# Geblen site-specific topic: The Productive Safety Net Programme

## Overall have regular food aid and credit-related interventions increased the asset-base of the community and reduced the number of households dependent on food aid?

No, it is not. The fact that there is no participant in Geblen graduated from the PSNP and the fact that there are many more people are being registered to take part in the second phase of the PSNP is indicate that the interventions are unable to meet its targets. Some of the credit facilities, particularly, those related to livestock including bees, that are allowed for the people in the kebele are highly affected by the severe drought persisting in the locality. Therefore, it can be said that the credit facilities that are allowed to people in Geblen do not created the capacity to the poor people.

Not only the livestock related credits, but also the non-farm credit facilities provided to the residents of the locality are not helpful to the revisers of loans. Only the very rich ones and women household heads that are engaging in small business in the village of *Mishig* are benefiting from the nonfarm credit facilities. The very riches are using it to trade different commodities and or purchase water pumps for the purpose of irrigation. While, those engaging in small business use it to build new houses and purchase modernized equipments like beds, DVD players and Televisions. The majority of the people could not be benefited from the non-farm credit facilities. Lack of proper management of the money in the side of the borrowers, exaggerated interest rates and lack of irrigable land are the major reasons for the failure of the credit facilities.

On the other hand, significant numbers of people who are included in the PSNP do not have access to the credit facilities. The elderly people and those destitute people who lack reputation and acceptance among the community as well as those People who have records of bad debts have no access to use the credit service. The poor people who lack reputation by the community and those with bad debts cannot borrow money from the credit services because of the sanctions put upon them by the kebele administration, which refused them to provide guarantee required for loan service.

## Do the interventions benefit poor people equally to the better-off?

The food aid programme coordinator of the kebele, reported that residents of the kebele have been receiving a monthly ration of food aid from the government and other NGOs such as Adigrat Catholic Missionaries and World Vision Ethiopia. For the last 5 years, the PSNP provides food and cash for six months of the year. Out of the total number of the residents in the kebele, 1933 people are without labour and are recipients of food and cash aid through direct support and the rest are with labour and for public works.

On the other hand, residents of the kebele who are not receiving regular food and cash aid through participation in the PSNP are receiving Emergency Food Aid. They are people who do have two and more than two oxen. Residents of the locality call the Emergency Food Aid as *Nay Haftam* [Food Aid for the rich ones].

In Geblen, most residents are taking loans for livestock; and modern beehives purchase. The Natural resource Assistant in the kebele reported that many people in the kebele have taken loans and purchase cows, oxen, goats, sheep, donkey, chicken and bees. However, most of them were unable to achieve food security. For example, since last year, more than 500 modern beehives distributed among the people in credit, however, almost all of them are out of use except to those purchased by the very few rich farmers are using it. The majority of the poor people are selling the hives and part of their ration for the purpose of repayment of debts. As a result, they are becoming very reluctant to participate in other credit services which in turn could keep them more food insecure.

Most poor people are becoming dependent upon the PSNP, though it did not bring significant change in their lives. They are using it to sustain their lives and the lives of their family members. On the other hand, the better offs are fully using the ration for the household food consumption. Thus, it helps them to at least keep their asset as it is. Although they did not increase their asset bases, they are not using their assets or borrow money to purchase food.

Poor households receiving regular food aid in Geblen are using the ration being transferred to them as food and non-food consumables goods, cash contribution and preparation of feasts. A destitute household head reported that he is using part of the ration is used as food to his family members. The other part will is used to repay debts he borrowed from his network, and to purchase sugar, coffee and salt. He also said he is planning to borrow from the saving and credit Enterprise to purchase food. He said, “I always borrow money from the government and spent it to purchase grain. He also said that most cases he used to give them back the money he borrowed either after I borrowed money from his relatives or by selling part of the grain he is receiving through the PSNP.

Another recipient of the regular food aid said that he has the plan to pay 27 birr as cash contribution to the school budget and 8birr to the party. He is a member of TPLF.

## Is the credit system more efficient for richer people?

Yes, it is. The credit system is not efficient for the poor people. The very riches are using it to trade different commodities and or purchase agricultural inputs water pumps for the purpose of irrigation.

Rich farmers who do have access to irrigable land assure his households food security after purchasing a water pump using the credit service.

Rich people engaging in non-agricultural activities such as in trading and installing grinding mills are utilizing the money they borrow from the credit service effectively. They are borrowing more than 5000birr from the saving and Credit Enterprise.

## What other things should be in place for the credit system to work well and grow?

The interest rate should be reduced from 18%. If the interest rate decreases, many more people may be encouraged to borrow money with full confidence and without hesitation. A DA in the kebele reported that when people are agitated to take loans they complained that the interest rate exaggerated. This indicates that it is too much.

Grace period should be provided to borrower. The DA in Geblen said that borrowers should be made repay the debt when there is a good harvest. According to the DA, the records of repayment of debts in the locality are better when there is a good crop harvest in the kebele.

Elderly people in Geblen including those who do have their own land should be allowed to tack loans.

## How have shocks (e.g drought, deaths, increased prices of inputs) affected the use of food aid resources and credit resources?

Head of the women’s association reported that the recurrent drought occurred in the area has been affected the lives of many people living in the area. Especially women are the main victims of such occurrences. Due to such condition, most poor households are using the money they borrowed from the credit programme to purchase food and other non-food consumable goods.

Because of the drought persistently in the locality, some women who had been able to save some thousand birr, have lost their financial capacity and became poor. Therefore, they become totally dependants upon food aid.

## What projects and policies have best insulated households from shocks? Why

Many poor who are taking part in the PSNP has saved their life and the life of their family members people from begging (dependency) and migration because the farmers are becoming dependent of the programme not for significant change of life. However, there are some irregularities related with the delay of provision of the ration that affected beneficiaries of the food aid programme.

A poor woman household head in Geblen reported, “Among all of interventions of the government PSNP has been providing a great help to the people. However, there are cases of delay in providing the help”. On the other hand, a medium rich said, “I don’t like to migrate to other location, he want to work hard and improve his capacity gradually in a place where he is living now using the food he is given by the government”.

## How have the community’s coping mechanisms changed since 2003?

Both poor men and women are using the regular food aid as the only coping mechanism while they are facing economic hardships. They are using it as a means to carry on the drought persisting for a longer period.

In the past times, women were engaging in handicraft and the products had been used for additional income in general and house decoration. However, currently there is no any woman engaging in such activity because the heavy work load within the household and outside in the field activities make it impossible. Now, they are looking for the regular food aid only.

Previously, men in Geblen who were facing economic hardships were engaging in nonfarm income generating activities such as producing charcoal. Now, working as daily labours in the neighbouring areas and migration abroad are becoming common mechanism of coping up of economic hardships.

Before 1997E.C, residents of Geblen were not interested to resettle in Humera. Now, most people are regretting to miss the chance to resettlement. Now most informants reported that they are ready to resettle in Humera if the programme is put in place once again. Thus, the cooping strategy is shifting from leaving in the locality to resettlement in Humera. Demand of resettlement in other parts of the region has been increased contrary to the former trend and the society’s attitude towards resettlement. Especially, individuals, including young people who went to Humera and return to the area have been demanded the resettlement arrangement repeatedly.

People in Geblen to cope up economic hardships also use borrowing from networks and from moneylenders with exaggerated interest rates

## Effect of the PSNP on informal social protections systems

The PSNP positively affects the informal social protraction systems. The case of a poor household head proves this fact. He said that his network were not reluctant to borrow him money when he was threatened by the kebele officials to face court of law due to his failure to repay the money he borrowed from the Credit and Saving institution. His relatives lend him without interest hoping that he will repay it after he collects the grain given to him as a ration through the regular food aid programme.

## Has the PSNP increased dependency

Implementation of the food aid programmes in the Kebele is developing the culture of dependency. The kebele chairperson said that People in Geblen who are always interested in the regular food aid are lacking commitment to work hard and change their levelly hoods.

## Has the natural resource base of the community changed?

Head of women’s Association in the kebele reported, “The community is ready for mobilization. However, what they lack is any significant change in the surrounding environment. She said, “Relentless effort has been exerted for the construction of terracing and soil and water conservation activities, though we did not see the fruit”.

The Food aid coordinator of the kebele reported that nearly 400 people [300 people, direct people &and 100 women who are pregnant and deliver children] are not contributing labour in the public works due to different reasons. This meant that the natural resource base improvement plan is affected negatively.

 The public works performed by the people under the PSNP focuses on maintenance of roads, watershed management, terracing, and school improvement activities. Those households that lack adult households are exempted from labour contribution. Those able persons but were unable to work in remote areas due to different reasons are allowed to work in the village such as in cleaning the health post, fetch water to the FTC and other public works.

## How have the PSNP and related interventions affected relationships with other communities?

NA

## What do people think of the community projects that has been done through Food-for-Work?

They are aware of the necessity of the community work. However, they are giving up hope because no change is not yet observed in their lives.

## What problems have their been related to the food aid, and the work programme?

The amount of the food delivered as a ration to participants in the PSNP is not sufficient to feed household members throughout the year. It is provided only for 6months.therefore participants are purchasing more food to fulfil the gap. As a result, they are unable to increase their asset base.

**T**here are cases of nepotism in the PSNP participants’ recruitment process. Members of the recruiting committee at the sub kebele level are committing the corrupt action. Therefore, people who have dissevering to be included in the programme were excluded. There were complaints who presented their cases to the wereda and kebele administration. Based on the review of the officials the complaints found out to be people that have the entitlement to take part in the programme. Consequently, they were made to participate in the programme.

The PSNP programme provides ration of food aid to participants in Geblen mainly in the form of food. However, sometimes it is it is provided in the form of cash. For instance in 1997E.C; birr 6 per person per month, 2001 E.C, birr 8, 2002E, C birr10. It has been increasing because of the inflation. Payment in cash was disadvantageous for receivers, as the amount of cash assumed by the donors to purchase the same grain at the local market grain with the one they provide is not compatible. Therefore, they could not purchase the same amount of grain in the market. As a result, recipients of the food aid ration in Geblen prefer delivery of rations in the form of food than in cash.

Men in Geblen are spending excessive amount of money to purchase alcohol drinks. Whenever, the PSNP ration is provided in the form cash, men house hold heads spend part of it to purchase alcohol drink and hence the amount of food consumption of those male headed household members lack sufficient amount of food for consumption. A man, household head, in Geblen said ‘’ men misuse the cash they are given by purchasing alcohol drinks. Therefore, it is better to us to be given the ration in the form of food. If so, we will directly take it to our house and give it to our women who are using it efficiently”. It is not a common practice for women in Geblen to purchasing alcohol drink.

The amount of grain given to recipients in Geblen is not compatible with the amount of food that has been promised by the officials to be provided to them when the programme launched. Manny respondents reported that there is at an average 5 kilograms of deduction from each 50 kilograms of grain provided as a food aid ration.

Provision of regular food aid ration to households in Geblen is negatively affecting the family planning programme. Provision of food encouraged residents of the locality to bear many more children. The kebele chairperson said that people in the kebele are bearing more and more children by taking the regular food aid as a guaranteed source of income used for purpose of rising-up their children.