of graduation were reported:

1. *Self-graduation* as a result of increased production/income-generating capacity that made participation in the DFAP redundant;
2. *Premature self-graduation*, generally to undertake self- or casual employment, even though a household may not be food sufficient, because it was perceived that more income could be earned outside the DFAP;
3. *Forced graduation*, as a result either of the application of a graduation quota, or of reallocation. Graduates in this category may have

⁶⁷ Personal communication from SCI staff member.

been able to increase resilience, but were not food sufficient.

4. *Benchmark graduation*, when a household had accumulated assets to the point where the benchmark criteria for graduation had been met. Due to the failure of the regional benchmarks to account for inflation, not all graduates in this category were food sufficient.

The criteria for graduation were based primarily upon the evaluation of household assets on a per capita basis against regional benchmarks, on the assumption that “assets better reflect lasting changes in chronic food insecurity status than income.” The benchmarks were designed to be applied in a flexible manner that considered a range of household assets and differences between livelihood zones. See Table 2.

It was expected that once a household had achieved potential graduation status, it would be given one year’s notice of impending graduation, during which time it would remain within the PSNP, but after which it would no longer receive transfers. Some graduates in Lasta, Sekota, and Simada reported that the year’s notice was not always given, and instead graduation occurred immediately after the acquisition of new assets—often as a result of a loan. In practice, in the highland regions, it was observed that a small number of graduate households were premature graduates. This was especially the case amongst landless youth and households near to towns and in those *woredas* where the proportion of cash transfers (relative to food transfers) was largest, but overall numbers were very small. A substantial proportion of graduates were self-graduates who had achieved food security as a result of DFAP activities, especially those who had been provided

with access to small-scale irrigation developments (although the actual numbers of such beneficiaries was not great in proportion to either overall beneficiary numbers or to overall program numbers).

In certain years, graduate numbers appeared to be based primarily upon asset values. This was the case in Tigray in 2012 and 2013⁶⁸ and in Amhara and Oromia in 2013 and 2014, when approximately 25% of graduate households left the PSNP in each case. Although this might be considered to be “benchmarked graduation,” it scarcely reflected the spirit of the PIM, which emphasizes flexibility and especially differences between livelihood zones. Instead, region-wide asset values were determined without reference to livelihood zones or especially to the loans that might have been taken out to acquire new assets. Graduation according to such fixed benchmarks, which had not been adjusted for inflation and which ignored external liabilities, respected only one section of the PSNP PIM and ignored the conditionalities that had been carefully specified in that document. It is difficult to determine the proportion of households that actually met the wider PIM criteria of food self-sufficiency, but the responses of both graduates and remaining DFAP beneficiaries strongly suggested that, for the most part, benchmarked graduation had been applied according to a limited assessment of asset value rather than the eligibility criteria of the PIM.

In general, however, the majority of graduates have been determined on the basis of quotas rather than the criteria within the PIM.^{69, 70} This has resulted in a significant number of forced graduates who have been obliged to leave the DFAP without reference to any objective criteria and before they have achieved food sufficiency.⁷¹ In such instances, the targeting of graduates has been a relative process, with the more food-sufficient households being

Table 2. Regional threshold asset values for graduation

Region	Average Asset Value
Oromia	Eth Birr 19,187 per household
Tigray	Eth Birr 5,600 per capita
Amhara	Eth Birr 4,200 per capita
SNNP	Eth Birr 2,998 per capita

Source: PSNP3 PIM

⁶⁸ E.g., Kola Tembien, graduate FGD.

⁶⁹ Reported by all FGDs in all highland regions.

⁷⁰ “Our *woreda* benchmark for graduation was 19,000 Eth Birr but there has been instruction from the region to graduate 60% of the beneficiaries on a quota basis. Had we used the benchmark, the number of graduates would have been much lower than the 60%.” Reported verbatim from Kersa *Woreda* Food Security staff.

⁷¹ This was particularly evident in Simada *woreda* and was testified to by all FGDs there.

selected to graduate, while the less food-sufficient ones have been allowed to remain within the DFAP, irrespective of actual assets or absolute levels of food sufficiency. KFSTFs reported that they had received quotas for graduation from the *woredas* and indicated that these quotas were in turn based upon figures determined at regional level. In this way, graduation proceeded with almost no reference whatsoever to either the criteria or the principles outlined in the PIM. It is important to note that, despite the close interaction between IP field staff and DFAP beneficiaries, IPs were largely uninvolved in the graduation process. DFAP Annual Reports either noted that the IPs were unable to elicit any justification from *woreda* or regional authorities for graduate numbers, or else were provided conflicting data regarding the numbers of beneficiaries who graduated each year.⁷²

Discussions with four regional authorities did not elucidate the basis for the extensive forced graduation that had occurred in highland DFAP programs. It was only at the federal level that it was explained that graduation had occurred “by design.” Neither the *kebeles*, *woredas*, nor regions were the final authorities involved in maintaining the graduation targets. Instead, these had been predetermined and specified within the first national Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP1). At the federal level, it was clearly articulated that the process of graduation had been based upon the expected implementation of PSNP3: “Graduation was an expected exit strategy.”⁷³ Anticipated graduation rates determined the allocation and availability of resources, and the program was implemented accordingly.

Overall, therefore, for the majority of households the process of graduation was not reflective of PIM criteria in any of the highland areas. This was reflected in the continued delivery of transfers to graduate households, many of whom became Transitory Beneficiaries of the DFAPs (see Section 2.1.6—highlands). The drought that occurred in many areas prior to the start of PSNP4 curtailed any further forced graduation, so that although the GoE target under GTP1 was to graduate 3.7 million beneficiaries, only 3.5 million were actually graduated. The expectation for GTP2 is that it will graduate 5 million beneficiaries between 2016 and 2020.

Note—The concept of graduation from DFAP assistance was not included in the agreed objectives or indicators for

SCI’s DFAP, and the terminology of graduation was barely used by SCI staff or *woreda* officials in the lowlands. The consultants were told of very small numbers of households exiting the program because they were judged to be either too wealthy or no longer ready to work, but this was classified as “retargeting,” not as graduation. Detailed questions on graduation were therefore not asked in lowland FGDs, and the topic is not relevant to DFAP implementation in the lowland areas.

2.2.2 What was the level of DFAP engagement and follow-up with graduated households, and how effective was this follow-up?

According to the revised PSNP3 PIM, households graduating from the PSNP should be “food sufficient,” but not necessarily food secure. Support to achieve food security is to be provided under the HABP or, in the case of a few USAID *woredas*, under the GRAD program. In practice, the extent to which either of these programs were effectively operational in DFAP *woredas* varied from not at all to significant levels of effort. Where no additional support was provided beyond the DFAP interventions, graduates were encouraged to participate in DFAP trainings, but the DFAPs were not budgeted to provide support that had been expected to come from government. In practice, capacity for engagement and follow-up was limited in all regions.

Some DFAP program elements provided opportunities for engagement of graduates. These elements included facilitation of financing from MFIs and RuSACCOs (especially in Tigray), as well as the provision of some practical training in beekeeping. Unofficial mentoring⁷⁴ did occur where linkages between the DFAPs and *kebele* leaders and DAs had been well developed and the latter agencies were motivated enough to promote DFAP supports. Otherwise, it was assumed that the support of graduates was the responsibility of HABP programs. Follow-up of graduates in terms of M&E or more general data collection was undertaken to a limited extent in Tigray only, where graduates were surveyed annually. The results, although of concern to REST, did not lead to any reactions. The 2014 PSNP in Tigray Region Annual Report notes that regional government was “not in a position to adopt the concern.”

⁷² The evaluation team sometimes encountered similar confusion. In Dire Dawa, officials were adamant that graduation had been according to benchmarks, but beneficiaries stated that they had been graduated by quota. In Simada, officials reported that many had self-graduated, while beneficiaries reported that they had been told the DFAP was about to close and that they should take loans and graduate while they could.

⁷³ Interview: Food Security Director, Ministry of Agriculture.

⁷⁴ I.e., positive supports that could not be described under any specific project activity.

2.2.3 Is there evidence of a difference in the food security status of graduated households compared with households remaining in the PSNP in the DFAP woredas?

Differences in food security between DFAP graduates and beneficiaries reflected the circumstances of graduation. Self-graduates were almost invariably more food secure than remaining beneficiaries. They had remained so despite the 2015/16 drought, indicating that they had achieved substantial levels of both food security and resilience. In the majority of cases, this reflected the fact that self-graduation was mainly a result of access to small-scale irrigation facilities, which also conferred some independence from inadequate rainfall. (It should be noted, however, that the benefits of small-scale irrigation development were enjoyed for the most part by non-DFAP households who had rights to the lands nearest the rivers). Under other circumstances, and especially where irrigation was not practicable, the differences were less obvious.

Benchmarked graduates were variable in their food security levels. Larger households with lands that had benefitted from community assets were more secure. Forced graduates were reportedly more food secure than households remaining within the DFAP, but the graduate selection procedure of community ranking within a fixed quota would automatically select those households that were relatively more food sufficient so that such graduation need not imply an actual improvement in food security, but simply a higher food security ranking within the community. But for the most part, forced graduates were rarely food sufficient and, in common with some benchmarked graduates, were often targeted for assistance soon after graduation. Those who could not be supported using contingency resources often became less food secure than the DFAP beneficiaries.

Graduates reported that prior to the 2015/16 drought, between 10% and 50% of graduates had achieved food security. Following the drought, many graduates had to depend upon emergency relief. In some *woredas* (e.g., Sekota and Gulo Mekeda), it was reported by DFAP staff that all graduates had become emergency relief beneficiaries, while in other areas a small number had remained food secure. In general, it was reported that the majority of graduates were not able to feed themselves through the drought, suggesting that although they might have achieved a degree of food sufficiency, they were not yet resilient. Graduates confirmed this position, indicating that they had been well supported by the distribution of emergency relief and had for the most part been able to protect their assets so that, given a reasonable harvest in 2016/17, they could once again be food sufficient.

Communities considered the 2016 drought response to have been especially favorable to graduates. DFAP beneficiaries reported that emergency relief beneficiaries received rations, including edible oil, based upon full family targeting. They were not obliged to do work in exchange for those rations. The anomalous situation thus arose whereby DFAP beneficiaries, who had been ranked as the poorest in the community, had to work for transfers that were less than those given to graduates, without consideration. As a result, DFAP staff⁷⁵ reported that some beneficiaries had wanted to leave the DFAP to take advantage of the transfers being provided to emergency relief beneficiaries.

Some graduates reported that emergency relief had allowed them to protect their assets, but some of those rearing or fattening sheep or goats reported that they had been obliged to sell their animals because they could not afford the cost of fodder, which had escalated in the drought year. This response was only found in some areas⁷⁶ but suggests that graduation based on this IGA may be more vulnerable to drought than graduation through other means.

2.3 Gender

The highlands DFAPs contain many elements designed to enhance gender equality. These include direct messaging on gender on the one hand, and on the other the provision of direct support to women, which has an indirect but nevertheless important gender equity effect. Examples of the former have included:

- Community conversations (held amongst mixed-gender groups of 30–40 community members on at least one day of public works time per month) include gender issues. Issues are also raised at coffee ceremonies.
- During public works and at distribution centers, DFAP and HEW staff in Tigray have sensitized community members to gender issues.
- Drama clubs have been used to increase awareness of gender issues amongst men and women in Tigray and Amhara.
- Taboo-breaking demonstrations have been held in Amhara (sessions in which volunteers have purposefully broken taboos by demonstrating skills strongly associated with the opposite sex, e.g., women plowing and men preparing the staple food *injeera*, serving coffee, or carrying water).

⁷⁵ E.g., in Raya Azebo and in Sekota.

⁷⁶ Households in Hawzen and Raya Azebo reported such livestock sales.

2. FINDINGS

- Gender clubs have been established in schools in Oromia/Dire Dawa.
- Community leaders and religious leaders have been recruited to help change attitudes amongst men.
- In Oromia, women's representation on committees has been strengthened through IP persuasion that women should be appointed as deputies in as many positions as possible.

Direct support to women has included women's literacy groups and savings/self-help groups, which have supported women's empowerment not only through their direct benefits (of literacy and savings/loans) but also by acting as focal points for discussion and attitude change.⁷⁷ In schools in Oromia, the IP has, by making sanitary pads available to young women on a sustainable basis, been able to increase school attendance by 50 days per year.

In addition to the above, the DFAP interventions themselves have been implemented in a gender-sensitive manner. Beneficiary targeting is either on a 50:50 basis or gives priority to female-headed households, especially in the use of contingency resources and in providing access to newly created lands. Community councils and associations set up to maintain assets (such as water users' associations) are also based upon 50:50 principles whenever this is possible.

Over the course of the DFAPs, there have been definite changes in access and control of resources and benefits as reflected by focus group responses.⁷⁸ These appear to have been facilitated by the Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) activities (as described in the bullets above) but to have been fundamentally driven by increased access by women to education.⁷⁹ It appears that the SBCC messaging has persuaded both men and women that women should be accorded an equal role in society, but it has been education that has allowed them to take advantage of that shift in attitude in a manner that, although not necessarily sustainable of itself, will be more difficult to reverse.⁸⁰

Gender outcomes were queried using the Access/Control Profiling (ACP) tool. Access is defined as the freedom to access a resource, while control implies the capacity to make decisions concerning the use or disposal of that resource. Thus, almost all women might have access to land and its productive benefits, but not all would have a say in the actual crops selected or in the allocation of rights to land to family members or to sharecropping decisions. Almost all focus groups responded similarly. The Regional response framework is shown below in Table 3.

The differences between regions were small and not well captured by the profiling. Gaps that were noted have been listed in the narrative, but it is difficult to represent/

Table 3. Access and control profiles

Resources	Access		Control	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Tigray				
Land (developed/protected through public works)	1	1	1	1
Food transfer from DFAP	1	1	1	1
HH assets: animals and cash	1	1	1	1
HH assets (livelihood support activities from HABP)	1	1	1	1
Formal education	0	1	0	1
Production or livelihoods skills trainings by DAs/DFAP	1	1	1	1
Production or MCHN skills trainings by HEWs/DFAP	1	0	1	0
KFSTF	0	1	0	1

Continued on next page

⁷⁷ These impacts have been described and analyzed in more detail in Doris Kaberia (CARE Kenya) and Rob Allport (Emergency Officer, FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization) Kenya), 2011, Good Practice Principle Village Community Banking (VICOBA) and Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) in the Drylands of the Horn of Africa, June.

⁷⁸ E.g., Waza *kebele* focus groups.

⁷⁹ Youth FGD at Waza in Samre Saharte; also youth FGD in Engudad, Simada.

⁸⁰ Youth FGD at Waza in Samre Saharte explained, "Now they (women) know these things, and they do not forget." HEW KII in Haqabas reported the same.

Continued from previous page

Benefits				
Land	1	1	1	1
Household asset ownership	1	1	1	1
Education	0	1	0	1
Amhara	Women	Men	Women	Men
Land (developed/protected through public works)	1	1	1	1
Food transfer from DFAP	1	1	1	1
HH assets: animals and cash	1	1	0	1
HH assets (livelihood support activities from HABP)	1	1	1	1
Formal education	0	1	0	1
Production or livelihoods skills trainings by DAs/DFAP	1	1	1	1
Production or MCHN skills trainings by HEWs/DFAP	1	0	1	0
KFSTF	0	1	0	1
Benefits				
Land	1	1	1	1
Household asset ownership	1	1	1	1
Education	0	1	0	1
Oromia/Dire Dawa	Women	Men	Women	Men
Land (developed/protected through public works)	1	1	1	1
Food transfer from DFAP	1	1	1	1
HH assets: animals and cash	1	1	1	1
HH assets (livelihood support activities from HABP)	1	1	1	1
Formal education	0	1	0	1
Production or livelihoods skills trainings by DAs/DFAP	1	1	1	1
Production or MCHN skills trainings by HEWs/DFAP	1	0	1	0
KFSTF	1	1	0	1
Benefits				
Land	1	1	1	1
Household asset ownership	1	1	1	1
Education	0	1	0	1

summarize these differences with regard to the specific resources that had been selected for this tool (as listed in the table). In particular, there was no great consistency within a region. Nevertheless, it was generally reported that women can both access and control the food transfers as well as the cash transfers. In some areas, women and men also appeared to have equal access and control over newly developed land and livelihood support activities, but in other areas men dominated the control of livestock and cash. Two arenas did still stand out as being strongly male-dominated, namely formal education and women's representation on community committees, especially on the KFSTFs and WFSTFs. When asked how these results compared with the situation five years ago, prior to the DFAPs, both men and women reported that there had

been substantial change, especially in the areas of decision making. Even in matters such as family planning, men reported that women now made the final decisions as to family size, obtaining contraception secretly if they did not want to confront their husbands. The outcomes reported in the "Attitude, Coverage, Practice" survey responses were ascribed by men as being due to a more general increase in education and awareness amongst women. "They are more educated now" was a commonly expressed reason for the broad-based change that had occurred.

Gender activities in the lowlands SCI DFAP have been low key and spread across different program components (though there has been no MCHN component in this DFAP). Some of the most important activities have been

those carried out by gender officers at *woreda* level (both SCI and government) and at regional/zonal level (SCI) promoting gender equality. These activities have included: working with school gender clubs; working with *woreda* legal offices (on issues such as early marriage); establishing and strengthening gender clubs and other work in schools; organizing and facilitating mother-to-mother group discussions and literacy classes for women; encouraging communities to invest in milling machines at distribution centers; and presenting awareness-creation sessions on household decision making during transfers.

An important area of work was ensuring that PIM guidelines on women's work contributions, especially on the rights of lactating and pregnant women and entitlements to appeal, are respected. There was general agreement across the three *woredas* that women beneficiaries were working around two hours less per day and were assigned lighter tasks (such as transport of soil), following PIM guidelines. There was also advocacy through the FSTFs to support client cards with photographs to identify women as the primary collectors for their households and for decreasing travel time/distance by instituting a larger number of transfer points so that women are more likely to collect the transfer themselves.

In some cases, the bylaws instituted by communities in association with public works, namely the *kalos*, favor the rights of poorer women to cut and carry fodder or graze young livestock, either specifically or indirectly as members of poorer households. It should also be noted that the livelihood support activities were targeted at both male and female beneficiaries. Although the general impact was low, gender equity was good. Some women were trained in non-traditional occupations for women, such as sanitary installation. Some women in focus groups reported increased empowerment in terms of one or more of the types of empowerment set out above (control over resources, decision making, participation, and freedom of speech), but given the multiple other trends in pastoral Ethiopian society (sedentarization, livelihood diversification, education), there would be significant methodological problems in attributing this to the DFAP.

2.4 Program Management, Coordination, and Sustainability

2.4.1 Management

The fact that all the IPs were able to implement the DFAPs over a five-year period, during which a significant drought occurred, without substantial loss of life, is a testament to the effectiveness and flexibility of the management of each

IP at every level. It especially reflects the capacity of management to partner with GoE personnel and to deliver an effective response under difficult circumstances.

The following findings on program management cover the strengths, weaknesses, achievements, and challenges in the **highlands**:

Strengths

- Technical expertise was a key strength that the IPs could bring to bear, not only in the construction of community assets but also in capacity development and in the development of innovative SBCC programs. This feature of the DFAPs was widely and positively commented upon by almost all WFSTFs and regional government staff.
- At the *woreda* and *kebele* level, IP speed in decision making allowed for the timely distribution of resources and contracting of public works.⁸¹
- The IPs had accumulated considerable experience in the field and in the communities where they were working. This helped to establish good relationships with the communities and authorities as well as to understand community priorities for development.
- Different IPs exhibited different specific strengths. REST in particular had resources in terms of its own plant and equipment⁸² that allowed it to undertake its own earth moving. CRS was especially competent at the enhancement of gender equity development, while FH/E had placed particular emphasis upon MCHN and WASH messaging through the development of close working relationships with district-level health authorities. In each case, these strengths enhanced program implementation.
- Capacity on the ground was good. This was especially true of REST, which has many staff members, including technical experts at *woreda* level, and also of FH/E-ORDA, which not only has staff placed at *woreda* level but has also worked to develop a network of animators and community coordinators at the *kebele* level who can support both their own interventions and GoE ones. CRS has fewer of its own staff at the *woreda* level, relying instead upon the development of graduate GoE staff. This has proved only moderately effective and may be modified in the future. CRS has also recruited animators at the *kebele* level.

⁸¹ KIIs with WFSTF in Hawzen, Raya Azebo, Samre Saharte, Sekota, Lasta, and Simada.

⁸² Fifteen bulldozers and more than 20 dump trucks.

- Management of each IP also demonstrated the capacity to integrate different programs so as to enhance DFAP outcomes.

emphasis on the development of WASH infrastructure due to its secondary position as the implementer but not owner of the DFAP programs.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses found in management are derived mainly from the situation in which the IPs have been placed, and almost all might be justified from the perspective of maintaining a sound relationship and effective dialogue with GoE.

- Acceptance of a secondary role in program implementation. For example, in Amhara it was reported that NGOs have a “low voice” at the WFSTF, where the position of the IP was definitely secondary to that of *woreda* staff. As a result, DFAP goals were not always aligned with *woreda* targets, especially insofar as graduation was concerned.
- Narrow focus on program indicators at the expense of being able to follow developments on the ground. Large numbers of program indicators (in one case over 100) required considerable management resources to collect and compile, but few related directly to progress on the ground or were collected at a scale or frequency that would allow changes in implementation in response to outcomes.
- Over-sensitivity to regional government policy, especially in Tigray and Amhara, resulted in public works that were not context-specific and in some cases appeared either inappropriate (as in Samre Saharte⁸³) or premature (as in Simada⁸⁴).
- Insufficient assessment of program interventions (e.g., poultry, backyard gardening, or different livelihoods) from a cost-effectiveness and/or value chain perspective. Different interventions have been tried by different IPs, but there is little hard evidence of what works best and in what circumstances to carry forward to the next generation of DFAPs.
- Imbalance between interventions on the ground. This was most frequently observed with regard to WASH activities in Tigray and Amhara, where WASH SBCC was compromised by inadequate infrastructure (lack of latrines and most importantly, adequate functional water points). In general, management was aware of this imbalance, but appeared compromised and unable to place greater

Specific instances of weak performance were only rarely reported. In Oromia, some GoE staff complained that the processing of *per diem* payments for training sessions was too slow, while in Amhara, ORDA reported that they had not been supplied with enough vehicles by FH/E to service their area properly. Overall, however, there were very few negative comments on IP management from any source.

Achievements

DFAP management achieved progress in a number of areas outside of the goals, outcomes, and outputs that they were expected to deliver. These included:

- The development of effective working relationships with local and regional authorities;
- Flexible responses to support graduates experiencing limited implementation of HABP;
- Major initiatives in Tigray to support migrant youth returning from the Gulf States;
- Transparent contract management in the course of public works that helped to promote good practices amongst counterpart *woreda* staff;
- Implementation of the DFAPs without disruption in the face of a substantial drought that increased logistical challenges;
- The development in all cases of community responses that looked either for continued support from the IPs or for the GoE to provide comparable assistance.

Challenges

DFAP management and staff were questioned as to the challenges they faced in implementing the programs. They reported the following:

- Working with predetermined numbers of beneficiaries on the one hand and unverifiable levels of graduation on the other made it extremely hard to bring about a sustainable increase in food security amongst beneficiary households, or even to improve food-security levels of beneficiaries. This problem was raised by all IPs, both in interviews and in the DFAP Annual Reports. In particular, the reduction

⁸³ In Finawa *tabia* in Samre Saharte, the community complained that the public works had been selected by the agricultural officer and did not match their needs. They wanted watering points, roads, and a distribution center but had instead been tasked to undertake watershed development.

⁸⁴ At Engudad in Simada, a large irrigation dam was being damaged by boulders, evidence of rapid river flow that should have been prevented by upstream conservation works. In this case, the dam had been installed before the conservation works had been put in place.

in beneficiary numbers resulted in a concomitant reduction in capital budget, reducing the financing available for raw materials and/or contracted works and thereby restricting the extent of subsequent public works activities. It appears to have been an intractable issue. There is no apparent solution evidenced for PSNP4, other than reliance upon an expressed intention on the part of the GoE to be more responsive to needs.

- The limited capacity of GoE to implement HABP meant that there was often little or no support provided to graduating households beyond that made available by the DFAPs. This meant that many graduate households, and especially forced graduates, frequently fell back into food insecurity, limiting progress towards the goal and objectives of the DFAPs. A particularly significant capacity limitation was the limited availability of financing amongst MFIs and RuSACCOs, which prevented those engaging in IGAs from expanding their businesses.
- The high workload of GoE PSNP staff meant that it was difficult to coordinate their availability with other activities—not necessarily those of the DFAPs but of other bodies, especially public works administration. The same constraint affected DFAP trainings in Amhara and in Tigray, where *woreda*-level staff in particular were continually involved in meetings.
- Staff turnover was also a challenge, not only amongst government staff, but even amongst the DFAPs (e.g., the gender officer and MCHN experts in Tigray). This was reported to be not only a waste of resources but also to hinder the development of a working relationship and coordination between DFAPs and GoE staff on the ground. DFAP management in both Lasta and Simada noted that *woreda* staff were very busy and hard to access. Only over time was it possible to develop the sort of “open door” relationship with them necessary to facilitate effective program implementation. Often the effort put into developing such a relationship was wasted, as *woreda* staff were so frequently replaced. The same was true of DAs, many of whom had been on the ground for less than a year when interviewed for this evaluation and who could scarcely comment on the needs of the communities and achievements of the DFAPs, or their relationship with DFAP agents.

The following findings on program management cover the strengths, weaknesses, achievements, and challenges of program management in the **lowlands**.

Strengths

A prime strength of program management was the clear understanding and communication by all parties that the role of SCI in the DFAP has essentially been in facilitation of the implementation of DFAP activities. While the most important level of management for the PSNP, and thus for the DFAP, was at zonal level, the main engagement of SCI was at *woreda* level, where the WFSTF was the key element linking SCI and government, and SCI provided technical specialists for thematic areas. *Woreda* experts and SCI jointly developed plans, and once agreed, the Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) was worked out and MoU signed. There was joint involvement with *woreda* government and community members throughout the project cycle (need identification, planning, implementation, and M&E), and SCI facilitated quality delivery of program activities.

The WFSTF took the lead in screening and selection of beneficiaries; SCI coordinated with the WFSTF. Addressing appeals on exclusion or inclusion was a responsibility of the WFSTF. However, SCI gave technical and logistic support to the forming of committees at *woreda* and *kebele* levels, a successful approach that helped the smooth operation of program activities and created effective engagement of all parties in the planning and monitoring of food transfers.

SCI assisted government at *kebele* level in drawing up Community Action Plans, which prioritized and planned public works for implementation under DFAP, and also other community-defined needs. Prior to implementation of any public works, an Environmental and Social Monitoring Form was filled in, to avoid adverse environmental and social impacts and to ensure sustainability. GPS readings were also taken for public works to allow subsequent analysis.

Weaknesses

- High staff turnover in government could act as a brake on learning and smooth implementation, though the Task Force system, in which SCI staff were able to deal collectively with government officers responsible for different sectors, partially mitigated this.
- There was some evidence that proper implementation of the DFAP has conflicted at times with other government priorities. As one of the SCI reports states, “Political and conflicting development agendas have made it difficult to engage in a smooth manner with the *woreda* and *kebele* leadership. The program has revised its capacity-building strategy to anticipate and deal with these new realities.” A particular manifestation has been that mass

mobilization of unpaid labor, to which local government was strongly politically committed, to some extent affected the program coordination and integration in some *kebeles*.

- Another weakness was that plans for closeout of the program were not well communicated to government at *woreda* level, and *woreda* governments could not engage in the process. Dissatisfaction with “hearing about the closeout by word of mouth” was registered strongly by the WFSTF in Dhas and the KFSTF in Arero, but communication had been better at the zonal level.
- Collaboration with other NGO-implemented programs in the zone, even those implemented by SCI (such as the ECHO (The European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department)-funded Borena Resilience Programme) and even at a basic level of sharing logistics, was minimal.

Achievements

In general, the program has been consistently well managed throughout all regions, and there has been good coordination between the different elements and operations of the program. In particular, food distribution has been well and promptly organized after public works completion; and training and experience sharing have supported the effective implementation of public works, food disbursement, and efficient utilization of budgets and physical assets.

Coordination between government and SCI is manifested in regular review meetings and reporting. Annual plans and quarterly, biannual, and annual reports (narrative reports, financial reports, and commodity disbursements reports) are kept available at *kebele* and *woreda* offices. Besides communication between government and SCI, the program as a whole has had good communication with beneficiary communities. In general, good information flow and transparency between stakeholders in DFAP was taken for granted in comments made to the evaluation team.

Challenges

The points discussed under “weaknesses” above can also be regarded as challenges for any future DFAP-type program in the lowlands: the need to deal with high government staff turnover, to adapt to conflicting government priorities, and to improve collaboration with other NGO programs.

2.4.2 Coordination

Coordination between the IPs: The Title II Coordination Group (T2CG) was set up specifically to promote coordination between the IPs and with USAID. Its Steering Committee, consisting of the four IP Country Directors and USAID, met on a quarterly basis. Its Technical Committee consisted of the four Chiefs of Party (COPs) and coordinated the activities of five learning groups.⁸⁵ The activities of the learning groups were shared amongst all IPs and led to the adoption of some practices (e.g., the use of uniformed female “scoopers” to speed up food distribution, as initially practiced by FH/E, across all the IPs). In general, however, COPs suggested that they found personal communication to be more effective in learning of and adopting new practices.

Coordination between programs: In Tigray, REST management integrated different interventions, including the DFAP, within a water-centered watershed management approach. This allowed REST to focus DFAP resources on key areas, while utilizing other programs to increase the coverage and depth of the interventions. For example, The International Center for Research in Agroforestry has assisted in the financing of aspects of watershed development, while collaboration with the NGO Concern has broadened outreach in the areas of WASH and nutrition. In Raya Azebo, REST was also able to link with the GRAD program that it was implementing to facilitate the transition of households out of the DFAP. One other outstanding area of coordination was the use of capital resources to provide a guarantee to facilitate the provision of financing to RuSACCOs for onward lending to GRAD and DFAP beneficiaries. Through such facilities, it was possible for some DFAP households to access water pumps and poultry so as to take advantage of irrigation small business development opportunities.

In Oromia/Dire Dawa, CRS used matching funds to support WASH activities.⁸⁶ These included the construction by Harare Catholic Secretariat of potable water supply in Melka Belo and Goro Gutu *woredas*. In Amhara, FH/E and ORDA coordinated with the NGO Action Contre La Faim to develop WASH infrastructure in Sekota as well as providing coordinated support to the capacity development of the local health services. In all regions, coordination with JEOP allowed IPs to make maximum use of warehouse facilities and to ensure the timely distribution of transfers

⁸⁵ The groups covered: Health and Nutrition, Monitoring and Evaluation, Gender, Commodity Management/Transfers, and NRM.

⁸⁶ In 2016, CRS allocated USD 134,000 as a matching fund.

Coordination with government: In Tigray, all of the interventions undertaken by REST appeared to be closely coordinated with local and regional government. In Oromia, coordination with local government was an important factor leading to the appointment of women as deputy chairpersons of FSTFs and other committees and the development of linkages between various initiatives,⁸⁷ while the soil and water conservation activities undertaken by FH/E and ORDA in Lasta were developed from interventions that had been initiated previously by local authorities in the same areas.

Coordination with government was critical to the sustainability of community assets. All IPs had placed considerable emphasis on the development of appropriate handover strategies whereby community assets, once completed, could be passed to community or user groups for ongoing management, albeit under the purview of local government. Notably, such coordination, which definitely enhanced the sustainability of community assets, was markedly stronger in all regions than the coordination required to enhance the sustainability of food security amongst graduate households.

2.4.3 Monitoring and evaluation systems

Substantial volumes of data are collected on a regular basis and reflected in the DIPs and IPTTs that are submitted annually by each IP to USAID. The DIPs are comprehensive documents that list more than 270 individual activities that are expected to take place, together with the actual level of performance achieved. The IPTTs show the progress made against 50 or more different indicators.⁸⁸ USAID guidelines⁸⁹ suggest the use of no more than 2 or 3 indicators and preferably 1 per result. On this basis, the maximum number of indicators would be no more than 36. The DFAP programs exceed this by 50% or more. In addition, each IP completes a Standard Annual Performance Questionnaire (SAPQ) that tracks progress against FFP indicators. The DIPs are comprehensively updated at least annually, indicating the wealth of in-house information available to management. This is reflected in the generally high management performance witnessed across all of the IPs and their subcontracted agencies. Management teams in all IPs appear to be well informed of the deployment of the resources at their disposal and of their activities and results.

The IPTTs are less regularly updated since while some

indicators are updated annually, many are not. Most importantly, 54 of the indicators tracked by FH/E are impact and outcome indicators that best reflect the real effectiveness of the program. Of these, 36 are measured at the beginning and end of the program only. The corresponding figure for CRS is 24 impact and outcome indicators, all of which are only measured at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the program. By contrast, only 4 of the 42 impact and outcome indicators monitored by REST are measured at the beginning, midpoint, and endpoint; the balance (38 indicators) are assessed annually. This may have implications for the effectiveness of the M&E systems. If the program management is effectively “flying blind” for two-year periods, relying only upon the expected linkages between outputs and outcomes, then the final outcomes and impacts may not be as expected. It might be more effective to have more frequent assessments of key outcomes that would allow the verification of expected linkages and the monitoring of real, as opposed to assumed, progress towards program goals.

Mechanisms were set up to share M&E results between the IPs, including the Knowledge Management Unit, headed by a Knowledge Management Coordinator, which acted as a secretariat for the T2CG Technical Committee that met to share technical information learned from the individual DFAPs. The Coordinator has taken responsibility for developing the annual knowledge management plan, has captured successful interventions, and has reported on best lessons learned. The Knowledge Management Unit also coordinated the work of the M&E learning group, which met three times a year. M&E officers from each NGO contributed to the lessons shared amongst all four IPs. Nevertheless, it was reported by the Knowledge Management Unit that the M&E teams in respective IPs did not routinely contribute to the work of the Unit and did not sufficiently serve as providers of knowledge or lessons learned, largely because of other work commitments. The Coordinator noted that there is a risk that the knowledge gained in the current DFAP might be lost in the new DFAP, because of a) high staff turnover at government offices and b) the ending of the DFAP in pastoral areas. It was also reported that there is no organized knowledge management system that cuts across the DFAPs and other USAID programs implemented by various NGOs.

In the **highlands**, IP agents in the field suggested that M&E systems were working well and that the data required by the IPTT systems were both available and

⁸⁷ Including school gender clubs, sanitary pad distribution, and fuel-efficient cook stove production.

⁸⁸ In the case of FH/E, the number of indicators in the IPTT exceeds 110.

⁸⁹ USAID Performance Management Plan (PMP) Toolkit: A Guide for Missions on Planning for, Developing, Updating, and Actively Using a PMP, October 2013, Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research, Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL/LER), page 27.

being collected regularly. Other useful data were also being collected. In particular, the outcomes from training of HEWs was well assessed by CRS and FH/E using Knowledge, Practice, and Coverage (KPC) surveys. Few other training activities were monitored in this way, but it was evident that such surveys can provide useful information to management and incentivizes those involved in project implementation on the ground.

It was observed that there was a paucity of M&E staff at the *woreda* level. Technical staff at the *woreda* level were mainly focused on process monitoring. This limited the capacity of *woreda*-level managers to respond to the results of their activities. There was also little capacity to share M&E data collected by the DFAP IPs with counterparts in government. Although this could be done on an *ad hoc* basis, regular data- and information-sharing procedures were not evident.

At the grassroots level, the most obvious deficit in M&E was the almost complete lack of monitoring of graduate households. While REST did conduct one post-graduation assessment, there was otherwise no systematic collection of data from graduate households that would allow the DFAP to monitor the sustainability and overall effectiveness of its activities. An ongoing post-graduate assessment procedure might have provided the data necessary to advocate for the modification of the forced graduation process, but this was not done, and so the potential for lessons learned is reduced.

In terms of the conversion of M&E results into lessons learned, the narratives of annual results reports consistently consist of approximately 90% results and 10% lessons learned. The lessons are compressed into a small number of paragraphs that are enough to provide the reader with a basic understanding of the subject under discussion but not the underlying causes and effects. They serve as headlines that spark some interest from readers, but are not of themselves adequate to share either knowledge or experience.

In the lowlands:

- M&E committees were established and strengthened at community and *woreda* levels.
- These committees received training on M&E concepts and systems, including participatory M&E.
- M&E plans were jointly developed by SCI and the *woreda* M&E teams. SCI provided the technical support in developing the M&E plans. Training was provided on the M&E tool to the *woreda* technical teams.

- Based on agreed M&E plans and tools, data were collected, analyzed, and used by all concerned bodies.
- Regular field supervision was carried out to identify gaps, to provide technical support, and to take corrective measures when necessary.
- M&E reports were prepared, documented, and shared (monthly, quarterly, biannually, and annually).
- *Woreda*-level M&E brought together M&E of DFAP and other project activities, a welcome development, as it provided opportunities to document lessons learned and identify challenges.

In general, the DFAP exhibited a good structure for M&E with country-level meetings (twice a year) of the M&E and Learning (MEAL) officers from the *woredas*. The recommendations from this meeting were cascaded to the *woreda* and *kebele* levels through mini-workshops and informal gatherings. Effective feedback was also provided during visits to the field by country-level staff. Examples were given of changes in practice following visits by country staff (increased standardization of *birka* design by exchange visits between *woredas* and by zonal SCI M&E staff (termination of contractors' contracts for inadequate work)). Despite the copious written documentation, much less feedback came from the country office to Borena through written responses. Field-level staff expressed satisfaction with the effectiveness of the M&E and the extent to which the knowledge generated from the M&E contributed to program implementation. However, the M&E system did not sufficiently incorporate the pilot livelihood activities.

2.4.4 Sustainability

Highlands

Community assets—Where users benefitted directly from the community assets, FGDs and interviews with DFAP staff confirmed that they were willing to commit to the maintenance of those assets. Users of irrigation systems were willing to clean out canals and rebuild earthworks (e.g., in Simada, Lasta, Raya Azebo, and Samre Saharte), while those using water points were willing to pay levies, exclude animals, and maintain levels of hygiene⁹⁰ around newly created reservoirs. Youths undertaking forage production from area closures had either employed guards (Samre Saharte) or protected the areas themselves (Simada) in order to protect the forage from grazing. Communities in almost all of the areas visited confirmed that the

⁹⁰ In one instance, users even removed their shoes before walking down to a reservoir impounded by a new concrete dam constructed in Amhara under the DFAP.



Removal of silt from canals was not considered to be a problem and was undertaken regularly.

maintenance of soil and water conservation works would be undertaken through free labor. In some areas in Oromia, community water technicians had been trained up and formed into groups by the IP. The groups were designed to provide a maintenance service to the community on a cost basis but would hand over responsibility to the local government if the work was beyond their capacity.

Conversely, where there were few direct benefits to individuals (even though there might be significant benefits to the community as a whole), local commitment to ensure sustainability was less certain. A newly renovated school in Lasta appeared in a state of disrepair even though it was only two years old, while the tap on the water tank constructed under the DFAP on the same site was broken, rendering the tank nonfunctional. Cut and carry forage

systems were not always respected by some community members in Simada, who allowed their livestock to graze at will.

Regionally, it was learned that the regional government of Tigray has recognized the importance of effective users' associations as an element of sustainable watershed management and has passed a proclamation to regularize the formation of users' associations and their bylaws. This suggests that such associations in Tigray would be better supported than those set up in other regions, although this could not be objectively verified. At the individual *kebele* level, it was found that not all users' associations were as viable as suggested, and that some associations, although set up in name, were not yet coherent. Disagreements within the committee set up to maintain a watering point were reported to the evaluation team in Amhara,

suggesting that the handover process had not been completed satisfactorily and that the sustainability of the asset was not necessarily guaranteed. There is no reason to suppose that such disagreements were unique.

Overall, therefore, the evaluation team found that the sustainability of community assets depended more than anything else upon the commitment of beneficiaries and in this regard on the extent of the benefit to the individuals charged to maintain them. The theme often quoted by DFAP agents that “the users will be responsible for the assets with the support of government” appeared to be a simplification of a potentially complex situation.

Livelihood development activities—Forage production from area closures and reclaimed gully areas appears to be sustainable as an IGA for which the opportunity costs are currently favorably offset by the benefits. The same cannot yet be said for fruit and timber production, which are as yet untested in terms of income generation. Small-scale irrigation is similarly sustainable as a livelihood, provided that: there is adequate surface or ground water reserves; there is adequate extension available to support new users of irrigation;⁹¹ and markets for the crops grown remain viable. Vegetable producers in some DFAP areas face both transport costs and market uncertainties⁹² that have not been well assessed. There is no certainty that prices for onions, garlic, and tomatoes (the three main crops being produced) will remain profitable. Beekeeping is one livelihood that was developed in Tigray to allow youth to take advantage of area closures. This does appear to be sustainable in that the domestic demand for honey is consistently strong, driven mainly by the market for *tej* (mead/honey wine).

Livelihood support—The sustainability of education-focused livelihood supports (women’s literacy groups and adult basic education) is not strong. The systems have been handed to GoE, which has formalized them, but GoE education capacity is already fully stretched. It has failed in the past to maintain such systems. In Oromia, the handover was delayed because the GoE was not ready to take responsibility for the programs. In contrast, the sustainability of savings/self-help groups appears to be quite strong. Experience elsewhere in Ethiopia has shown that such groups are often maintained for years after the program that began them has ended.⁹³ Such groups appear to have been well established in Oromia and Amhara, and it can be expected that both the

groups themselves and the benefits associated with them (including gender empowerment, financial capacity development, and improved resilience) will be sustained for some time into the future.

MCHN and WASH interventions—Improved mother and child nutrition appears to be most sustainable in those areas where behavior change can be reinforced by the availability of appropriate foods. In those areas where the availability of water is adequate to support backyard gardening for a substantial part of the year and where there is adequate space and feed to support poultry, it can be expected that nutritional outcomes will be sustainably enhanced. Conversely, where messaging alone has been provided, it is unlikely that behavior change will be sustainable. WASH interventions are subject to the same concerns. Messages have been well received, but unless they can be acted upon, especially with regard to the availability of water, it is unlikely that sustainable change will occur. In highland areas, these findings were common especially to Amhara and Oromia/Dire Dawa.

Gender empowerment—The progress made in gender empowerment appears to be sustainable wherever women’s education has occurred in conjunction with a change in attitude in the community. In such circumstances, progress appears to be self-reinforcing and irreversible. In other cases, where community attitudes are not yet open to women’s empowerment, women who have benefitted from education may not be able to realize their full capabilities. Generally, however, given government’s strong support for gender equity, it is quite probable that the gains made by women during the course of the DFAPs will be sustainable in Tigray and Oromia, although that appears less certain in Amhara.

Lowlands

There were high expectations from beneficiaries that public works (water provision and *kalos*) will give lasting benefits to the community, that beneficiaries can and will maintain them unpaid on an ongoing basis, and that bylaws that have been instituted limiting access will continue to function. There was also some transfer of skills during public works construction that will be useful for conservation or farming. All *kalos* built by the DFAP are communally owned and managed. Most are, or shortly will be, limited by bylaw to grazing of young stock and/or cut and carry forage for sale by poorer beneficiaries.

⁹¹ It was observed that the agronomic practices of some farmers were inefficient and would have benefitted from extension advice. Tigray is the only region to have addressed this issue by strengthening water resource extension capacity.

⁹² Youth in Simada reported that they generated income from forage production of approximately Eth Birr 1,500 per year each. Concerns over marketing and prices were expressed by irrigated growers in Waza (Samre Saharte), Chercher (Raya Azebo), and Simada, as well as by honey producers in Tanqua Abergele.

⁹³ In SNNPR (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region) and Somali Region, 60% of the savings groups initiated by CHF International as part of the Somali Region PSNP were still in existence five years after the program had ended.



Improved chickens distributed by DFAP partners

The spread of *kalos*, including large-scale private *kalos*, as a broader socio-economic trend in Borena has been associated with the creeping privatization of communal rangelands, limitations on pastoral migration, and loss of resilience. DFAP-sponsored *kalos* constitute a small proportion of total *kalo* area in Borena, and the team is not saying here that DFAP *kalos* are necessarily making any significant contribution to declining opportunities for pastoral mobility. *Kalos* sponsored by DFAP, and more broadly by PSNP, need further study in the overall context of private and communal enclosure and limitations on drought-related mobility.

Management skills transferred to government and to community members at different levels by formal and informal capacity building will continue to be useful in a post-DFAP phase in Borena (i.e., a shift to a mainstream PSNP model in the DFAP *woredas*). However, the high mobility of government officials will tend to dissipate gains at this level as time goes by. Gender empowerment amongst women in beneficiary communities can be sustainable, but its attribution to DFAP activities is problematic.

There are strong perceptions that livestock holdings of beneficiaries, by far the most significant category of household assets, have either increased (in Yabello *woreda*) or been stabilized (in Arero and Dhas *woredas*). However, the team noted widespread concern about the potential impacts of a failure of the *haggaya* (September–November) rains that were overdue at the time of fieldwork. Concern of this magnitude over a single season's rainfall failure, which many observers believe would have been coped with more easily in past decades, suggests decreasing resilience of the overall system.

As noted above, livelihood support/diversification activities within the DFAP were too few, too late, and under-designed to contribute to overall resilience.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The purpose of this section is to answer the evaluation questions based on evidence from the findings.

3.1 DFAP Design and Effectiveness—Conclusions

The design and implementation strategies vary in some aspects amongst the four DFAP programs, but for the highland areas, each program comprised the following, often integrated, common basic elements:

- a) Transfers of food or cash⁹⁴ on a regular basis, generally in exchange for public works;
- b) Development of community assets;
- c) Livelihood support activities designed to promote economic development, health, and nutrition;
- d) Targeted messaging designed to promote behavioral change in MCHN, WASH, and gender equity;
- e) Extensive training of community and government representatives at different levels in a range of skills and activities related to the programs.

For the Borena DFAP, relevant features of the Borena pastoral context are significant to the design issues, including: communal management of rangelands, though this is being weakened by enclosure; pastoral mobility, though this is also in steep decline; lack of non-pastoral employment opportunities; and low educational participation.

3.1.1 To what extent was the design of the DFAP's program well suited/matched to deliver the planned objectives/resilience-building goal of the programs?

Food transfers—design issues

The food transfer element of each DFAP was closely aligned with the PSNP PIM. The following conclusions are relevant to all highland programs. The design of the transfer system is relatively simplistic. It was originally based upon two types of beneficiary: the Permanent Direct Support Beneficiary (PDSB), who received a transfer without working for it, and the standard beneficiary, who

was obliged to provide five days of labor in exchange for each monthly transfer. Under PSNP4, this has now become more nuanced, so that PLW are no longer obliged to work for a period before and after giving birth,⁹⁵ and women in general are required to work shorter hours than men. PDSBs now receive 12 months of transfers, while standard beneficiaries receive six months' support conditional upon 30 days' work per beneficiary per year. Despite the more nuanced design, the arrangement still ignores the considerable variation in beneficiary circumstances.

The food transfers themselves reflect the basic needs of beneficiary communities in terms of volume, content, and timing, but there are some concerns. Standard transfers do not match the timing needs of beneficiaries who are landless. Without the means to produce their own food, landless households experience a twelve-month food gap that the six-month transfer does not fill. Landless households require a more nuanced timing of transfers that reflects their limited income-generation capacity. The distribution of transfers is also a problem for those PDSBs who lack the capacity to travel to distribution points and/or to transport food back to their homes. The in-kind cost of transport can amount to as much as 30% of the transfer.⁹⁶ Specific measures need to be taken to ensure that PDSBs can receive their full transfer. For larger households, the volume of the transfer has now become an issue. Under PSNP4, households with more than five family members are no longer eligible for full family targeting, and this newly introduced limit of five places per household is creating increased stress. (Although full family targeting was not always achieved under PSNP3, transfers were nevertheless larger on a per-household basis.) Given that approximately 39% of rural households exceed this threshold,⁹⁷ it is inevitable that the revised transfer policy design will be less effective in addressing food security needs.

Under PSNP4, the content of the ration has been reduced to 15 kg of cereals and 4 kg of pulses. PDSBs in particular noted that their food transfers under PSNP3 had enhanced their nutrition through the inclusion of vitamin-fortified vegetable oil in the ration. Now that this benefit has been discontinued, their dietary diversity has decreased. One survey taken towards the end of the DFAP period also

⁹⁴ Food only for USAID.

⁹⁵ Under the PSNP4, PLW are expected to work less but to attend behavioral change communication sessions in lieu of the work.

⁹⁶ This was especially the case in Dire Dawa and in Finawa (Samre Saharte), where the cost of transport was reported to be Eth Birr 75.

⁹⁷ Central Statistical Agency, 2010/11 Ethiopian Households Consumption-Expenditure (HCE) Survey, Table A2.3(a).

showed that PLW had only consumed 1.8 food groups in the previous week, suggesting that simple additions to the standard ration, or even the inclusion of mobile cash-linked vegetable vouchers,⁹⁸ might substantially enhance the impact of transfers on dietary diversity.

The program design encompasses conditionality on the food transfers. In other countries, FFP programs have used different transfer modalities to support basic food sufficiency. Some transfers have been conditional upon education, participation in health and nutrition trainings and activities, and/or upon child vaccination/clinic attendance. Others, recognizing the value of a “consumptive stipend” towards the development of livelihoods, have been unconditional. The main reasons for not adopting a more liberal approach towards transfers here appear to be the fear of developing dependency amongst beneficiaries and concerns that a more liberal transfer system might be considered inequitable by some members of targeted communities. Neither of these concerns is supported by concrete evidence.

In the Borena DFAP, selective targeting was used to identify beneficiaries, and despite concerns expressed for other pastoral areas of Ethiopia,⁹⁹ there was no evidence that targeting the poorest was regarded as problematic in terms of local cultural norms—either because the poor were seen as undeserving of assistance or because there were expectations that aid should be shared across the community. The idea that beneficiaries should be those with no livestock, or small numbers of small stock only, commanded widespread agreement. Informants spoke of limited sharing with neighbors immediately after distribution but not generally to an extent that interfered with the benefits of the program to its target group. There was also no criticism voiced over the fact that the program distributed food rather than cash. Some informants thought that cash would mean that beneficiaries would have to make two journeys, one to collect cash and another to a market to buy the food. Some hinted that cash payments might be monopolized by men and spent on alcohol or *khat* rather than food for families. It was, however, a major and widespread concern across the three *woredas* that food transfers had become limited to only five family members per household. This concern tended to dominate discussions of the adequacy of the ration and the proportion of the year for which beneficiaries experienced food security.

Public works/community assets—design issues

The functionality of irrigation systems was highest when

based upon gravity-fed weirs, or spring capture, and canals to irrigable lands downstream. In some cases, dams were used to impound water that could then be pumped uphill to feed terraces or other irrigated areas. These might be considered less functional, as they are dependent upon fuel and spare parts to be effective, yet their continued functionality after some years suggested that irrigated vegetable production had been profitable enough to enable proper pump maintenance and function. Similarly, the functionality of most DFAP water points (both reservoirs and wells) appeared to be high. In one instance, hand-dug wells had failed, but this appeared to be due to GoE siting issues. In one other area, DFAP hand-dug wells had also failed, but the area as a whole had experienced a 50% failure rate due to a gradual decline in ground water. In general, however, the functionality of water points and the diesel pumps used to operate them appeared to be high.

In Tigray, the emphasis upon soil and water conservation as the underlying principle of all programs has led to dramatic improvements in food security in some *woredas*, but this tends to be only in those areas that are well suited to a water conservation approach; other communities receive few benefits beyond the transfers. Similarly, in Amhara, there has been a shift in focus over the last two years of the program to the use of water for productive purposes, especially small-scale irrigation. This has in some cases resulted in watershed development programs that are unbalanced. Development has been focused on downstream irrigation, without adequate upstream conservation measures or the equitable development of facilities such as water points in communities farther up the watersheds where beneficiary numbers and needs might be greater.

The public works/community assets undertaken by the DFAPs are both extensive and impressive. They unquestionably contribute to the development of the communities in which they are situated, but their contribution towards the food security of DFAP beneficiaries is often less evident. Where DFAP community asset design focuses on watershed management, the food security of the poorest beneficiaries (who have little, marginal, or no land) is only enhanced when they are also provided with productive opportunities. In this regard, the bench terraces constructed in Tigray and Amhara have the potential (although as yet unrealized) to provide livelihoods to those who would otherwise be unable to support themselves. Area closures and gully reclamation activities have created possibilities for income generation through fodder and fruit

⁹⁸ Under the “Belcash” network in Ethiopia, funds can be transferred to an individual by mobile phone, with limited redeemability—i.e., it can be specified at source that the funds can only be redeemed by beneficiaries (for cash or other goods) from specific agents. This creates the opportunity to transfer cash that might, for example, only be redeemed from nominated vegetable sellers.

⁹⁹ For example, Behnke, Desta, and Kerven, 2014, Final Report on PSNP Re-Design for Lowland Ethiopia.

production. The development of dam and canal-based small-scale irrigation systems also provides households with the opportunity to increase incomes substantially.

Overall, the watershed development activities tend to benefit those outside the DFAPs more, which is not unexpected since the community selection of public works involves all of the community, not DFAP beneficiaries alone. The majority of households that benefit from the reduced erosion, reduced flooding, and increased soil moisture content are those with productive land. Similarly, the majority of households utilizing small-scale irrigation schemes are those with lands closest to waterways, who were already food secure. It might be argued that watershed benefits that accrue to non-DFAP beneficiaries might ultimately trickle down to DFAP beneficiaries through the creation of employment opportunities. In practice, the evaluation team saw little evidence of this effect. Most productive households have excess in-house labor capacity that will normally be used in preference to the employment of others. This general conclusion could be drawn for all highland areas.

In the Borena DFAP, beneficiaries broadly accepted the essential principle of transfer of food in return for participation in public works, and there was little criticism of the ways in which work was organized, monitored, and remunerated. The choice of works itself was also generally approved, with beneficiaries expressing high levels of satisfaction with *birkas* for water supply and with enclosures in various combinations with bush thinning and soil and water conservation. These categories of works were seen as beneficial to the communities and to the poorest (through preferential bylaws giving the poorest the right to graze young stock or cut fodder in the enclosures), sustainable into the future, and not presenting problems by either limiting pastoral mobility or exacerbating any inter-community conflict or tension.

Livelihood support activities—design issues

Several of the DFAPs were designed to include a range of livelihood support activities aimed at increasing access to food through income generation. These included the development of savings/self-help groups, support (through training, loans, and assets) for specific IGAs, labor-based employment opportunities, and more general support

(including training) for activities promoted under HABP. These interventions vary in their relevance and suitability:

- 1) Savings/self-help groups can increase income through the provision of loans for petty trade, but revenues are generally small and their impact on food security appears to be limited, although women will tend to purchase more diverse foods.¹⁰⁰
- 2) In Tigray, the program design provided for youth labor-based employment outside of the public works activities,¹⁰¹ financed from the DFAP capital budget. Although this provides extra income to enhance food security, it is a short-term intervention and a coping strategy rather than a livelihood support.

Training in financial literacy, business development, and associated subjects was provided in some areas, mainly in support of IGAs. These are unlikely to enhance food security significantly unless income-generating opportunities are actually available.

Where DFAP program design incorporated nutritionally-focused (rather than income-focused) livelihood support interventions, the outlook is more positive. Interventions in this category included the provision of poultry and backyard gardening (in some cases, keyhole gardening) support to PLW. Beneficiaries were generally highly appreciative of the poultry¹⁰² and reported feeding their eggs to children as advised, generating a perceived positive impact upon nutrition. Closer scrutiny suggests that the intervention should be designed with a stronger focus on local conditions¹⁰³ in order to be sustainable. The training in backyard gardening for the production of vegetables is a successful approach as long as there is ready access to water. In many *woredas*, vegetable production is only practiced during the rains.¹⁰⁴ Some respondents (approximately 25% of all households with gardens) reported being able to sell some part of their produce but also frequently reported the difficulty in obtaining appropriate vegetable seeds—an issue which should have been anticipated. Greater emphasis was placed upon savings groups in Oromia/Dire Dawa and Amhara than in Tigray, where savings was generally linked to specific livelihood activities. The opportunity for a wider impact from savings activities was largely foregone in the latter region.

¹⁰⁰ This finding was particularly evident in Amhara and Oromia/Dire Dawa.

¹⁰¹ The same was done in Amhara, but not exclusively for youth and/or beneficiaries.

¹⁰² This was reported in Sekota, Lasta, and Simada—all FH/E *woredas*.

¹⁰³ Concerns included the hybrid breeding of the birds supplied, their refined dietary requirements, short productive lifespan, and poor sitting capacity. Birds better adapted to a lower-quality diet, with a longer, albeit lower, productive capacity and ones who are good at sitting might provide a more sustainable impact.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., in Dire Dawa, due to the scarcity of water, almost none of the women interviewed were growing vegetables.

MCHN/WASH activities—design issues

The design of several of the DFAPs includes targeted messaging aimed at promoting behavioral change in the areas of MCHN and WASH. The types of messages appear appropriate, but there was concern regarding the cascading delivery mechanisms. Beneficiaries reported, “We are trained repeatedly” during public works, at community conversation groups, and at other gatherings. Although some found the repetition boring, most appreciated the message. The design flaw here is the excessive workload and bottlenecks for HEWs. To bridge this gap, DFAP staff, animators, and community facilitators have played an important supportive role. Specific DFAP messaging techniques such as drama clubs, food preparation sessions, and coffee ceremonies were especially appreciated, but the exit strategy is not clear. Once the DFAPs end, the HEWs will not be able to communicate the MCHN/WASH messages to the community. (One possibility is the use of savings/self-help groups, which are effective in gathering women into groups at which animators would be able to reinforce MCHN and WASH messaging.)

The major design issue with the MCHN/WASH activities, however, is that communities are constrained in adopting the recommendations that they have learned due to infrastructural constraints not being addressed, mainly water access. One HEW reported that even the health post lacked access to water, and that while she could teach the principles of WASH to the community, she herself could not apply them. In other cases, beneficiaries noted wryly that they had filled the water bottles outside their latrines especially for the evaluation team’s inspection, but that the difficulty in drawing water meant that normally they would not be unable to maintain that standard. These design issues were reported across all highland regions.

(Details related to the design of the behavioral change messages targeted at gender equality and empowerment are covered in section 3.3 below)

Capacity development initiatives—design issues

The inclusion of extensive capacity development initiatives in each of the DFAP designs is highly commended. They include the training of regional- and *woreda*-level staff, as well as the training of *kebele* and community agents (foremen) and members. The most common method of training has been the cascading Training of Trainers (ToT) approach, which is well suited to the situations in which the DFAPs are implemented; i.e., the need to deliver relatively simple messages to very large numbers of people. Other methods have been based around groups—including community groups, savings groups, drama

audiences, and the public works groups (delivering messages both during and after work), as well as the recruitment of facilitators and animators to reduce the ratio of trainers to trainees.

The training of HEWs, the use of animators and facilitators, and the repetition of messages through different media and at different fora also resulted in high levels of transmission of MCHN and WASH messaging. PIM implementation and DRM capacity has also reportedly been enhanced,¹⁰⁵ especially with regard to technical aspects such as NRM and water and soil conservation works. At the *kebele* and community level, cascaded training has clearly strengthened community management committees, user groups, and savings groups. In general, it was evident that the enthusiasm of trainees to be trained and to use their knowledge increased with increasing proximity to the field level. Training in procedures was also well received by *woreda*- and *kebele*-level staff, noting that GoE procedures were often changing and that it was important to be kept up to date with the latest developments.

The suitability of the capacity development approach in emphasizing ToT was consistently compromised by three factors, however:

- Some *woreda*-level trainees reported that the training they received was too theoretical to be passed down to the *kebele* and community level, while other trainees reported that they learned nothing new from the trainings that they had received. (This was especially the case for DAs, many of whom were new graduates who had been recently taught subjects such as NRM at university.)
- The GoE, rather than DFAP staff, undertook the selection of trainees. Those selected sometimes regarded the training more as a source of income (*per diems*) than as an obligation to undertake ToT,¹⁰⁶ with the result that the messaging was not always well transferred or even transferred at all.
- High levels of turnover amongst GoE staff, especially DAs and HEWs, meant that continual retraining was required; otherwise, *woredas* and *kebeles* would be without trained staff for two years or more.

These factors were observed across all regions. Nevertheless, the training given to HEWs was more on job training and more practical. HEWs reported that it was very useful and much appreciated.

¹⁰⁵ Although there is no counterfactual to measure the impact, WFSTF members repeatedly emphasized that their capacity and performance had been enhanced through DFAP training.

¹⁰⁶ In some instances, training was perceived to confer unique knowledge and associated status that some trainees were unwilling to share.

Considerable resources have been spent by the DFAPs on training for capacity development. When training is targeted, and the trainees are able and motivated to cascade their knowledge, the results can be substantial. But there is scope for the design of the training process to be improved with enhanced focus of messaging, improved targeting of trainees, and the introduction of alternative/additional systems that can reduce the impact of staff turnover.

In the lowlands DFAP, as a result of the capacity-building activities, WFSTFs and KFSTFs and community members were increasingly engaged in the management of program implementation. Post-training action planning, follow-up processes, and monitoring with *woreda* and *kebele* trainees were put in place. The capacity building assisted the DAs to do their work more effectively, improved their ability to carry out effective targeting, and improved their implementation capacity on public works. Beneficiaries expressed increased awareness about how the program components should be implemented and the importance of participatory processes and local ownership. By inclusion into the capacity-building activities of the Do No Harm principle¹⁰⁷ to promote better holistic analysis of the programming context and its impacts so that activities neither cause nor exacerbate conflict or tensions amongst the communities, the program was able to implement its activities in circumstances where inter-clan conflicts were active in some of its intervention areas. High staff turnover within government also presented a problem for capacity building. However, task forces are able to appoint replacements in the absence of the designated individual, which helps to ensure continuity and also reduces gaps when one or the other officer is engaged elsewhere or transferred. In the case of DAs,¹⁰⁸ foremen were able to serve as substitutes where needed.

For the Borena DFAP, the food transfers, public works, and associated capacity-building activities were all seen as important contributions to increasing the food security of the poorest and the resilience of wider communities. It was clear, however, that they were not sufficient for building resilience on a wider scale. To do that would require interventions in livelihood diversification well beyond the late, small-scale, and inadequately planned pilot livelihood support activities included in DFAP. More broadly,

building pastoral resilience will also require interventions in a) livestock marketing and b) policy on land and natural resource management, including countering the enclosure and individuation of Borena rangelands and maintaining at least some possibilities for pastoral mobility, especially in drought years. Although a DFAP nested within PSNP is not the most appropriate vehicle for these interventions, better integration between government, bilateral donors, and NGO activities is needed across a broad range of interventions to increase resilience.

3.1.2 How well were DFAPs able to achieve desired results against the project goal and objectives?

Impact of transfers on increased household food security

According to PSNP terminology, almost all beneficiary households that received transfers were moved closer to food sufficiency, but few managed to achieve sustainable food security. The capacity of households to meet their food needs was substantially increased by the DFAP transfers, but underlying increases in productive capacity or purchasing power were small and not evident across all households. The extent to which DFAP transfers enhanced food sufficiency varied according to household size. Most households reported a three- to four-month reduction in the number of months in which they experienced food shortage, but for larger households the reduction was reportedly less.

For those households that have remained in the programs, food security tended to increase over the first four years and fell in the fifth year as a result of the drought. Attribution of the increase is difficult. The balance of evidence suggests that the DFAPs provided the support necessary for households to sustain themselves, so that those with productive capacity (especially land and labor) could take advantage of reasonable weather conditions to increase their underlying food security, while those with less productive capacity made correspondingly fewer gains. In the last year of the program, the effect of the drought was to reduce food security levels, an effect which was compounded by the limitation to five transfers per household. Focus group responses of residual¹⁰⁹ beneficiaries suggest that some of the gains made over the preceding four years were lost in the fifth year.

¹⁰⁷ DFAP provided capacity-building training for relevant government partners and community members on the Do No Harm approach to be used as an analysis tool during public works sub-project design, site selection, and management. Consequently, the community analyzes all public works-related activities with Do No Harm approaches so as to enhance community cohesion and minimize tensions. Project staff, *woreda* government staff, and community leaders received training in conflict sensitivity and management.

¹⁰⁸ Beneficiary foremen/women are selected by their community or public works working group to serve as public works site supervisors, responsible for the overall day-to-day public works activities of the group. In the absence of DAs, for whatever reason, and when well-trained, they ensure that public works are delivered as planned and provide feedback into the design and selection process. One other benefit is that they will be available for future activities and will continue to play a leading role in community mobilization for formal and informal development activities. Source: Save the Children Federation, Inc. Ethiopia, T2FS FY14 PREP (FFP-A-11-00015) – FINAL, submitted June 27, 2014.

¹⁰⁹ I.e., those beneficiaries who remained within the program for the full five years.



DFAP beneficiary producing vegetables from diversion weir and canal irrigation system.

Overall, it was assessed that the goal of increased food security had been broadly attained to the extent that those households receiving transfers were more food secure with assistance than without it. But the number of households whose inherent capacity to achieve food sufficiency had increased over the period of the DFAP was relatively small; and an even smaller proportion of those had been able to achieve sustainable food security. DFAP impacts on household food security were further diminished by forced graduation from the programs, which meant that many of the initially targeted households were unable to receive the full benefits of the program. (See section 3.2 below). There was little difference between the DFAPs with regard to this general conclusion. Any differences observed between regions were considerably fewer than those observed within regions.

Impact of community asset development on food security, health, and nutrition

The evaluation found limited evidence that public works enhanced the food security of the targeted beneficiaries more effectively than just direct transfers. From the DFAP beneficiaries' perspective, the community assets that have been produced confer benefits mainly on those with larger land holdings, but for CFI households with little and/or poor land, they can be of limited benefit and require a

disproportionate amount of their time. They justified their participation because of the reliability of the transfers compared with income that might be derived from their private activities. There were important exceptions to this, including in particular small-scale irrigation development and to a lesser extent gully reclamation and area closure. Where DFAP interventions allowed households to access sufficient irrigable land, their productive capacity was increased substantially (in some cases as much as ten-fold). For those producing food crops under such conditions, sustainable food security was often ensured. It was observed, however, that the proportion of DFAP beneficiaries accessing small-scale irrigation schemes was generally small. Only when new land had been developed (e.g., through the construction of hillside terracing) were DFAP beneficiaries given priority access. In such cases, the plots allocated to each beneficiary were small and required the production of cash crops (mainly fruit and vegetables) to sustain food security. Gully reclamation and area closure also provided landless youth with opportunities for income generation, although the impacts of these interventions were limited.

A number of community assets have impacted beneficiary health and nutrition. These were all related to institutional

infrastructure. Direct benefits were evident from the construction of water points, including shallow wells, reservoirs, and water catchment tanks, as well as from the construction of institutional latrines at schools and clinics. Indirect benefits were also noted from the construction of access roads, office-linked accommodation for HEWs, and post-delivery rest rooms for women at health posts. Amongst these, the beneficial effect of increased road access so that women could be brought by ambulance to deliver babies at the health post was the most frequently praised.

Impact of livelihood activities on food security

Livelihood activities undertaken on new lands, irrigation schemes, or through off-farm IGAs include beekeeping, fruit and forage production, irrigated vegetable production, poultry production, and shoat fattening. In many cases, these activities were too new to evaluate effectively. Beekeeping appears to be profitable, but the hives provided to youth cooperatives were only in the second year of operation. Less resilient was shoat rearing which, despite its popularity, suffered from lack of forage due to drought. Irrigated vegetable production appeared to be robust from a production perspective, but in the absence of further training irrigated enterprises may be vulnerable to market fluctuations. Fruit trees planted in reclaimed gullies or area closures have yet to bear fruit and are not suitable for immediate impact assessment. By contrast, forage production in the same areas has produced income for the youth to whom these new lands had been made available. In Tigray, funds had been granted to RuSACCOs to provide revolving loans to DFAP households for poultry and vegetable seeds on a semi-commercial scale. The loans were to be paid back over a three-year period, but since repayment had only just started, objective evaluation was not possible. The availability of investment financing, either as credit or cash, is a widely-reported constraint to livelihood development. In Tigray, the use of a guarantee fund has enhanced the availability of cash from MFIs, but elsewhere the prognosis for increased levels of financing becoming available to DFAP graduates is currently poor.

Impact of MCHN and WASH messaging on health and nutrition

In the absence of quantitative data, it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which DFAPs have enhanced health and nutrition. Only in Tigray was a quantitative assessment of the main health- and nutrition-related indicators undertaken throughout the program. This showed overall reductions in underweight and stunted children, although an extensive outbreak of acute watery diarrhea had led to an increase in wasting. Reductions in underweight

children were consistent over the program period and exceeded targets. On the other hand, while stunting had been reduced relative to the baseline, the reduction had occurred in year one. Thereafter, stunting levels had consistently *increased* over the course of the DFAP.

Elsewhere, (Amhara and Oromia/Dire Dawa), the impact of DFAP on Health and Nutrition had not been measured, but subjective responses from women FGDs and HEWs indicated reduced visits by malnourished children to health centers, as well as reduced numbers and frequency of children with diarrhea over the period of DFAP.¹¹⁰

Where DFAP program outcomes include behaviors that can be expected to lead directly to improved health (such as the feeding of colostrum and six-month EBF), it is reasonable to assume that if outcomes have improved, then health and nutrition will also have been enhanced. In some cases, data collected showed a reduction in EBF in one case and an increase in another, allowing no concrete conclusions to be drawn. In other cases, including the use of latrines, hand washing, and other activities limited by the availability of water or infrastructure, indicators of training outputs are inadequate and indicators of observed behavior are of questionable value in assessing actual impacts. These results do not reflect the considerable level of effort expended under the DFAPs (especially in Amhara) in MCHN and WASH training and in messaging through different means. Nor do they reflect the significant levels of uptake and comprehension by beneficiaries of MCHN/WASH messages that were both observed by the evaluation team and reported through objective assessments.

Improvement in one area is clear: the DFAPs enhanced dietary diversity amongst some households. PDSBs commonly noted that while they might normally consume only one or two food groups, they had benefitted from access to three food groups during the first four years of the DFAPs (when PSNP3 ration standards were applied). In the last year, this had been reduced to two following the withdrawal of vegetable oil from the ration (in line with PSNP4). These responses, together with other quantitative data,¹¹¹ suggest that while dietary diversity had been increased under the DFAPs, much remains to be done in this area.

WASH interventions were well received insofar as delivery of WASH messages was concerned. The WASH messages were well received and understood by DFAP communities. Nevertheless, actual change on the ground was harder to perceive. Some progress was made towards the creation of

¹¹⁰ E.g., in Meta, Haqabas *kebele*, and Dire Dawa.

¹¹¹ A field survey conducted by CRS suggested that PLW had accessed only 1.8 food groups in the week prior to data collection; other IPTT data estimated 2.5 food groups. IPTT data for Tigray suggest an increase in dietary diversity score from 4.8 to 5.7.

open defecation-free areas, and increased hygiene was witnessed around some water reservoirs. It is likely that the definite progress in understanding will be reinforced by actual implementation in those areas where water is available. Where such reinforcement is difficult, the progress may not be sustainable.

Impact of capacity development initiatives on food security, productivity, health, and nutrition

The DFAPs' capacity development initiatives have been critical to improved food security through their impact on PSNP implementation capacity and DRM. Key informants consistently responded that training in the PIM was effective and useful, while DRM training had also been effective and reportedly improved targeting and drought cycle response activities. Other capacity development initiatives with food-security impacts have included technical trainings in the watershed approach, some of which have cascaded not only to the community level but also to individual farmers.

Trainings with an impact on production and productivity included the technical training of DAs to support small-scale irrigated production systems, although it must be noted that the majority of beneficiaries were those with land, few of whom were actual PSNP beneficiaries. Only where PSNP beneficiaries (most commonly landless youth) were provided with access to new land, such as irrigated hillside terraces, were such trainings well aligned with PSNP food-security objectives. There had been few attempts to develop business or marketing capacity, however, for fruit tree production, forage production, or irrigated vegetable production. Those who had taken up these activities appeared unaware of the marketing challenges that they might face. Given the importance of off-farm IGAs to the food security of increasing numbers of landless youth, increased emphasis on business development capacity will assist both beneficiaries and their advisors.

Considerable capacity development was provided for HEWs, with HEWs noting that DFAP training was more comprehensive and effective than the government training. They had been taught 16 different components in five separate packages, including maternal and child nutrition. Although HEWs had also received and appreciated the MCHN/WASH training, their effectiveness in improving MCHN and WASH was restricted by turnover. Incentives are required to reduce turnover, or else an approach to training must be developed that can accommodate high rates of turnover.

Government staff at federal, regional, and *woreda* levels all expressed appreciation for the capacity building

undertaken through each of the DFAPs. Training undertaken at regional and *woreda* levels in particular appeared to have been well received. Training in PSNP implementation and in DRM was most commonly reported as having been useful, while training in construction, commodity management, and climate change was also appreciated. At the *kebele* level, training of the HEWs, training of DAs in watershed management, and KFSTF training in PSNP implementation had all enhanced capacity. Communities and even individuals had developed the capacity to implement appropriate soil and water conservation structures.

Impact of all activities in the Borena DFAP

The SCI DFAP has achieved its overall goal of reducing food insecurity—shortening and lessening seasonal food gaps—for its target group in Borena Zone inasmuch as predictable food transfers have allowed beneficiaries to stabilize and, in some cases, increase livestock holdings. However, there has been no significant graduation from food assistance. This was not a planned result of the DFAP, and the terminology of graduation was not used in DFAP implementation. There was also considerable concern expressed by beneficiaries over possible failure of the 2016 *haggaya* rains. These two facts taken together suggest that the reduction in food insecurity is dependent on definition, as it remains dependent on continued external food transfers. Furthermore, due to the end of the DFAP in the zone, support will be supplied under mainstream government PSNP modalities without the facilitating of technical assistance in targeting and timely delivery supplied by SCI, a prospect clearly concerning for many of our respondents, including SCI staff themselves.

In the longer term, the DFAP has contributed to improved resilience, primarily by constructing useful community assets for water supply and rangeland restoration. This has to be seen in terms of the still-limited number of such assets, even relative to the *woreda* scale on which the DFAP was implemented (the Arero FSTF expressed a view that three times as many *birkas* were needed). It has made a minor contribution through construction of infrastructure associated with social services (primarily additional classrooms for schools) and capacity building, though the latter intermediate result raises issues of sustainability (skill transfers to government) and attribution (behavior change around gender).

3.1.3 Were there key value additions that the DFAPs delivered in terms of building resilience?

The DFAP programs have delivered a range of value additions in the process of building resilience. Some of these are based upon innovation, such as enhanced composting, keyhole gardens,¹¹² and the distribution of

¹¹² Introduced in Amhara by FH/E.

sanitary pads in schools.¹¹³ Others are based upon techniques that have been effective elsewhere, including mobile money transfer and crop insurance,¹¹⁴ the provision of poultry, image boxes,¹¹⁵ and drama groups. Others still have been used extensively within a development setting but are not commonly part of the PSNP. These include the establishment of savings groups, planting of tree seedlings and fodder grasses in reclaimed gullies, and the construction of dams and canals to create small-scale irrigation systems, as well as the construction of hillside terraces.

It is hard to evaluate innovative value additions since in most cases they have only been in operation for one or two years, and their effectiveness and sustainability remain unproven. Mobile money transfers may well become standard practice in the near future and offer the opportunity to develop more complex transfers (e.g., of cash redeemable only at specific outlets for certain goods) that could focus benefits more precisely. These and other innovations to the development arena may all have potential, but it will require assessments based upon carefully collected data and valid comparisons before any of them can be properly justified as adding real value. This has not yet been done within the DFAP context.

The value additions that have clearly made a discernible difference to the livelihoods of beneficiaries include the savings/self-help groups and the construction of small-scale irrigation schemes, including hillside terracing. The planting of reclaimed gullies with trees has yet to have a commercial impact, although the planting of fodder grasses has yielded some returns. Savings/self-help groups are usually set up to promote saving with the intention of making loans available with which to start small businesses. In practice, they operate more as insurance systems than providers of seed capital, although they may provide the working capital for petty trade. Savings groups contribute to household resilience by facilitating the sharing of risk, and they also provide a predominantly female forum for the promotion of MCHN/WASH and gender issues as well as a social empowerment mechanism.

The DFAPs have consistently added value to the public works process across all highland regions through the construction of assets that for reasons of expertise, cost, or capacity would be beyond the reach of *kebeles* working only with government support. They either own or can hire plant and machinery that is beyond the scope of manual labor. This is especially true of REST, which owns 15 bulldozers and more than 20 dump trucks, allowing them to construct sophisticated hillside terracing and

associated irrigation canals that have made new land available to 28,000 landless youth.

In the Borena DFAP, maintaining the overall good practice generated by the IP will be important across a range of future development interventions that must also address strengthened community resource management, drought early warning and management, livestock marketing, and livelihood diversification. In the long run, the key contribution of the Borena DFAP to building resilience is likely to have been the piloting and promotion of community-based rangeland enclosures, which contribute to rangeland regeneration while operating associated bylaws that favor poorer households in rights to graze or cut fodder. More knowledge is still needed on the contribution of such enclosures to overall resilience in a landscape where considerably larger-scale private enclosures have been associated with decreased pastoral mobility and thus increased vulnerability to drought. Where the communal enclosures are pro-poor and environmentally sustainable, it has been a significant achievement of DFAP to pilot them. The promotion of *birkas*, a technology brought in from another part of Ethiopia, was also widely praised by informants as an important innovation.

The main value addition to resilience building delivered by all the DFAPs is largely intangible. Both DFAP agents and their counterparts in government noted that the DFAP management teams (and their agents) were focused, motivated, and effective in bringing about the process of change on the ground. This was evident in all regions, in the consistent quality of work that was produced and the continual improvement in performance that was achieved. Each DFAP implementation not only provided a high standard of service to beneficiaries but also served as an example of good practice that could be emulated by government counterparts.

3.2 Graduation—Conclusions

3.2.1 How effective was PSNP graduation in improving resilience of targeted households?

The effectiveness of graduation upon the resilience of targeted households should depend upon the appropriateness of the benchmark/GPS process, which, if correctly applied, should result in the graduation of only those households with an adequate level of resilience. It was found that in practice the majority of households graduating from the DFAPs were obliged to do so by the imposition of quotas rather than the achievement of benchmarks. Under such circumstances, it might be

¹¹³ Introduced in Oromia by CRS.

¹¹⁴ Both implemented in Tigray by REST.

¹¹⁵ Introduced in Amhara by FH/E.

expected that those *woredas* in which households had moved more rapidly towards asset accumulation and food sufficiency might demonstrate a higher degree of resilience amongst graduate households, even though they might not

have achieved food sufficiency. Nevertheless, it was evident that larger numbers graduating from the DFAPs were less of an indicator of better performance by the IP and more related to externally imposed quotas.

Key lessons learned on design and effectiveness

FOOD TRANSFERS AND COMMUNITY ASSETS

- Effectiveness of the program was constrained by the limited capacity of IPs to influence its two most critical aspects viz: Beneficiary numbers and graduate numbers.
- NRM-based assets offer few benefits for landless youth.
- Standard and contingency resources budgeted under the program were not adequate to completely cover potential beneficiary needs.
- The loss of oil from the ration and the removal of full family targeting were retrograde steps that will constrain progress towards graduation in PSNP4.
- Despite concerns expressed in studies of other pastoral regions, for Borena the fundamental design of the DFAP around targeting of the poorest (in livestock terms) and public works is sound and accepted by beneficiaries and broader communities.
- The DFAP intervention directed at the poorest can form one part of a range of interventions to address the very complex development problems of Borena.

LIVELIHOODS SUPPORT

- Livelihood development activities are essential for landless households especially youth.
- Successful livelihood development requires further attention to:
 - Business planning and value chain analysis
 - Adequate investment (long term loans or grants)
 - A casework approach with individually tailored mixtures of financial assistance and vocational training
 - Follow up and mentorship
- Savings groups should be replicated as a first step to awareness and livelihood development.

MCHN/WASH

- DFAP messaging has proved effective in changing attitudes.
- Use of facilitators and animators can definitely improved efficiency.
- Knowledge component is achieved, but practice requires adequate infrastructure in both cases.
- Dietary diversity remains a substantial problem amongst the poorest.
- Positive impacts are being achieved, and are essential to long-term resilience - but do not affect short-term food security impacts.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- Current approaches to capacity development, although much appreciated are constrained by staff turnover.
- IPs play an inadequate role in the selection of trainees.
- The quality of training and its effectiveness in generating outcomes at grass roots level is more important than trainee numbers.

The qualitative analysis found the number of households that indicated that they were food sufficient at graduation was variable. In some areas, at least 50% of graduates had reached this condition. In other areas, the proportion was considerably less, varying according to key criteria:

1. Access to small-scale irrigation—this was a generally a robust predictor of graduation with resilience.
2. Condition of the *kebele*—some DFAP *kebeles* were better off than others. Graduation with resilience was more commonly achieved where geomorphology favored the application of the watershed development.
3. Successful business development—some households who received loans from MFIs, RuSACCOs, and appropriate business development support were able to generate enough income from IGAs to graduate with resilience, but these were few.

While the number of graduate households was substantial (see Figure 1 below), the evaluation found that relatively few were actually food sufficient upon graduation. The majority were forced and premature graduate households. These households were not able to re-join the DFAP programs as CFI beneficiaries, but a proportion could be supported as Transitory Beneficiaries through the use of contingency resources. The remainder were left without further support, as a result of which their food sufficiency was reduced for the remainder of the program.

Within the DFAPs, the interaction between graduation and resilience can be assessed in two ways. First, the retargeting exercise that took place at the beginning of PSNP4 resulted in a substantial number of forced graduates being reabsorbed as CFI beneficiaries under the new safety net, indicating that they were not food sufficient and had lost whatever degree of resilience they might have achieved before they were graduated from the

DFAP. Second, in 2016, almost all of the remaining graduates in most DFAP *woredas* were targeted for emergency relief, indicating that those who had been graduated according to the benchmark system, and even some of the self-graduates, might have achieved food sufficiency but had not in fact reached sustainable food security and were not able to cope with the shock of the 2015/16 drought.

The impact of graduation upon resilience appears therefore to have been relatively limited. On the one hand, households who experienced forced or premature graduation were unable to benefit fully from DFAP interventions to develop resilience. On the other hand, even those who appeared to have achieved food sufficiency were not adequately resilient to withstand shock.

In the Borena DFAP, the concept of graduation from DFAP assistance was not included in the agreed objectives or indicators, and the terminology of graduation was barely used by SCI staff or *woreda* officials. The evaluation team were told of very small numbers of households exiting the program because they were judged to be either too wealthy or no longer ready to work, but this was classified as “retargeting,” not as graduation.

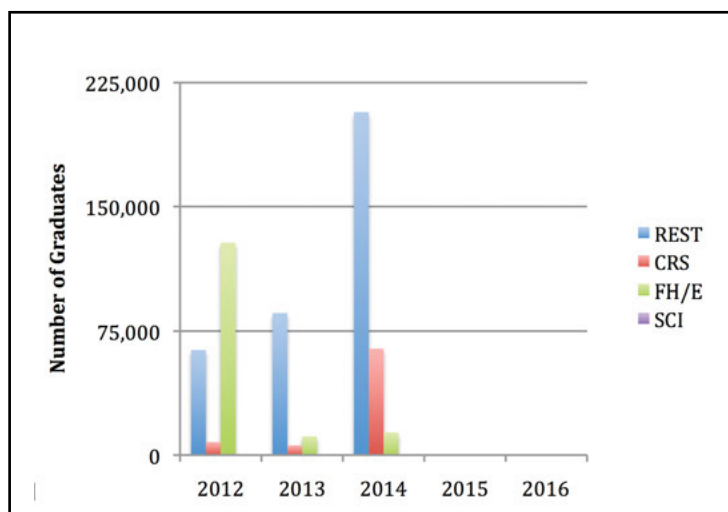
3.2.2 Did the DFAPs improve the PSNP graduation process?

The DFAPs theoretically improved the graduation process through the training of WFSTF and KFSTF members in the implementation of the PIM, including the application of graduation benchmarks and the GPS. In practice, the stipulations of the PIM were not always followed (especially when graduation was quota based), in which case the benefits of such training were largely moot.

Graduation was a two-stage process. Households who had left the PSNP/DFAP were expected to be food sufficient but not necessarily food secure, and the process of graduation in theory continued until resilient food security had been reached, at which point the household graduated from all supporting programs (such as HABP or GRAD). The DFAP programs played no part in this continued progression. They did not provide any follow-up support or ongoing mentorship, nor did they monitor households who had left the DFAP. Any DFAP improvements to the graduation process were therefore confined to program impacts prior to the achievement of food sufficiency and cessation of PSNP transfers.

Since graduation was largely quota based, any intervention that might accelerate development of resilience amongst graduating households might thereby be considered to have “improved the graduation process.” The following interventions appeared to have been most important in this regard:

Figure 1. Numbers of graduates by year and IP



3. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

- a) Amongst the community assets, small-scale irrigation development stood out as having assisted some DFAP beneficiaries to strengthen their resilience. Nevertheless, while the benefits of irrigation were reportedly substantial, the proportion of CFI households who could access such developments was low. Other public works interventions that benefitted DFAP beneficiaries from a graduation perspective included the provision of access to area closures and reclaimed gully areas for the purposes of beekeeping, forage, and tree production (for both fruit and timber). These activities clearly improved the graduation process of the households that had been able to participate in them. Other community assets, especially the water and soil conservation activities, were of less immediate benefit. While the community as a whole benefitted from increased crop production, relatively few DFAP beneficiaries did so, the one exception being new land allocated to landless youth as hillside terracing.
- b) Livelihood support activities (including savings/self-help groups and adult literacy classes) had an impact not only when they were linked to community assets but also when they were used to support other IGAs. Savings groups in particular appeared to provide an insurance function that would be expected to enhance resilience. Nevertheless, it was not evident that any of these activities, although definitely beneficial, had played a major role in accelerating the development of resilience so as to achieve more robust graduation. The impacts were too small to be perceived by beneficiaries as being critical supports to graduation. While DFAP agents frequently mentioned them, focus group respondents rarely mentioned them as important.
- c) DFAP transfers themselves enhanced the graduation process when the aggregate of transfers and own production was more than enough to meet household needs. Under such circumstances, the sale of transfers allowed beneficiaries to accumulate productive assets and hence move more rapidly towards resilience. An unanticipated and yet potentially important aspect of DFAP (and PSNP) interventions has been the impact of food transfers on market prices. It was reported that the transfers tended to stabilize prices and thereby enhanced the food security levels of all community members, including graduate households. This effect has also been noted in other studies,¹¹⁶ but its overall significance to beneficiaries was not assessed.

Food sufficiency levels overall remain absolutely dependent upon continued transfers. The majority of program graduates have not achieved food security. Instead they fall into three categories:

- a) Those who have graduated prematurely and do not have a regular sufficiency of food;
- b) Those who have remained within the programs and who have a degree of food sufficiency as a result of the program transfers;
- c) Those who have graduated from the programs and may have achieved food sufficiency, but are not able to withstand moderate shocks, as evidenced by their inclusion in the emergency response.

Those households in the first and second categories should be retargeted for continued transfers under PSNP4. Those in the third category have generally received effective support under the emergency response and would be expected to be able to resume food sufficiency under normal production conditions (as were widely experienced during the last *meher* season) but will require further livelihood supports in order to progress towards food security.

The evaluation noted that some IPs had attempted to raise concerns about the integrity of the graduation process with authorities, including attempts to improve the process by advocating for realistic graduation targets, but it does not appear that these attempts had any impact during the course of the DFAPs.

Key lessons learned on graduation

- For the poorer HHs, progress towards graduation is slow and not dramatically enhanced by community assets or MCHN/WASH activities. Small-scale irrigation and the development of IGAs have the greatest potential to hasten graduation.
- Real graduation as per the PIM is only possible if each *kebele* is adequately resourced. Either IPs must be involved in the implementation of the GPS and the validation of graduation, or future DFAPs should be resourced in the light of a GoE target of five million graduates (GTP2).
- Monitoring and follow-up of graduates is a necessary aspect of program implementation.

¹¹⁶ USAID Bellmon Analysis FY 2010.

3.3 Gender Equality and Empowerment—Conclusions

3.3.1 To what extent have the DFAPs contributed to gender equality and empowerment in terms of access and control over resources, decision-making roles and opportunities, participation in community and social institutions, and freedom of speech and movement?

Enhanced gender equity is a key aspect of the DFAPs as a crosscutting objective. It is also a fundamental principle of government policy and is therefore well respected in all aspects of the PSNP PIMs that underpin the DFAPs.

Access and control over resources

Transfers were provided to women directly, although receipt of the food/cash must be signed for jointly (i.e., for married male-headed households, by husbands as well). Nevertheless, in almost all *kebeles* visited in all highland regions, it is women who almost always receive the food transfers. In most areas, female-headed households are also prioritized for the receipt of contingency resources. It was significant that scooping of grain at the transfer distribution centers was an exclusively female activity that both provided income to women and enhanced female status. Public works activities were modified to reduce the burden on women, who could transfer to PDSB status when they became pregnant and for a period thereafter. Workloads for women were also reduced as compared with men, but it was still reported that for some female-headed households it was impossible to fulfill the public works tasks and care for their families effectively.

With regard to the public works themselves as community resources, there appeared to be an adequate focus on gender equity, with non-NRM public works particularly directed towards women. Road construction appeared to focus primarily on providing access for ambulances to take women to hospital to give birth. Construction of additional rooms at health posts allowed women to rest after labor. Household latrines, micro/keyhole gardens, and small hand-dug wells were constructed for female-headed households only. Additional productive capacity that resulted from NRM activities (such as access to reclaimed gullies, terraced lands, or area closures) were reportedly allocated on an equal basis to men and women where possible (although in practice there appeared to be a predominance of male beneficiaries). Women appreciated the extensive development of water points, as it has reduced the almost exclusively female burden of carrying water, but the equity situation will not be resolved until

men are also carrying water for their households. These conclusions were consistent across all highland regions.

The activities outside the PIM have allowed the DFAPs greater scope to enhance gender equity over resource access and control. Amongst the various activities designed to enhance economic development, it was observed that savings/self-help groups are particularly well taken up by women and have been established in all highland DFAPs. Savings were being used both for emergency/large expenditures (medical costs, school fees) and as a source of working capital for petty trade. The groups were not always exclusively female, but in practice women comprised the majority of group beneficiaries. Assessments both within the DFAPs and elsewhere have suggested that once they have become well established, such groups have a high level of sustainability. The economic impact of savings/self-help groups will vary according to the economic status of the community and may sometimes be small. Other economic livelihood-support activities included women's financial literacy programs and other forms of adult education directed towards women. While their impact in terms of food security may depend upon the availability of resources, especially cash,¹¹⁷ they have a direct impact upon women's status and self-awareness that goes beyond the practical implications of the trainings.

Interventions such as the construction and marketing of fuel-efficient stoves by women's groups (implemented by CRS in Oromia) were well appreciated from a gender equity perspective, but their ultimate impact will depend upon their sustainability. Other economic support activities¹¹⁸ appeared to be provided on a gender-neutral basis, in which women were either included on a 50:50 basis or according to interest. In addition, all highland DFAPs have prioritized women and female-headed households in access to contingency resources, as well as ensuring equal distribution between men and women in the provision of newly created lands (hillside terraces, reclaimed gullies, and area closures) and access to livelihood-development supports. This has empowered some women, but the limited scope of livelihood-development activities has restricted the overall contribution of this prioritization. Activities such as poultry rearing and backyard gardening for the nutritional value of the eggs and vegetables were well adapted to women's needs and may have provided some enhanced resource control from the sale/supply of eggs and vegetables, but impacts will ultimately depend upon sustainability.

¹¹⁷ For this reason, women's literacy groups in Tigray were also set up as savings groups.

¹¹⁸ Including beekeeping, fruit and forage production, irrigated production, sand and stone selling, labor-based youth employment (Tigray), and grants/loans for poultry/vegetable seeds and shoats (through RuSACCOs in Tigray).

Focus groups universally agreed that there had been noticeable changes in women's access and control of resources and their benefits over the course of the DFAP five-year implementation period. Attribution of this change is difficult. Some respondents considered the changes to be due to a general increase in women's education, while others associated it with improved economic circumstances. Others reported that repeated gender awareness and empowerment messaging at DFAP meetings and public works had a substantial effect upon gender awareness.

Decision-making roles and opportunities

All of the DFAP capacity-development activities were generally undertaken within the context of GoE institutions, where principles of gender equity have been well inculcated. Training on the PIM has emphasized gender norms in most areas, while in Oromia/Dire Dawa, cascading trainings of staff have referenced a gender checklist. But while the principles of equity are understood, their application is not guaranteed. In almost all cases witnessed by the evaluation team, *woreda*- and *kebele*-level task forces and committees were not gender-balanced. Reportedly, gender balance is more common at the grassroots level,¹¹⁹ but at the levels observed such balance was not evident. The explanations given were that women were too busy to participate and had little interest in doing so unless they could receive a *per diem*. Amongst some men, there was also still a strong (albeit perhaps unconscious) acceptance of fixed roles according to gender. Indeed, in some cases men complained that the DFAPs focused too much on women. In Oromia/Dire Dawa, considerable emphasis has been placed on women's participation on such committees, and the DFAP there has successfully achieved gender-balance results not witnessed elsewhere. In Oromia, the appointment of female Deputy Head of *Woreda* Offices as members of WFSTFs and their strengthened presence in task forces have provided a powerful demonstration of women's capacities. In Amhara, the demonstrations of role reversal have provided equally powerful examples of what is possible at the grassroots level.

Participation in community and social institutions

Gender awareness activities have been carried out within each DFAP, aimed at promoting greater engagement of women within the communities and society more broadly, and these appear to have had the greatest impacts. Different DFAPs have used different technologies. In Amhara and in Oromia/Dire Dawa, barrier analyses

established the issues and constraints to enhanced gender equity, and specific interventions have been designed accordingly. A variety of different techniques have been used to transmit messages, ranging from image boxes through drama groups to high-impact demonstrations in which the traditional roles of men and women are reversed.

A more conventional approach has also been widely adopted by the DFAPs through the training of HEWs as agents of change. The HEWs are considered appropriate as a result not only of their standing within the community but also of their understanding of different taboos and sensitivities. They are able to pass on gender messages during community conversations, at public works sessions, and at other community gatherings, not only to women but also to community and religious leaders as well as teachers, DAs, and other committee members. Targeted messaging designed to promote behavioral change in the areas of MCHN and WASH emphasized the importance of adequate nutrition for girls and mothers, although there was little evidence that the messaging opportunity had been used to elevate the status of women in the community,¹²⁰ as has been done in other programs.¹²¹ The main WASH interventions with strong gender-related impact include the development of sanitary pad dispensing capacity at some schools that has allowed young women to increase attendance by up to 50 days each year and family planning messaging provided to both women and men, which has had a direct and positive impact.

In all of the above, it was observed that rates of progress of gender equity development and levels of effort by IPs to facilitate that process varied more amongst different localities within a region than amongst regions themselves. In all cases, it was observed that the individual DFAPs were facilitating a gradual process that will take time to come to fruition, but that no one DFAP or IP stood out as being more successful in supporting the process than any other.

Freedom of speech and movement

DFAPs worked to enhance gender empowerment through a number of different means:

- Projects designed to facilitate women's education at different levels;
- Savings/self-help groups (not gender specific, but with a major effect in terms of women's empowerment);

¹¹⁹ E.g., water users in Haqabas *kebele*, Meta *woreda* reported, "It is a must that the committee should consist of three men and three women."

¹²⁰ Although women recruited to the Health Development Army were generally accorded higher status in the community as a result.

¹²¹ The ENGINE (Empowering New Generations to Improve Nutrition and Economic Opportunities) program has successfully used SBCC to elevate the status of pregnant and lactating women as "Queen Bees" within their households, strengthening both MCHN and gender equity simultaneously.

- Specific communication programs (including drama, coffee, and other community groups and role exchange demonstrations);
- Emphasis on women's participation in decision-making committees (especially in Oromia/Dire Dawa), including the FSTFs at *woreda* and *kebele* level;
- Specific activities (sanitary pad distribution, school gender clubs).

From an evaluation perspective, it is hard to rank these different approaches in terms of impact on empowerment. Savings groups and women's education initiatives have driven fundamental change, and the different communications strategies allow women and men to recognize and express the change that is taking place. Nevertheless, the process of empowerment is by no means complete, and further interventions will be needed to reinforce and deepen the process. In particular, men's attitudes towards and understanding of gender empowerment need to be assessed, addressed, and monitored more closely. In some discussion groups, respondents (especially young men) voiced concern that the DFAPs focused too much upon women. This indicates a shortcoming in program design in that either the gender balance had indeed swung too far towards women or messaging to highlight the need for gender equity has been inadequate. In either case, it is important to ensure that men are well informed of the purpose of the gender empowerment activities and that they accept the DFAPs' gender emphasis. Failure to achieve these goals will alienate men from the program and reduce its gender effectiveness.

Access and control profiling revealed broadly consistent results across all DFAPs to the effect that gender awareness and gender equity had notably improved over the DFAP period. Given the substantial emphasis placed upon gender equity by government, it is difficult to attribute the improvements to DFAP interventions alone. Nevertheless, focus group responses made it quite clear that repeated gender messaging in various fora and through different mechanisms had an effect not only upon their perceptions of gender but also upon behavior. These results were nuanced by region. In Tigray, considerable and sustainable progress appeared to have been achieved and to be strongly supported by government as a matter of course. In Oromia, more intensive gender-focused interventions had also achieved results, although questions were raised as to their sustainability once the DFAP had ended, and specific linkages had been forged with government to ensure continuity. In Amhara, where the gender interventions appeared to be strongest of all, there was also inherent resistance amongst some communities, and the risk that there might be some reversion of attitudes remains.

Contributions to gender equality and empowerment in the Borena DFAP

Gender activities in the Borena DFAP were diffuse and low key but included a wide range of formal and informal training and capacity building. SCI activities contributed to ensuring that PIM guidelines on women's participation were followed and that public works, both for water supply and rangeland management, delivered benefits for women. Some female respondents perceived they were more empowered in terms of control over resources, decision making, and participation, but given the multiple other trends in pastoral Ethiopian society (sedentarization, livelihood diversification, education) there would be significant methodological problems in attributing this to the DFAP.

3.3.2 What has been done to sustain the positive gender-related outcomes that are achieved by these programs?

Most of the DFAP interventions have depended very much upon human resources to enhance the development of gender equity. Government is not as well-resourced as the IPs, and when DFAPs end, in the absence of any other NGO interventions, the strength of gender messaging will inevitably be reduced. Hence the sustainability of gender-related outcomes will be largely dependent first upon the extent to which the messaging to date has been received and understood and second upon the sustainability of the other mechanisms that have been set up to enhance women's empowerment. Some aspects of gender empowerment are robust. The prioritization of women in the distribution of newly created lands and the specific availability of grants for women in Tigray are sustainable and concrete developments that cannot be reversed. Amongst women especially, the change in attitude that has been brought about not only by the repeated messaging under the DFAPs but also through women's literacy groups is also unlikely to revert.

Some sustainable interventions will continually reinforce gender equity. The savings/self-help groups have proven to be not only sustainable but also potent at empowering women. This effect is unlikely to diminish after the DFAPs. Other institutional interventions also confer sustainability. In particular, the use of gender checklists provided by IPs in both Tigray and Oromia to *woreda* and *kebele* officials will help to reinforce gender equity. These are so closely aligned with institutional norms that their continued use is almost certain. On the other hand, the practice of selecting women as deputy office heads is unlikely to be sustainable unless there is a directive from the regional governments.

One potentially successful approach towards sustainable gender equity has been pursued in Oromia, where the IP has focused resources on schools. The modification of girls'

clubs to become gender clubs has heightened gender awareness as has support for gender initiatives with economic impacts (school IGAs). These activities were driving deep-seated change that would be inherently sustainable. At the time of the evaluation, the IP was transferring the responsibility for the activities to the school authorities. It had been agreed that the interventions would continue, and a plan had been developed but not yet formalized. As a result, the sustainability of these activities was still in doubt. Nevertheless, this does appear to be an effective way of developing sustainable gender equity, provided agreement can be reached with the local authorities.

Overall, while there is some sustainability of gender-related outcomes, it is not uniform across all regions. Especially in Amhara, change has occurred (men now agree that they should not hit women!), but the responses from focus groups there suggest that ongoing repetition of gender messaging will be necessary before the process can be considered successful and sustainable. The DFAPs have made a major contribution towards enhanced gender equity, but the work is not complete nor is its sustainability ensured unless follow-on activities are programmed. Governments of all regions are supportive of such activities but lack the capacity to undertake the necessary interventions themselves. As a result, while the sustainability of gender-related outcomes in some areas is assured, reversion in isolated areas is also definitely possible.

Key lessons learned on gender equality and empowerment

Progress is inherently gradual. Nevertheless:

- Repetition and a diversified “multichannel” approach are proving effective, especially through HEWs and schools.
- A five-year period is enough to achieve sustainable change, but not to the desired extent in all regions.
- Gender empowerment requires more than the DFAP program timeframe. Some initiatives/changes may prove to be sustainable but depend on conducive political environment/regulations and perhaps continued presence of NGOs.

3.4 Program Management, Coordination, and Sustainability—Conclusions

3.4.1 What are the key lessons learned in terms of program management, coordination, and implementation?

Management and coordination

Program management was consistently good across all DFAPs with a number of aspects outstanding at different levels. At the grassroots level, it was evident that DFAP management had coordinated closely with *woreda* and *kebele* staff as well as with DAs and HEWs, and that their support and assistance was clearly valued and appreciated. The same was also true at the community level. This has helped the DFAPs to serve as examples of excellence in a variety of different areas¹²² (including PIM implementation, commodity management, and infrastructure development, as well as SBCC).

At the mid-level, management in all highland regions was also flexible in terms of responding to *woreda* and regional requests and directives, and attempted to balance the DFAPs’ goals and objectives with the changes that had occurred both in terms of targeting and graduation as well as the shift from PSNP3 to PSNP4. At Head Office level, management also faced problems of changing circumstances, including forced graduation, changes in the PSNP, and the drought of 2015/16. While these had sometimes been impossible to accommodate completely (e.g., the number of graduates was effectively non-negotiable), management responded to the fullest extent of available resources (e.g., through the complete drawdown of contingency resources) so as to maintain progress towards the overall goal.

Coordination was also largely effective. IPs in Tigray and Amhara noted that the coordination of different interventions within a layered approach enhanced program outcomes and was a fundamental principle of DFAP management in those regions. The integration of resources (such as matching funds and machinery) generated synergies in community asset development, while coordination of different programs (e.g., JEOP and DFAPs) allowed for effective commodity management and use of warehouse facilities. Integration of different donor initiatives (e.g., International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) integrated with FFP) allowed the different initiatives to focus on different elements of an overall development plan. Similar integration was noted in Oromia/Dire Dawa but

¹²² Although it is difficult to assess their isolated cost efficiency/effectiveness, due to the integration and overlap with other programs and their activities.

not in Borena. Conversely, poor integration could be highly detrimental to program effectiveness.¹²³

It was noted, however, that since programs rarely ran synchronously, the strategy of integrating different program initiatives from different donors generally implied a long-term IP presence in the areas of interest. This works against the concept of an exit strategy. Quite often, the IP was expecting to remain active in the area, if not through the DFAP then as a result of other programs. The IP was therefore not necessarily under pressure to ensure a complete and effective handover of all responsibilities to local authorities. In fact, community members were almost universally unaware of any DFAP exit strategy and assumed that matters would be resolved in the future as a result of the ongoing presence of the IP in the area.

Management in all cases emphasized the participatory nature of program development and the “bottom-up” approach to the planning of public works and livelihood development, even if in some cases teams found that beneficiaries selected projects from a predetermined menu of options provided by the DAs. Moreover, the projects chosen were those preferred by the community as a whole, not necessarily those that would benefit the poorest. The emphasis on community participation appeared to justify the selection of interventions irrespective of cost-benefit analysis, and there was little ranking of different interventions in terms of their relative costs and benefits.

It was evident that in all highland programs, there had also been an expectation of HABP functionality that was rarely fulfilled. This aspect of the program design was not clearly articulated, but it was clear that graduation, even at conservative rates, was unlikely to be achieved without significant coordination with other programs such as HABP and GRAD. The limited capacity of the HABP programs was regularly mentioned as a constraint to DFAP performance. Conversely, where it was possible to coordinate with other interventions outside of DFAP, results were clearly strengthened.

Overall, it was concluded that while all the IPs had demonstrated effective management and sound implementation practices, their overall effectiveness had been consistently constrained by the framework laid out by the PSNP. By accepting the PIM procedures, the IPs lost any control over critical aspects of program design, including targeting, ration composition, ration size, and, most importantly, graduation. This undoubtedly reduced the effectiveness of their interventions in reaching program goals. Complete acceptance of PIM procedures meant that

any opportunity to conduct small trials on variations in any of the above (targeting, ration composition, etc.) was also lost, so that opportunities for evidence-based policy advocacy that might have affected PSNP4 have been foregone.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

The general observation amongst DFAP M&E staff was that although there were so many indicators to be collected, management was not always aware of progress on the ground. This appeared to be a general characteristic of the DFAPs. The lists of indicators for each DFAP are lengthy. Many of them relate to program monitoring and are not relevant to program management on a monthly or quarterly basis. In most cases, the indicators reflect a preponderance of outputs, with roughly 50% addressing outcomes and impacts. Unfortunately, many of the most important outcomes and indicators are only assessed intermittently (i.e., baseline, midline, and endline), providing management with only one opportunity to evaluate progress and adapt accordingly. Surveys of program-critical outcomes, such as household food-security levels, need to be conducted much more regularly than they are at present if management is to be aware of changing needs and circumstances of beneficiaries.

The large numbers of output indicators allow management to determine whether or not they are making progress at a superficial level (e.g., indicators such as number of people trained or hectares of land under improved management) but provide little or no indication of the actual quality of the work undertaken or the benefits that might have resulted. In only a few cases could the team find evidence of surveys or other forms of data collection that could assist management to prioritize and adapt their interventions. Experimental interventions (such as the use of compost liquid) have been undertaken without M&E follow-up, and even larger-scale interventions (such as poultry and backyard gardening) lack hard data to demonstrate their viability and effectiveness. While these are apparently successful in the short term, it would be very helpful to understand their real benefits. Management is aware of these shortcomings, and it was noted that there are not enough M&E staff available to collect such grassroots data. Some IPs are already increasing their ground-level M&E staff numbers.

The absence of such effective M&E suggested that the DFAPs were being managed on a fixed and pre-determined basis, without reference to changing circumstance. The DFAPs demonstrate few of the learning opportunities that have characterized programs such as “Support to the

¹²³ This was clearly demonstrated where DFAPs and emergency relief programs were implemented in the same *kebeles*. Although DFAP beneficiaries had been targeted as the poorest in each community, they received a two-component ration restricted to five members per household in exchange for work, while emergency relief beneficiaries in 2016 received a three-component ration and full family targeting on a direct transfer basis. The difference between the two programs was seen as inequitable and caused disruption.

PSNP,” GRAD, “Pastoral Areas Resiliency Improvement through Market Expansion,” or the “Pastoral Livelihoods Initiative.” This was inherent in their design, but it has meant that while they may have demonstrated excellence in implementation, their potential for advocacy has been limited.

Knowledge gathering

In terms of knowledge gathering, it was evident that this function had been effectively compartmentalized by the T2CG, which had provided resources, including manpower, to a Knowledge-Gathering Unit that was external to each IP. That unit worked assiduously to extract lessons learned from the four IPs and to compile and disseminate them amongst stakeholders, including USAID and the GoE. T2CG units reported that individual IPs were reluctant to share failures and that, when less-than-perfect results were factually reported, they generated such a strong reaction from the USAID Mission that the practice was discontinued. Instead, it was decided to place greater emphasis on knowledge sharing at T2CG meetings themselves. It was evident that the documentation function of the Knowledge-Gathering Unit had not been well internalized by any stakeholder. Most were reluctant to share failures and invite criticisms, and most of the documentation produced by the Unit proved unavailable when requested. No IP managers reported that they had actually adopted new practices as a result of the Unit’s reports, which they considered to be more of success stories than critical analyses. On the other hand, knowledge-sharing field visits organized by the Knowledge-Gathering Unit appeared to have had a significant impact and to have been well remembered by IP staff. This aspect of the Unit’s work seemed to have strengthened knowledge sharing and to justify greater emphasis in future.

Overall, it was evident that knowledge gathering was largely tangential to DFAP interventions. It did not appear to be well integrated with M&E activities but was instead left to an external unit to pull together, so IPs were reacting to information requests rather than generating lessons learned of their own to share. The information that had been gathered under the DFAPs has now been archived and the unit disbanded, with the possibility that the information as a coherent body will soon be lost. This is regrettable, but almost inevitable given the lack of continuity amongst IPs and their management. It is necessary to draw this and similar information and experience into a knowledge base that has a greater degree of continuity and that can inform future program design and implementation practices. The required degree of continuity can only be found within the Ethiopian staff of the USAID Mission who could, if so tasked, contribute substantially to the knowledge-gathering process, becoming the institutional memory required to ensure that lessons learned can be carried over from one generation of programs to the next.

Sharing of Knowledge

From the perspectives above, it is quite evident that while there is considerable emphasis placed upon knowledge-sharing mechanisms, especially in program designs, in practice the documented sharing of knowledge appears to be weak. By contrast, there has been a useful exchange of knowledge through visits to other IP project sites to see at first-hand how different interventions are working. Such visits tend to promote both objective analysis and impact. Interviews in the field indicated that these had been useful and were well remembered. CRS took the women’s literacy approach from REST. FH/E took the soil and water conservation approach from REST, while REST and CRS took aspects of commodity management from FH/E.

One additional and critical aspect of knowledge sharing is the development of a knowledge base that can inform other projects, especially subsequent projects working to address food security within Ethiopia. This evaluation attempted to locate that knowledge base; i.e., to identify which people or institutions possess the necessary expertise and experience in terms either of personal memory or in written form that could inform future project designs. Interviews with project and Mission staff established that institutional memory was strongest amongst the long-term Ethiopian staff within both the IPs and the Mission. Expatriate staff in both institutions tended to turn over too rapidly to be able to develop the necessary experience. The institutional accumulation and ordering of written information on lessons learned appear to be weak. The retrieval of earlier documents created under the DFAP that might be useful guides to past experience proved difficult and sometimes impossible.

Management, coordination, M&E, and knowledge gathering in Borena

Program management by government at zonal, *woreda*, and *kebele* levels, through the multi-sectoral task force system and with a range of modes of support from SCI, has worked well and supported proper and timely implementation of food transfers and public works. M&E systems at community and *kebele* level have generally worked well, and learning from M&E has been incorporated in program practice (although feedback from the national level on M&E reports was not always shared, and systems for knowledge management between the four DFAPs, hosted by SCI, did not work as well as they should have done). The major criticisms regarding program management were as follows:

- There was some evidence that proper implementation of the DFAP has conflicted at times with other government priorities, particularly mass mobilization of unpaid labor.
- Plans for the closeout of the program were not well communicated to government, particularly at *woreda* level and below.

- Collaboration with other NGO-implemented programs in the zone, even those implemented by SCI, and even at a basic level of sharing logistics, was minimal.

3.4.2 What are the key lessons learned in terms of sustainability of program outcomes?

The different aspects of the DFAPs have varying degrees of sustainability. The following conclusions can be drawn:

Community assets—Small-scale irrigation and most of the other activities related to the creation of community assets through watershed conservation works appeared to be physically sustainable, although the lack of financial analyses or data for any of these activities prevented any determination of financial sustainability. It was noted that sustainability of all of these activities depended upon at least some rainfall and that, in the event of a drought, even irrigation dams would be expected to dry up. None of the above activities were completely resilient to weather-related shocks. A shortage of water resources extension workers at *kebele* level in all regions except Tigray is also compromising the sustainability of irrigation and other water-resource development interventions.

In almost all cases, measures have been put in place to maintain the community assets developed under the DFAPs. The general principle is that assets are to be handed over to the community to be maintained by user groups, financed by fees and savings, and regulated through bylaws. Additional supports (such as specialist repairs) are to be provided by the government. The general paucity of local authorities' resources suggests that this anticipated support might not always be forthcoming, and sustainability must depend more upon the capacity of those who derive the greatest benefit from the assets to maintain them.

Thus, the first plank of sustainability of community assets—effectively channeled local commitment—was found to be present in many but by no means all cases assessed. The second plank—government support—was generally weaker. In many *woredas*, local government itself reported limitations in both financial and human resources that would prevent it from carrying out major repairs or maintenance work. Although in some cases the necessary expertise either exists or can be contracted to carry out repairs, this is not always possible. In fact, the capacity of the IPs to undertake such works when local communities or government could not is one of the value additions that IPs have brought to the DFAPs. Nevertheless, this does suggest that reliance upon local government to support the

sustainability of community assets is in some circumstances misplaced.

Overall, therefore, the evaluation team found that the sustainability of community assets depended more than anything else upon the commitment of beneficiaries and the extent of the benefit to the individuals charged to maintain them. The theme often quoted by DFAP agents that “the users will be responsible for the assets, with the support of government” appeared to be a simplification of a potentially complex situation.

Livelihood support activities—Savings/self-help groups are widely recognized as sustainable if correctly established, and this appeared to be the case in all regions where the conventional savings group approach had been followed. Other livelihoods developed under the DFAPs ranged from being relatively simple (e.g., forage production, shoat rearing, sand and stone selling) to relatively complex (beekeeping, fruit and irrigated crop production) in both technical and marketing aspects. The sustainability of the more capital-intensive and technically demanding livelihoods is less certain. A further limitation is the small amount of capital that has been made available through MFIs and RuSACCOs, making some commercial livelihoods unable to reach the scale required to make a substantial difference to household resilience.

In Borena, there are strong perceptions that livestock holdings of beneficiaries, by far the most significant category of household assets, have either increased or been stabilized. There is widespread concern, however, about the potential impacts of a failure of the *haggaya* (September–November) rains, which were overdue at the time of fieldwork. Concern of this magnitude over a single season's rainfall failure, which many observers believe would have been coped with more easily in past decades, suggests decreasing resilience of the overall system.

MCHN and WASH outcomes—Sustainability has depended upon: the suitability and impact of messages delivered to each community; a conducive environment that can reinforce those messages; and adequate capacity to deliver the messages. Where the physical resources needed to adopt the recommended behaviors are not available, the recommendations will eventually be forgotten. Two constraints to sustainability were observed. In Amhara, the high turnover of HEWs necessitated the continual retraining of staff. In Oromia, the turnover of HEWs was less, but HEWs were frequently sent to Dire Dawa University for capacity-building training or to upgrade their education, leaving a gap in the provision of health service to the community.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ During the field visit, HEWs at neither Kersa nor Dire Dawa were available since they had been called away for training.

Capacity development—The constraints of staff turnover also apply at the *woreda* level, limiting the sustainability of ToT training. DAs in particular show a high rate of turnover as young graduates move on after completing two years of obligatory service in the field. At present, it appears unlikely that this trend can be reversed, although the construction of accommodation as a DFAP community asset could reduce the incentive to leave a remote rural posting. In Borena, the management skills transferred to government and to community members at different levels by formal and informal capacity building will continue to be useful in a post-DFAP phase in Borena (i.e., a shift to a mainstream PSNP model in the DFAP *woredas*), but the high mobility of government officials will also tend to dissipate gains at this level as time goes by.

Overall, it is evident that the sustainability of key impacts and outcomes, especially amongst graduate households, will be dependent upon closer coordination with government, especially with regard to expectations regarding graduation. The lack of coordination at higher levels means that the DFAPs were not adequately resourced to prepare households for graduation at the rate that the government had planned in GTP1. GTP2 states that under PSNP4, the government plans to graduate five million beneficiaries over a five-year period. DFAPs should be adequately resourced to achieve this rate, if forced and unsustainable graduation is not to be repeated within DFAP *woredas*.

3.4.3 What critical services or conditions are/were necessary to sustain and strengthen the outcomes?

A number of factors, both external and internal to future programs, are necessary if DFAP outcomes are to be sustained. Chief amongst the external factors is equable weather conditions. Emergency beneficiaries reported that timely and adequate relief measures in 2016 had allowed them to maintain assets despite the 2015/16 drought, but the current national financial situation¹²⁵ suggests that such a response cannot be expected to be repeated. In the absence of such support, even food-secure graduates indicated that they would be unlikely to sustain themselves in the event of a second drought. This is not unexpected. A society in which more than 80% of households rely upon agriculture for their livelihood is inherently vulnerable to drought, irrespective of their immediate food security. A single drought in the coming five years would undoubtedly impact most graduate households negatively.¹²⁶ If two were to occur, none of those households reliant upon agricultural livelihoods would be expected to sustain food security, and most of those dependent upon off-farm IGAs

would also be negatively impacted. The main impacts and outcomes of the DFAPs are inherently vulnerable to inequitable weather and will remain so until off-farm IGAs, including urban employment, become much more prevalent.

Continuous population growth also continues to undermine the gains made under the DFAPs. Program goals and objectives become increasingly unattainable as numbers of landless youth increase. GoE supports family planning interventions, but more needs to be done to strengthen messaging around contraception. Contraception messaging from the Orthodox Church is reportedly changing; while the Church used to be strongly against contraception, it is now silent. Women are also changing in their attitudes, but still there is more to be done before rural population levels can be considered stable enough for DFAP interventions to make a sustainable difference to food security at the community level.

Recognizing that most DFAP beneficiaries and graduates are net buyers of food from the market, DFAP households also require protection from commodity price shocks and adverse terms of trade. Domestic cereal prices in Ethiopia tend to track between import and export parity. Currently, however, domestic prices of wheat are significantly above import parity. Continued high cereal prices will erode the purchasing power of IGAs and reduce the sustainability of food security amongst graduates who depend on them. Circumstances under which Ethiopia has lacked the capacity to import grain commercially (due to forex constraints) or where prices have risen dramatically due to inflation as a result of monetary imbalance have certainly prevailed in the last ten years. Both can seriously undermine the outcomes of the DFAPs.

Finally, DFAP outcomes will only be strengthened if opportunities for self- and wage employment increase. This is perhaps the least likely development in the short term. If future DFAPs do not place greater emphasis upon the facilitation of employment, beneficiaries will be obliged to continue livelihoods that are always vulnerable to shocks from weather and population growth.

Internal factors that could strengthen outcomes include the availability of longer-term investment financing, which is critical to the expansion and strengthening of both on- and off-farm IGAs. DFAP staff, local authorities, and beneficiaries all mentioned this financial constraint. There simply has not been enough financing available to meet the demands of those who wish to access credit for business

¹²⁵ Ethiopia's effective drought response measures were to some extent enabled by a reduction in commodity prices, especially of fuel oils and grains.

¹²⁶ In the context of changing climatic conditions for the region, some climate experts expect an increase in frequency and intensity of drought associated with higher global temperatures and more frequent El Niño/La Niña occurrences, coupled with other external stressors.

development.¹²⁷ Three causes of financial constraint were reported:

1. Group lending policies of MFIs were seen as too risky by some beneficiaries who believed that the downside of one group member defaulting would erase any profits they might make from the loans.
2. Inherent capital limitations within MFIs and RuSACCOs meant they were not able to access adequate financing for on-lending and prefer allocating their limited resources to the best-performing clients.
3. Regional government require that 97% of outstanding loans be paid back in order for MFIs to extend loans.

The last constraint in particular has hobbled livelihood development programs. Different regional governments have approached the situation in different ways. In Tigray, a loan guarantee fund has been put in place to cover the risk and facilitate increased availability of financing. Conversely in Dire Dawa and Oromia, the regional authorities have either suspended further credit or are seeking to recoup outstanding amounts from the administrative budgets of the *woredas*. These moves are likely to have detrimental impacts on beneficiaries and will weaken DFAP outcomes, unless some mitigating measures can be developed. It is also evident that sustainability of IGAs will be enhanced through the development of

business skills as well as improved access to market information. The follow-up and mentorship of newly developed livelihoods is resource intensive but has been shown in Tigray¹²⁸ to be effective in increasing livelihood sustainability and consequent resilience.

In the Borena context, it was clear that sustaining and strengthening the outcomes of the DFAP will depend on a much broader engagement with the sources of vulnerability in the pastoralist system: trends towards individuation of land tenure with resulting loss of pastoral mobility as a fallback measure; high transaction costs of livestock marketing; under-provision of health and education services; and a lack of livelihood diversification opportunities.

Ultimately, however, the main intervention required to sustain and strengthen program outcomes was bluntly stated by all stakeholders at the grassroots level to be the continuation of DFAPs and especially the services provided by IPs in addition to the PSNP. This point was continually repeated—that the communities were not yet ready for the DFAPs to leave and that a reduction in the quality of services received was expected in those *woredas* where DFAP closure was anticipated. Given the level of resources available within government, such a reduction is almost inevitable. It will require a substantial increase in human resources, skill, and motivation at *kebele*, *woreda*, and regional levels before the impacts and outcomes begun under the DFAPs can be sustained under a PSNP implemented by the GoE alone.

Key lessons learned on program management and sustainability

- Capacity of management to coordinate different interventions within a layered approach definitely enhances program outcomes.
- Coordination with government is critical, but a policy of absolute alignment with government principles should be carefully assessed. In particular, a policy that restricts manageable interests of DFAP IPs in key areas (such as graduation and targeting) should be scrutinized to ensure that it is in line with DFAP goals.
- A rigid approach to program management limits opportunities for gathering evidence to inform future policy.
- Knowledge gathering should not be external to each DFAP but rather should be integrated within each M&E component.
- Lessons learned are best shared through field study visits.
- Institutional memory at the IP level cannot be relied upon to carry lessons learned from one program generation to the next.
- Adequate financing is critical to sustain livelihoods developed under the DFAPs.
- Sustainability of outcomes (especially of graduate households) requires closer coordination with government, including an awareness of government expectations of future graduation rates.

¹²⁷ Although the problem is less acute in Tigray, where it has been recognized and some mitigating measures have been implemented.

¹²⁸ A. Sengupta, 2012, Pathways out of the Productive Safety Net Programme: Lessons from Graduation Pilot in Ethiopia, Working Paper, BRAC Development Institute. Available from <http://graduation.cgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Pathway-out-of-PSNP-Final-June-2012.pdf>.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Design and Effectiveness

The following recommendations relate to how the design of the DFAP's programs were well suited to deliver the planned objectives/resilience-building goal of the programs, their effectiveness, and the value additions.

4.1.1 Program design—recommendations

Program activities should be context specific: While regional policies may focus on general pathways (e.g., watershed development), the actual approach to development needs to be context specific if it is to be successful. In areas where watershed development is not appropriate, for example, a stronger focus on agropastoral activities, social infrastructure development, and off-farm IGAs may be warranted. This will almost certainly require greater emphasis on livelihood supports such as training, as well as increased availability of investment capital.

In Borena, linkages should be strengthened between PSNP and other relevant pastoral development initiatives, actual or potential; in particular:

- Increased links to community early warning activities, both to commit extra resources to build early warning and to use early warning as a trigger to timely and appropriate responses;
- Linkages to drought response initiatives that can supply animal health inputs and/or targeted feed donations to selected breeding stock during drought.

With regard to public works, future PSNP work should be supported to:

- Work closely with customary institutions in natural resource management to ensure sustainability;
- Continue to take into account the seasonal nature of particular activities so that work on community assets does not compete with other livelihood activities of community members.

Increase program emphasis on landless youth: A substantial proportion of DFAP beneficiaries are landless youth, making activities that enhance the productivity of land of little benefit to them. Greater emphasis on livelihood support activities will be more appropriate. In the context of IGA, the following recommendations are made:

- Due attention should be given to value chain analysis,

i.e., linkages between local production and market opportunities, prior to encouraging youth to engage in any off-farm IGA. Unless the value chains are demonstrably profitable, it is possible that youth may find themselves adopting livelihoods that consume both their time and resources but are ultimately futile.

- Those beneficiaries taking up IGAs should be provided with technical training and also market information and support.
- Youth should continue to be supported in different IGAs (such as beekeeping and high-value crop production) within protected areas.
- IGA support should include not only business opportunities but also employment through the provision of both hard and soft skills. This will be an important service for landless youth who lack business development aptitude.

Balance program interventions with availability of livelihood-support financing: Alternative IGAs, whether related to community assets (such as forage production from reclaimed gullies or small-scale irrigation) or not, require adequate financing. Future DFAPs must be supplied with or linked to adequate levels of investment financing for livelihood-support initiatives if they are to significantly impact household food security. It is not appropriate and potentially misleading and cost inefficient to train beneficiaries in alternative IGAs if the financing necessary for these to succeed is not available. In such instances, the provision of training to facilitate employment might be more appropriate. A detailed assessment of the availability of financing for investment in IGAs should be made in each region to include savings groups, MFIs, and RuSACCOs. It should consider both the availability and terms of available loans and their suitability to sustain IGAs. The results should be used to inform the nature and scope of IGA development planning.

Consider options to increase overall availability of financing: Approaches should be made to free up financing for livelihood development in all regions. This might be achieved through the use of DCA (DanChurch Aid) guarantees or through agreements to refinance outstanding debts on a longer-term, low-interest basis, including an effective moratorium¹²⁹ on repayment of the principal until household income reaches specified levels. Although it has

¹²⁹ A direct moratorium may be beyond the capacity of regional authorities to implement since it is the issue of National Bank of Ethiopia. Nevertheless, future DFAPs may choose to consider other mechanisms, including the provision of loans to cover initial repayments in order to create a de facto moratorium.

been a controversial issue since 2010, MFI regulations that prevent lending in *kebeles* that have not recovered 97% of outstanding loans continue to penalize enterprising households, and their repeal/modification to enable such households to access financing should be advocated for.

Ensure adequate resources for WASH-supporting infrastructure: Long-term food security is dependent upon adequate WASH capacity. This is only possible given adequate access to water. In a number of *kebeles*, watershed development priorities had been placed above access to water. The result was that, although WASH messaging had been well received, it could not be acted upon. Greater emphasis in program design should be placed on ensuring adequate access to safe water for all households as a key priority of community works.

Provide support that better reflects capacity needs and opportunities: In terms of the design of livelihood diversification, the two-way choice between training and grant support used in the Borena DFAP needs to be replaced by a case-based approach more tailored to individuals. It could include a combination of formal training, apprenticeship to more senior tradespeople, and grant or loan support at varying amounts. Where formal training is supported, it should be based on a realistic analysis of the capacities of the training institutions and more targeted support to them where appropriate. Increased information is required on the current level and nature of non-pastoral employment (including number and types of enterprises and their labor constraints) in the small towns of the zone.

4.1.2 Program effectiveness—recommendations

Participate in beneficiary targeting and graduation numbers: Two key aspects affecting program implementation are the number of beneficiaries who continue to be supported and the number of graduates leaving the program, with both determined in principle (but not in practice) according to the GPS. When these aspects are determined independently of the IPs, it limits the extent to which they are able to match resources to actual community needs and the extent to which they can be held accountable to any of the program's impact indicators associated with sustainable graduation. It is strongly recommended that both IPs and USAID lobby for validation of beneficiary and graduate numbers in those *woredas* and *kebeles* in which their resources are to be utilized.

Match program transfers to the need of the households: While some PSNP/DFAP beneficiary households have access to land and may be able to support themselves from

their own resources for six months or more each year,¹³⁰ others have little or no land and will therefore require transfers over a longer period in order to achieve food sufficiency, regardless of the productivity level of the season. The provision of a blanket transfer is an inefficient and unfair use of resources under such circumstances. It is recommended that program designs should consider the application of transfers over a variable period according to need. The “3–6–9” approach has been trialed in 2010 and found to be effective. For instance, it continued to be applied for a longer duration in one of the pilot *woredas* of Amhara Region. A similar approach should be trialed across DFAPs and PSNP *woredas* to provide possible evidence for future change.

Re-evaluate DFAP transfers per household: The imposition of a household cap, i.e., a limit on transfers of five per household in PSNP4, has led to many complaints and dissatisfaction amongst beneficiaries. It is not possible to protect household assets of larger households under such conditions, and the urban migration of young people who are “surplus to the transfers” is evidence of the inadequacy of this. It is recommended that full family targeting be reintroduced. This would require increased resources, but the additional amount required could be moderated by adjusting the number of months of transfer and by introducing a variable-level support mechanism. It is also recommended that consideration be given to the reintroduction of vitamin-A fortified vegetable oil to the food transfer. If this is not possible across all beneficiaries, then it should be targeted specifically at PDSBs and PLW. It is recognized that the current close alignment of the DFAPs with PSNP4 may restrict the extent to which such a change is possible. Hence, it is suggested that special provision be sought for pilot programs/field testing of these recommended alternatives in order to generate the necessary evidence for future policy change. Specific M&E activities should be undertaken to evaluate the impact of such pilot initiatives.

4.1.3 Key value additions—recommendations

Strengthen and enlarge the nutrition-focused livelihood interventions: Small-scale poultry production and backyard vegetable gardening have been supported as means of strengthening nutritional outcomes. Both initiatives appear to have potential, and it is recommended that they become embedded within rural communities to achieve sustainable outcomes. The interventions should also be combined and disseminated beyond the current restricted target groups (mainly PLW). Greater liaison with existing local research capacity will also enhance future sustainability. In particular, the use of local vegetables should be considered to replace the exotic varieties for

¹³⁰ At least during a good harvest season.

which seeds are not readily available. Also, more appropriate breeds of chickens that do not require specialized diets and can scavenge to support themselves should be considered in place of the high-performance birds supplied to PLW. Food security and other development work in Borena must be linked to research-informed work, at the legal/policy level and at the community level, on appropriate models of land tenure and natural resource management that serve both environmental sustainability and equity/poverty reduction.

Increase emphasis on savings/self-help groups: Savings groups have been part of USAID interventions for more than ten years under PNSP. Their effectiveness and sustainability in promoting self-empowerment and aspiration, as well as providing both coping capacity and credit for small-scale income generation, has been well established. It is recommended that this initiative be implemented as widely as possible and especially across all user groups in all regions.

Re-evaluate the capacity development/training processes: To achieve the maximum effectiveness of training:

- Ensure that trainees and the purpose of training is systematically linked to project activities;
- Be involved in the selection process for institutional trainees at regional and *woreda* level;
- Assess trainees prior to training to avoid repetition and wasted time;
- Consider introduction of computer-based training modules (modules have been already developed for DAs by other programs in Ethiopia);
- Prioritize interventions that can help reduce staff turnover.

4.2 Graduation

While the number of graduate households was substantial, the evaluation found that relatively few were actually food sufficient upon graduation. The majority were forced and premature graduate households. The following recommendations relate to how the PSNP graduation process might be improved.

Minimize dependence upon counterpart modalities:

The DFAPs were obliged to be aligned with PSNP modalities and to depend upon local authorities to implement graduation and HABP. These constraints

limited program success in the attainment of the goal and strategic objectives and in the capacity to provide lessons learned in the key areas of transfers and graduation. A program design that reflects the general principles of the PSNP PIM, rather than strictly adhering to the modalities of each region, could provide better evidence for policy change in the future. Future DFAP programming would benefit from greater flexibility of design, allowing different approaches to be taken either as a whole or on a pilot basis, under the control of the IPs, while also operating within PSNP guidelines.

Align DFAP resource plans with government

expectations: Currently the GTP2 envisages the graduation of five million beneficiaries under PSNP4. Future DFAP resources should be aligned with these expectations to avoid the dilution of impacts that was caused by premature graduation during the previous DFAPs.

Assist in the application of the GPS: IPs are represented at the *woreda* FSTF level and have the capacity to assist in the application of the GPS. It is recommended that each IP should assist in the collection and entry of data into the GPS for each livelihood zone, and in particular should assist in the projection of each graduation rate generated by the GPS tools across the relevant *kebeles* in which they are working. This would allow the IPs to have greater oversight of the graduation process. It is also essential to update the livelihood baseline data to make the GPS tool objective and relevant to the current program conditions.¹³¹

Reduce premature self-graduation: This can be achieved by:

- Using messaging to enhance beneficiary appreciation of the process of livelihood development that is expected to occur along the graduation pathway. Messaging should be an essential part of program activities and should be regularly reinforced during public works, community meetings, and KFSTF meetings;
- Monitoring the trade-off between regular transfers and associated public works duties, and opportunistic IGAs. Transfers should be continually assessed for their adequacy, reliability, and relevance in meeting the subsistence needs of beneficiaries, so as to reduce pressure to prematurely leave the programs;
- Reducing the stigma associated with public works activities. The use of public works participants in an exploitative manner should be avoided through

¹³¹ The data currently used are 10 years old. An update of the baseline is understood to be in process as a result of a USAID-funded program implemented by SCI.

enhanced monitoring of activities. Particular care should be taken that public works on private lands is undertaken only when part of an integrated watershed development plan or when the landholder is a PSNP beneficiary.

Adopt a value chain approach to IGAs: Graduation is often reliant upon the development of IGAs by beneficiaries. The IGAs that have been most widely proposed include some (such as sheep and goat fattening) for which costs, markets, and risks are well understood; but for others, the essential aspects of profitability and sustainability are not yet well addressed. A site/context-specific value chain assessment should be undertaken to determine the potential risks and benefits of each alternative IGA before it is recommended for take-up by potential graduates.

Assess the resilience to drought of sheep production as an IGA: One of the most widespread IGAs that can lead to, and potentially sustain, graduation is the rearing/fattening of sheep. This activity is often dependent upon bought-in forage, especially when taken up by the poorest households (whose lands are limited and who may no longer have access to areas closed off as a result of watershed development). If harvests are good, forage can be available and cheap; but in a poor season, transport costs of forage can be prohibitive, and prices can quickly escalate. This IGA may actually reduce a household's capacity to withstand shock, if livestock must be sold in a declining market because drought has made forage impossible to purchase economically. The assessment should also consider the relevance of livestock insurance to sheep- and cattle-fattening enterprises.

Increase business skills: Graduates undertaking commercial activities, especially those that require increased investment in inputs such as irrigated vegetable production, are vulnerable to market risk. They must develop the necessary commercial acumen to minimize this risk. DAs should be trained to impart the principles of business development, including product diversification, finance, and marketing and market research. If DAs are not able to assume this role, then IPs should provide other advisors to make sure that those operating newly developed terraces and irrigation schemes can do so profitably.

Strengthen follow-up and support mentorship of graduates: Follow-up of graduates is essential to ensure that they are able to maintain and increase food sufficiency levels so as to eventually achieve resilient food security. At present, such follow-up is limited and often constrained by the workload of DAs. The task is considered outside of the DFAP IPs, which currently have no resources committed for this purpose. It is recommended that graduates should be followed up through group meetings (especially savings group meetings where appropriate). IP animators, together

with KFSTFs, should be tasked with convening groups of graduates and providing basic oversight, invoking more focused IP support for individual graduates as and when necessary on a "referral" basis.

4.3 Gender Equality and Empowerment

The GoE has developed an extensive gender empowerment strategy that is being implemented in all regions. The impact of the DFAPs has been to accelerate this process of change through increased emphasis and multifaceted messaging. The following recommendations highlight where this could be strengthened.

Continue the current successful approaches to gender empowerment: Traditional barriers remain amongst some older people, but the overall impact has been good. Based on the observed outcomes, it is recommended that the DFAPs should continue the current process of empowerment using the same broad approach, but this approach should include different forms of messaging delivered to men and women as well as boys and girls. The interventions to enhance gender empowerment in Oromia (strengthened presence on task forces) and Amhara (role reversal activities) in particular deserve wider application across all regions.

Expand gender equity programs in schools: Gender is a crosscutting issue that should not be limited to the food security arena. In particular, a greater emphasis upon gender equity within schools would be expected to promote a more fundamental response than messages targeted at older generations. The experience of converting girls' clubs to gender clubs, with both boys and girls as members, has had a positive impact on gender equity amongst young people.

Involve men more in the design of gender interventions: Future program design and gender interventions should make sure that they promote the involvement of men in the process of change. The participation of men, and the understanding of men, is very important. Interventions should be designed to encourage the participation of men and the use of male peer pressure to reinforce change. M&E systems in particular should monitor male attitudes to ensure that alienation does not occur.

Develop strong linkages between gender interventions and government support: Linkages should be established well before program closure so that the effectiveness of the linkages and budgetary allocation can be validated and sustainability ensured. The use of gender clubs in schools, for example, would benefit from formalization by government so that they remain active after the support ends and are widely applied in all schools and *woredas*.

4.4 Program Management and Sustainability

Program management was observed to have been of consistently high quality and to have demonstrated flexibility in the face of changing circumstances. M&E systems need to be enhanced to allow the collection not only of the program indicators required by USAID/FFP but also of the data necessary to inform management on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. The overall sustainability of program outcomes requires closer coordination with government in particular, including an awareness of government expectations and intentions with regard to graduation. The following recommendations relate to the key lessons learned in terms of program management, coordination, implementation, and sustainability of program outcomes.

4.4.1 Program management, coordination, and knowledge gathering—recommendations

Focus planning on needs, not policies: It is recommended that during the process of planning, management at all levels be given the scope to address the actual circumstances and needs of beneficiaries, and constrained less by overarching principles and policies of development.

Have a clear exit strategy for community assets: The development of major community assets such as micro-dams, shallow wells, irrigation schemes, and hillside terracing requires initial planning, construction, the development of local management structures, and subsequent training in effective utilization and maintenance. The DFAP will not have fully discharged its responsibilities until the last stage (of training) has been completed. This limits the window within which such major projects can be undertaken. It is recommended that such projects should not be initiated if the handover process, including the establishment of effective management structures and all training, cannot be completed within the DFAP period.¹³²

Be timely with follow-on programs: The late timing of follow-on program contracts has resulted in a hiatus, during which some expert staff have been laid off. This has meant that experience and expertise developed over time has been lost. This is especially the case for field staff. Follow-on contract arrangements should be made in a timely fashion to allow both the continuity of public works programs on the one hand and the maintenance of relevant expertise on the other.

Improve the functioning of M&E: With management of all IPs reporting intentions to strengthen M&E capacity, the following changes should be introduced:

- It should be recognized that the analysis of data to understand both its implications and its limitations is the ultimate purpose of most M&E exercises, rather than the collection and collation of data alone.
- Lessons learned need to be developed in a context-specific manner, including reference to the circumstances in which they might, and might not, be appropriate.
- *Ad hoc* assessments of impacts and outcomes (such as the knowledge, attitude, and practice coverage surveys) have provided useful information to management. Greater emphasis could be put on frequent small-sample surveys (as opposed to baseline, mid-term, and end-of-project surveys) to enhance capacity to respond to success, failures, and changing circumstances.
- In addition to assessments of impact and outcomes, M&E systems should include specific provision for *ante* and/or *post hoc* cost-benefit analyses of different interventions, taking social and environmental sustainability into account, particularly for public works and livelihoods.
- M&E should be undertaken of graduates' progress to provide the information necessary to modify program interventions and strengthen success rates. This will provide a useful indication of the effectiveness of the GPS and facilitate the timely delivery of contingency resources.
- M&E capacity of DFAPs at lower levels should be strengthened to promote learning, especially through the assessment of training and local pilot activities.
- All of the above should be undertaken within the context that M&E provides not just indicators for reports but also ongoing analysis to provide dynamic information that should inform program management. From this perspective, M&E should feed directly into individual DFAP management as well as the T2CG Steering Committee deliberations.

Provide more resources for knowledge gathering: To be effective, the process of knowledge gathering requires more resources than those available to date. Responsibility for

¹³² As was observed on more than one occasion in Amhara.

the assessment of lessons learned across all of the DFAPs and their formulation into a useful body of knowledge cannot be allocated to a single individual. Two options exist. Either the T2CG knowledge management unit should consist of a larger dedicated team of at least one person per IP, or a single knowledge manager should be able to draw upon individuals within each IP. Ideally, the individual within each IP would be a senior member of the M&E department who, in addition to their in-house M&E work, would be budgeted and tasked to gather knowledge and liaise with the overall coordinator.

In either case, long-term knowledge accumulation also requires coordination between the knowledge-gathering representative of the various IPs and a permanent counterpart within the USAID Mission. Detailed knowledge of the PSNP, and of USAID's contribution to it, relies upon institutional memory held within a few institutions with little coherence and is largely dependent upon specific individuals. There is no guarantee that those institutions will continue to be involved in DFAP implementation, and there are no mechanisms in place to ensure the sustainability of that knowledge. A knowledge management counterpart within the USAID Mission would ensure that the lessons learned throughout the course of DFAP implementation could be readily available for dissemination whenever and wherever appropriate.¹³³

Within that context, the development of an atmosphere that encourages the open discussion of failures as much as successes is important if knowledge gathering is to be a meaningful process.

4.4.2 Sustainability of program outcomes—recommendations

Ensure community commitment prior to community asset construction: Where benefits to PSNP individuals derive from community assets are small or indirect (even though the benefit to the community as a whole might be substantial), commitment to provide the necessary maintenance should be obtained from the general community before the community asset is constructed. This may require the development of a maintenance budget, the calculation of an appropriate levy, and the agreement of the community that the levy would be paid.

Expand and deepen livelihood diversification in Borena to make it more effective: Whether this is done by a program involved in food transfers or not is less important than creating linkages between medium-term food security and livelihood diversification, which will be

necessary for the long-term resilience of the system. Specific linkages to a public works program can be based around providing space and resources for IGAs such as animal fattening, apiculture, and fruit tree planting.

Increase emphasis on family planning: A widespread response in interviews with both beneficiaries and DFAP IP agents was that the imposition of a limit of five transfers per household under PSNP4 was impractical unless population growth could be constrained.¹³⁴ Continual population growth will undermine program outcomes. Family planning is one of the 16 components covered by the HEWs, and some health posts can provide family planning services. Additional support to HEWs to address family planning should be included as part of the DFAP MCHN program.

Undertake interventions to reduce staff turnover: While turnover of government field staff is inevitable, it might be reduced and DFAP impacts enhanced through the following:

- The provision of infrastructure to support *woreda*- and *kebele*-level officers (DAs and HEWs), especially health and veterinary posts that include accommodation facilities;
- The use of trained facilitators and animators to reduce the workloads for DAs and HEWs;
- The predictable/transparent provision of skills upgrade or education/training opportunities (reflected in salaries/responsibilities/status) to allow staff to develop aspirations for their own professional growth within the system.

Undertake an empirical graduation study: It is recommended that a study be conducted to make an empirical assessment of the levels of investment required to achieve sustainable graduation. Such a study would examine the livelihoods of successful graduates, including combinations of enterprises and IGAs as well as access and utilization of community assets, to determine in particular the sources, types, and amounts of investment required. This would provide the evidence necessary to advocate for increased levels of investment and to inform the resource requirements of future programs.

Maintain levels of performance by raising community expectations and advocacy: Some key value additions under the DFAPs are derived from inherent characteristics of IPs. These characteristics include not only technical expertise, capable management, and plant and equipment

¹³³ Moreover, linkages between such a knowledge center and government structures, including the PSNP Donor Coordination Team at federal level, would ensure that lessons from DFAP are flowing to and from the government-implemented PSNP.

¹³⁴ Reported in Samre Saharte, Lasta, Simada, and Meta.

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but also less tangible ones. These include the capacity to prioritize and adapt interventions beyond target-driven activities, high levels of motivation to achieve and maintain standards, and a clear focus on the wellbeing of beneficiaries. These all contribute to overall levels of performance that cannot be expected to be sustainable without fundamental counterpart change. This change can be facilitated by close cooperation between DFAP and government staff, but it can also be driven by demand. The conclusion of DFAP activities in Borena was marked by a clear statement of expectation from beneficiaries that the government counterparts should in future provide the same level of support that they had enjoyed under the DFAP. For DFAP outcomes to be sustainable, it will be necessary for beneficiaries in all areas to maintain and articulate that expectation. DFAP activities should therefore be designed to develop grassroots awareness of rights and obligations, and to strengthen community advocacy for improved services.



Water point developed from spring capture in Simada

