



RURAL SYNERGIES



# ETHIOPIA

*Building bridges between social and  
productive inclusion policies*



With the technical cooperation of:

# Improving coordination and synergy between social protection and agriculture in Ethiopia

## KEY MESSAGES

**E**thiopia's population is overwhelmingly rural. They are constantly exposed to extreme poverty and chronic food shortages and depend mostly on smallholder farming and livestock herding for their livelihood. This makes the promotion of coherence and synergies between the social protection and agriculture sectors of paramount importance for the country.



The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is the government's flagship social protection intervention. It reaches eight million chronically food insecure people with public works, income support and livelihood interventions. The fact that, unlike similar programmes in other countries, the PSNP is led by the Ministry of Agriculture presents a great opportunity for pursuing social and productive aims simultaneously. In fact, the PSNP has succeeded in mitigating poverty, saving lives and preventing people from becoming destitute. It has been less successful in building resilient livelihoods and allowing people to sustainably move out of poverty through household asset and livestock accumulation. The resilience of households in the face of external shocks or crises is an argument particularly relevant in contexts such as the one we are currently facing as a result of COVID-19.



A pilot nested within the rural PSNP in two woredas of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People (SNNP) region, the IN-SCT project sought out to strengthen social protection services as well as health and nutrition outcomes for one distinct set of PSNP

beneficiaries. Despite including a nutrition-sensitive agriculture component and succeeding in linking PSNP participants to health and nutrition services, the pilot only achieved limited impacts in terms of farm production or household wellbeing. The very limited provision of farm inputs to the project participants and the lack of articulation with the agricultural extension services and with microfinance and other credit providers on the ground seem to have compromised the pilot's effectiveness in achieving better outcomes.



Adjustments to the institutional architecture of the PSNP could go a long way in boosting its effectiveness in reducing food insecurity and promoting productive livelihood opportunities for Ethiopia's rural poor. The Extension Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture should play a more prominent role in implementing the programme's livelihoods component. Stronger coordination is needed at the regional state level, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs could be brought into existing coordination mechanisms at the federal and local level, where its ability to deploy frontline staff in support of PSNP objectives remains limited.



The PSNP should seek to strengthen the delivery and accessibility of its clients to agricultural inputs, services and technologies, and credit facilities. Moreover, the size of the PSNP transfer needs adjusting, to make up for the loss of its real value as a result of inflation.



**E**THIOPIA HAS A LAND AREA OF 1.1 MILLION KM<sup>2</sup> AND A POPULATION OF MORE THAN 100 MILLION. ITS ECONOMY IS LARGELY BASED ON AGRICULTURE, WHICH EMPLOYS TWO THIRDS OF THE POPULATION AND ACCOUNTS FOR ABOUT ONE THIRD (31.2 PERCENT) OF ITS GDP (WORLD DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS). MOST OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IS BASED ON SMALLHOLDER FARMERS, WHO PRODUCE ABOUT 94 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S FOOD CROPS AND 98 PERCENT OF THE COFFEE. A SIZEABLE PROPORTION OF THE RURAL POPULATION DEPENDS ON SOCIAL PROTECTION TO BRIDGE THE FOOD GAP ARISING FROM RECURRENT DROUGHT AND OTHER SHOCKS. THIS IMPLIES THAT BOTH SOCIAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE ARE IMPORTANT SECTORS TO ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY AND POVERTY IN RURAL ETHIOPIA. THEY SHOULD THEREFORE BE PLANNED AND IMPLEMENTED IN AN INTEGRATED AND COHERENT MANNER.

In 2005, the Government introduced the Productive Safety Net Programme, in collaboration with its development partners. The PSNP is the second largest social protection programme on the continent and, unlike in other African countries, it is under the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). This, indeed, is a unique feature of the PSNP, which sets it apart from similar programmes in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. One reason why the PSNP was placed under the MoA was to ensure that it would contribute to communal asset building and a host of productive outcomes. One important aim from the outset has been to complement agriculture by protecting people's consumption at times of shock and building community infrastructure. According to some estimates, the PSNP direct transfer to rural households has reduced the national poverty rate by two percentage points (from 33% to 31%) during the period 2010–2014. PSNP transfers have also been shown to increase agricultural input-use among beneficiaries, and to contribute to a reduction of about 40 percent of soil loss and an improvement of up to 400 percent in land productivity (World Bank, 2015; AfDB, 2020).

Starting in 2015, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) started to implement a pilot, the Improved Nutrition through Integrated Basic Social Services with Social Cash Transfer (IN-SCT). The pilot, which received technical assistance from UNICEF and funding from IrishAid, was nested within the larger PSNP managed by the MoA. It was implemented in two woredas of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People (SNNP) region, with the intention of strengthening the linkage to health and nutrition services for a distinct set of PSNP beneficiaries, namely, pregnant women, children and elderly persons. The intention of the IN-SCT was to pilot test a model of multi-sectoral coordination that could then inform the roll-out of the program

in its fourth phase, PSNP4. The project was designed at the federal level by the National Nutritional Taskforce led by MoLSA, with technical support from UNICEF and inputs from government ministries such as the Ministry of Health and MoA.

## PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Since its inception in 2005, PSNP progressed through different phases. According to IFPRI (2019), it initially evolved from being an irregular relief response to becoming a predictable and development-oriented intervention (PSNP1), followed by a phase of consolidation (PSNP 2), expansion (PSNP 3), and finally the transition to a social protection system (PSNP 4). These phases spanned 2005–2006, 2007–2009, 2010–2014 and 2015–2020, respectively. Over these four phases, the number of woredas covered by the programme increased by over 50 percent, from 231 during PSNP 1 to over 350 during PSNP 4. Close to eight million chronically food insecure people are reached by the PSNP in eight states of the country (MoA, 2014). During its first three phases, the PSNP was managed by the MoA alone, while MoLSA joined during PSNP 4 to co-manage the programme. Collaboration between the two ministries was not foreseen from the beginning, which would later pose some challenges in terms of promoting cross-sectoral articulation and coherence in subsequent phases of the programme.

Under PSNP 4 food insecure households with at least one able-bodied adult member are asked to work in community planned Public Works (PW) in exchange for transfers. All household members (up to a maximum of five) are entitled to receiving cash transfers for a period of six months per year. The able-bodied members are required to work for as many days per month, up to a maximum of 25 per household,



as would be the case if all household members entitled to transfers were able to work (MoARD, 2014).

PSNP 4 has special provisions for “pregnant women and lactating mothers of children less than 12 months and primary care-givers of malnourished children less than 5 years of age” (MoARD, 2014). The Temporary Direct Support (TDS) scheme entitles the pregnant and lactating women to 6-months-per-year transfers of the same amount as the PW transfers, but frees the woman from the obligation to take part in public works from pregnancy to 12 months after child birth. Food insecure households with no able-bodied adults are recipients of permanent income support (PDS). This entitles them to receive 12 months of unconditional transfers per year for each member (up to five). Moreover, PSNP4 also has a component that is intended to improve the livelihoods of programme participants. Income generating activities, both on- and off-farm, are promoted, along with business development services such as training, access to credit and small financial grants for poor clients. Training is delivered at Farmer or Pastoralist Training Centres in areas such as technical and business/marketing skills, as well as paid employment as part of the programme’s livelihoods component.

As a government multi-sectoral programme, PSNP involves key ministries such as MoA, MoLSA, MoH and other sector ministries in its management and coordination, alongside their respective structures at regional, woreda and kebele levels. The programme is led by the MoA, while MoLSA is responsible for managing the PDS social transfer, PDS and TDS social service linkages, and livelihoods-employment pathway (UNICEF, 2020).

UNICEF provided support to the IN-SCT pilot project, designed as part of PSNP 4 to test the health and nutrition service linkage components of the programme.

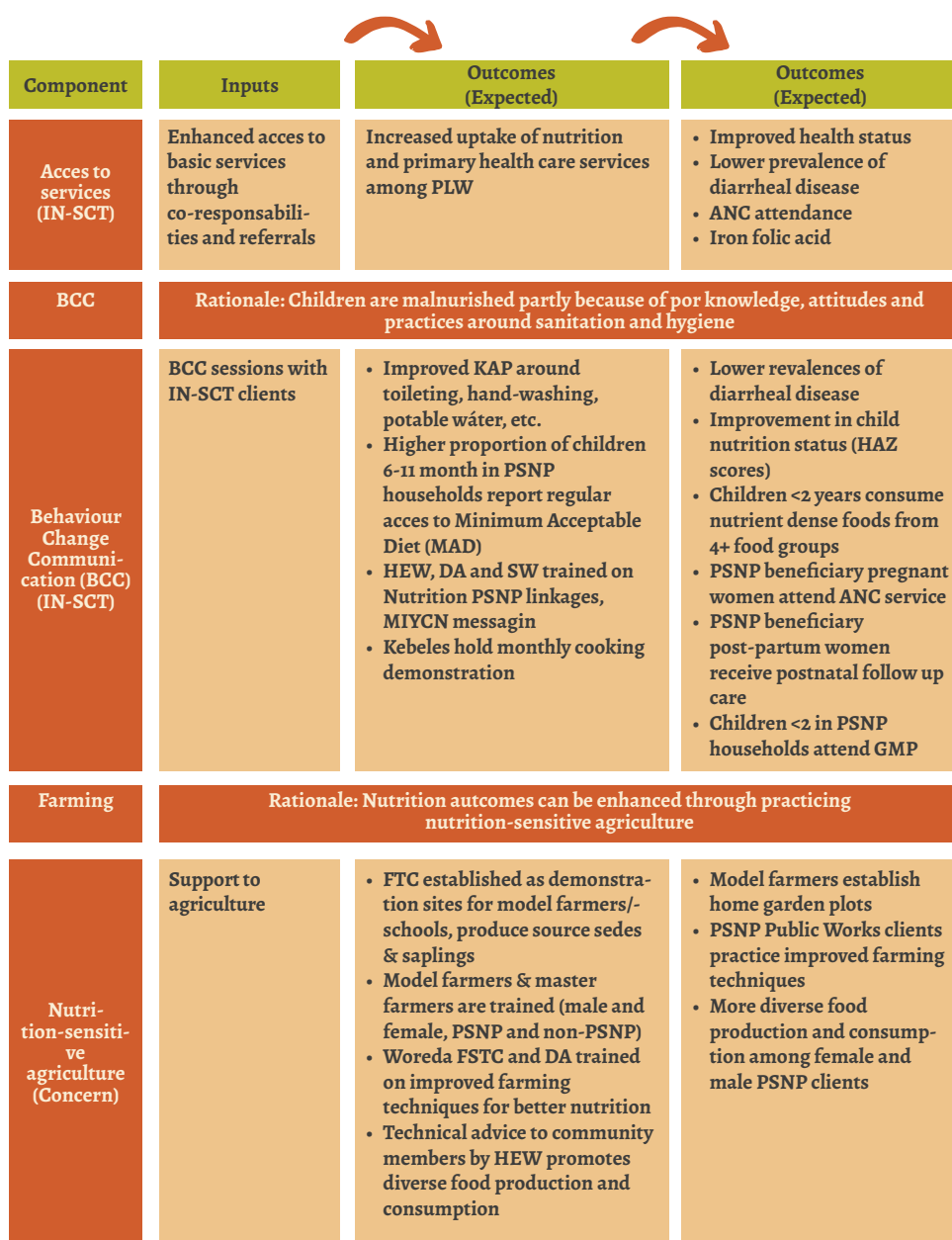
The pilot focused on TDS and PDS clients. During the period of exemption from PW participation, TDS clients were supported so that they could access health and nutrition services. Priority health services for the pregnant and lactating women included prenatal and postnatal follow-up, health education and immunization at local health clinics. Care takers of malnourished children were referred to health services until the child recovered. TDS clients were also linked to nutrition services, which included nutrition education, demonstration of child feeding practices, and nutrition sensitive agricultural activities related to home gardening and poultry. The latter consisted of complementary services such as training, the provision of vegetable and fruit seedlings, and poultry transfers. However, the implementation of this component was assigned to an NGO and was not directly linked to the management structure of the PSNP at ground level.

## PROGRAMME THEORY OF CHANGE

Figure 1 depicts the theory of change of the IN-SCT pilot. It shows the project's inputs, intermediate outcomes and impacts. Facilitating access to services was expected to have a direct impact on child malnutrition, by improving health, hygiene and sanitation. The pilot's nutrition-sensitive agricultural interventions were expected to have a

direct impact on crop production in the short run, while the nutritional knowledge imparted by Health Extension Workers and the provision of fruit and vegetable seeds by Development Agents sought to motivate programme participants to grow diverse crops. The IN-SCT relied on the PSNP stakeholders for its planning, implementation and coordination.

**Figure 1. Theory of change for the IN-SCT pilot**





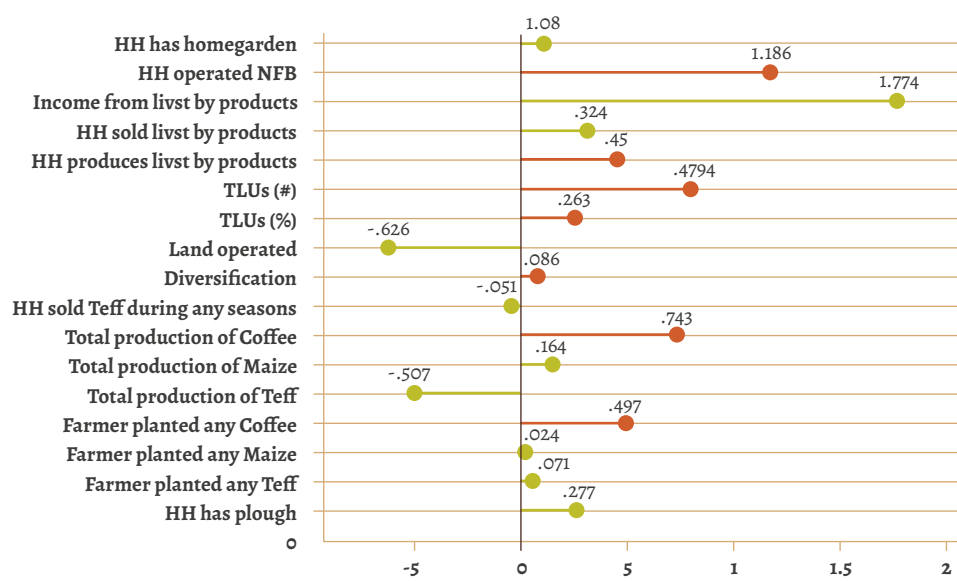
## FINDING AND CONCLUSIONS

### 1. Impacts:

The evaluation found the following results from the implementation of the PSNP+IN-SCT programmes:

- **Land:** The IN-SCT pilot had no effects on the operated land size in the mother-child household sample (Figure 2). This indicates that the programme did not provide enough incentives to alter land size. The ever-increasing land price renders sharecropping and land renting unaffordable, given the amount of IN-SCT's cash transfer.
- **Access to credit and extension services:** The pilot had no significant impacts on access to credit. In Ethiopia, farm credit is a key input and instrument to implement the government's agricultural extension system. Based on the direction of the woreda agriculture office, Development Agents from the MoA organize and link farmers with the credit providers – microfinance institutions and cooperatives. The latter mainly respond to the list of farmers they receive from the Development Agents. The problem is that these lists often focus on the better-off farmers, who also tend to get preferential treatment by the country's extension system. In practice, this excludes PSNP clients from accessing credit on favourable terms.
- **Crop production:** The IN-SCT achieved mixed results. It led to an increase in the share of farmers growing sorghum (22.3 percent) and increased crop diversification (8.6 percent). The agronomic trainings provided by the pilot must have contributed to crop diversification. However, this did not translate into improved farm yield. The IN-SCT package, in fact, had no effect on the harvest of major crops (teff, wheat, maize, sorghum, chat, enset, barley), likely because PSNP clients had very limited or no access to productive inputs, improved seeds or technical support from the Development Agents. For instance, the IN-SCT input provision was limited to nutrition-sensitive farming such as home gardening but did not include inputs for major crops. Ethiopia's extension system rarely reaches PSNP households with productive inputs because of its focus on the model farmers – a bias that ultimately undermines the prospects for achieving greater coherence and synergy between agriculture and social protection.
- **Livestock:** The IN-SCT led to significant positive impacts on livestock ownership. There was an increase of 19 percent in the share of households owning livestock, equivalent to a 26 percent increment over the baseline average. Similarly, the IN-SCT pilot led to a significant increase in Total Livestock Units and in the number of cattle, small ruminants and pack animals owned by a household. This may have resulted from the fact that the project's provision of poultry stock and associated husbandry trainings to its participants.

**Figure 2. Selected productive impacts of the IN-SCT pilot**



**Note:** Orange bars indicate statistically significant impacts, green ones refer to statistically insignificant impacts. The impacts are shown in percentage change.

#### • **Child feeding practices and nutrition:**

There were no impacts on the proportion of children who had access to minimum acceptable diets or dietary diversity. The finding is hardly surprising as child nutrition is a function of both food accessibility and utilisation. Despite improvements in the health and nutritional behaviours of mothers due to the IN-SCT, the very limited access by programme clients to productive inputs and services significantly undermined farm yields and income, thereby weakening their capacity to acquire the necessary foodstuffs for their children. Supply side factors, i.e. limited food production from own farming and shortage of income to buy the necessary food items from the market, are likewise the reason for the lack of statistically significant improvements in child nutrition, as measured by stunting prevalence, height-for-age and weight-for-height scores.

#### • **Nutrition-sensitive agriculture:**

The IN-SCT included the provision of complementary services such as trainings, vegetable seeds, fruit seedlings and poultry for families in receipt of temporary direct support. Yet the pilot had no significant impacts on the proportion of women practicing home gardening in the 12 months prior to the survey. Limited coverage of the input supply, insufficient rainfall and plant diseases were among the key factors undermining participation in home gardening.

## 2. Implementation challenges

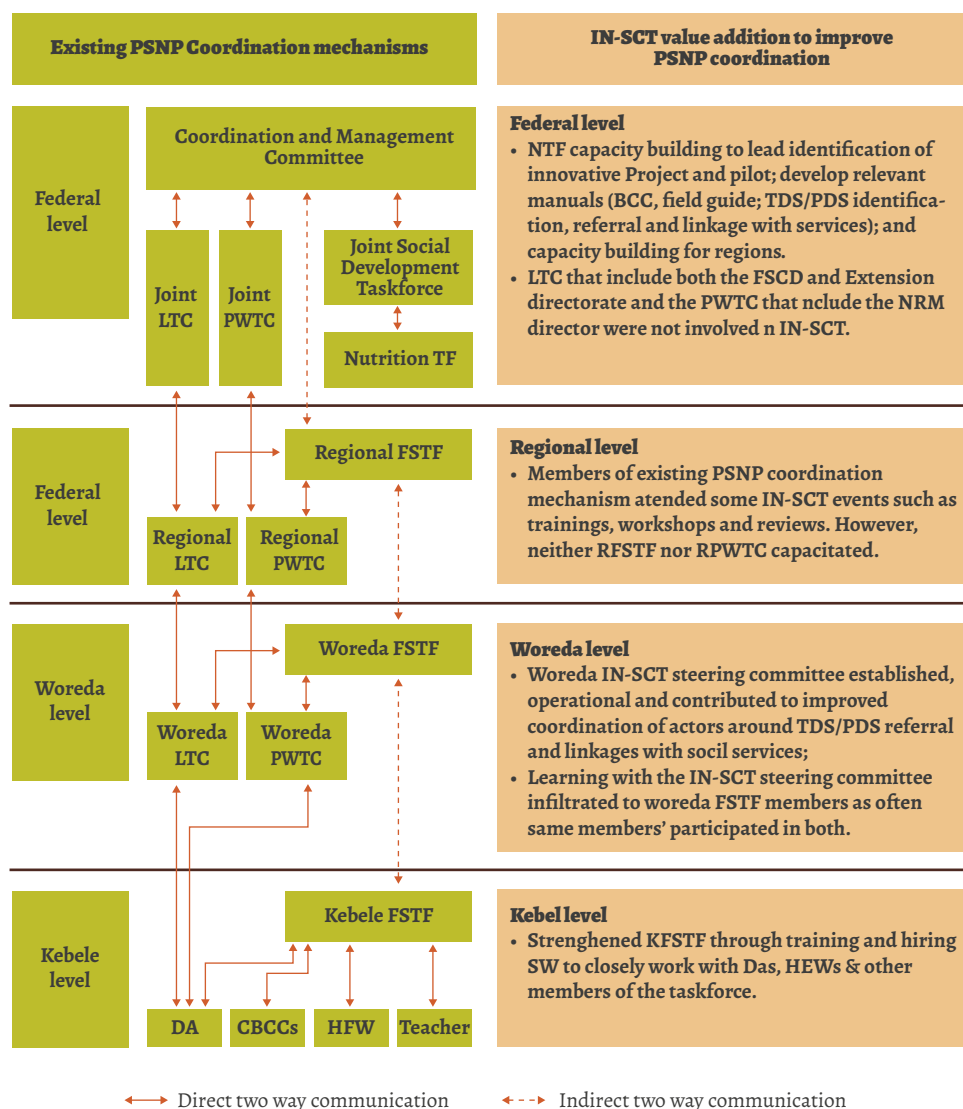
- **Federal level:** The relevant coordination bodies of the PSNP at federal level are the joint social development taskforce (SDT), the nutrition taskforce (NTF), the public works technical committee (PWTC) and the livelihoods technical committee (LTC), each of which brings together important ministries (agriculture, health, labor and social affairs) and development partners. The SDT is responsible for the overall guidance related to gender and social development, nutrition and social service linkage. The federal PWTC is a coordination mechanism in charge of the design and implementation of PWs and the associated work requirement. The nutrition task force, a subset of the SDT dealing with the nutrition component of the PSNP, was responsible for designing the IN-SCT project. The NTF, however, did not involve the PWTC in the process, which somehow undermined the pilot's effectiveness. Nor did the NTF involve the LTC and its Extension directorate in support of the IN-SCT, despite the fact that the latter is in charge of coordinating and overseeing the implementation of the livelihood component of the PSNP. Instead, an international NGO was hired to implement the project's nutrition sensitive agriculture activities. This seems to have been a missed opportunity for anchoring the pilot more effectively within the institutional architecture and operational arrangements governing the PSNP. The IN-SCT's outreach to PSNP clients with agricultural inputs was very limited, which resulted in little improvement in the promotion of nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices. The local Agriculture office, which bears the ultimate responsibility for local agricultural development, was excluded from the implementation setup of the pilot.

Moreover, MoLSA is not a member of either the LTC or PWTC. Hence, an opportunity to ensure coherence between social protection and agriculture at the federal level was not utilised to its full potential. This had repercussions for the promotion of greater coherence between the two sectors at regional and woreda level. The PWTC and LTC were rarely involved in the IN-SCT both at regional and woreda level, implying limited coordination between the two sectors.

There was limited internal coordination within the MoA itself. The livelihoods component of the PSNP 4, which offered huge potential for stronger coherence, was set up under the Food Security Coordination Directorate (FSCD) within the MoA. Food security and livelihoods staff within this directorate were implementing the PSNP 4 livelihoods component including its agricultural activities, while the Extension directorate that had the mandate and expertise in smallholders' agricultural development was excluded at almost every administrative level from the livelihoods component of PSNP 4.

Consequently, the Extension directorate mainly focuses on smallholders outside the PSNP, while the FSCD and its structures below take care of the PSNP clients. Joint planning and implementation of agricultural activities between the Extension directorate and FSCD within MoA to improve the livelihoods of PSNP clients rarely takes place. Weak internal coordination within the MoA lies at the core of the limited integration and synergy between agriculture and social protection. The marginal role of the Extension directorate in PSNP 4 has been one of the key factors undermining access to farm inputs among the PSNP clients.

Figure 3. PSNP coordination mechanisms



- **Woreda and kebele level:** The woreda PWTC and LTC were also not involved in IN-SCT coordination. Instead, the pilot established a new coordination mechanism, called woreda steering committee, in the two woredas where it operated. The committee was composed of relevant woreda offices including WoLSA, Agriculture, Food Security, Health, Education, among others. This contributed to good coordination and improved coherence between the government's productive safety net and the health and nutrition services promoted by the IN-SCT for the temporary direct support

clients. Government structures that are closer to communities felt the need for collaboration in order to enhance the impact of their respective interventions.

- At kebele level, the Food Security Taskforce (FSTF) was the relevant coordination body for the IN-SCT. Kebele FSTFs were established to support coordination and implementation of the PSNP. Members of the kebele FSTF typically included MoA's Development Agents, MoH's Health Extension Workers, elders, religious leaders, youth and women. In the IN-SCT kebeles, Social Workers were recruited by the project and included

in the FSTF. These Social Workers worked closely with the Development Agents, Health Extension Workers and school teachers to ensure the referral and linkage of PSNP temporary and permanent direct support clients with social services. This was one of the key value additions of the IN-SCT pilot to the PSNP 4.

- **Lower level bureaucracy and frontline staff.** The experience from the IN-SCT pilot indicates that the definition of clear roles and responsibilities for lower level bureaucracy and frontline staff is key to operationalizing more integrated and coherent approaches between social protection and agriculture. Memoranda of Understanding outlining roles and responsibilities were prepared and shared with woreda steering committee members, along with the necessary trainings to ensure that they were properly understood. Similarly, a detailed description of roles was developed and shared with frontline staff (Development Agents, Health Extension Workers and Social Workers), coupled with trainings. A similar approach, if adopted between the Extension Directorate and the FSCD of MoA at multiple levels, could go a long way towards improving coherence between social protection and agriculture in the implementation of the PSNP.
- **Human resource limitations:** MoLSA lacks sufficient frontline staff at community level. Social Workers could work more closely with MoA development agents to improve coherence between social protection and agriculture at the community level. The problem is that while the latter are present in almost all the kebeles, Social Workers are not because MoLSA's budget is inadequate to ensure staffing and deployment at such scale.
- **Macroeconomic challenges.** Inflation has eroded the value of the PSNP transfer over the years. By doing so, it has contributed to undermining both the 'protective' and 'productive' functions of the PSNP. The lesser the real value of the transfer over time, the less that the PSNP can succeed in playing its role as a safety net and the less that one can expect to find strong evidence of the productive impacts that are built into the programme's logic.
- **Policies and strategies.** The limited coherence between social protection and agriculture in Ethiopia is ultimately rooted in the prevailing ideology, policies and strategies. Policies that were developed in the 1990s, as well as the Rural Development Policy and Strategy of 2003 and the Agricultural Policy Investment Framework of 2010, are still guiding and framing the country's socio-economic development. Ethiopia embraced social protection as a core component of its development agenda much later, after these policies had been in place for some time. This set of policies has given limited space for integrating agriculture and social protection in a systematic way. Access to farm inputs, services and technologies is critically important for the PSNP clients because the existing extension system favours the model farmers. The fact that an agricultural extension package especially tailored to PSNP participants is missing, and that the Extension Directorate of the MoA focuses on smallholders outside the PSNP, suggests that there is room for greater alignment.







## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **1. Ensure access to improved agricultural inputs, services and technologies for PSNP clients.**

The livelihoods component of PSNP 4 should move back to the Extension directorate. The FSCD can continue overseeing the overall PSNP, leaving the technical livelihoods planning and execution to the Extension directorate. Extension packages tailored to PSNP clients should be designed and implemented by the MoA's Extension directorate, which should work actively together with the FSCD to ensure greater coherence between social protection and agriculture in implementing the PSNP.

### **2. Ensure that the right actors are included in programme coordination mechanisms.**

To address the shortage of capital and technical knowhow faced by smallholders, it is important that all the actors with experience in agricultural development, such as development agents, the extension directorate of MoA and microfinance institutions, become involved. The agricultural component of the IN-SCT project could have achieved greater productive impacts for the PSNP clients if it had been more aligned and better articulated with the structures that MoA already had in place on the ground, particularly its extension services.

### **3. Address weak coordination at mid-level bureaucracy.**

Efforts to improve coherence between social protection and agriculture must give adequate focus to mid-level bureaucracies such as those at the regional level. Coordination receives limited attention among bureaucrats at regional level because these structures are neither close to where policies and programmes are planned and designed nor to the grassroots level where they

are implemented. Investments in training and capacity building for coordination will therefore be needed, since mid-level bureaucracies are crucial for coordinating the technical and managerial support to ensure smooth implementation at the local level.

### **4. Increase MoLSA's workforce at the grassroots level.**

The presence of MoLSA operational staff at community level can contribute to the quest for improved coherence between agriculture and social protection. In the IN-SCT pilot areas, significant improvements were observed in promoting coherence between social protection and access to health and nutrition services, mainly because of the increased number of social workers. Severe shortage of budget lies at the core of under-staffing within MoLSA and its lower structures. Therefore, it is crucial to properly resource MoLSA including the deployment of an adequate number of frontline staff.

### **5. Adjust the value of the PSNP transfer.**

Efforts are also needed to address the impact of inflation on the PSNP transfer. The inflation rate topped 20% in the last one year in Ethiopia (March 2019-March 2020). As the real value of the transfer deteriorates over time, it does not allow recipients to acquire sufficient productive inputs and engage in farming. The transfer rate should therefore consider price changes over the years to make sure that its real value does not fall.

## TECHNICAL SHEET

### The Project

Over the past few years, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), together with Universidad de los Andes and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have been analysing the potential synergistic effects of interventions on rural households that involve social protection programmes and productive rural development projects. IFAD and Universidad de Los Andes have implemented this project through the “Conditional Cash Transfers and Rural Development in Latin America” grant ([www.sinergiasrurales.info/](http://www.sinergiasrurales.info/)); and FAO through the project entitled “From Protection to Production: The role of Social Cash Transfers in the Promotion of Economic Development” (PtoP) ([www.fao.org/economic/ptop](http://www.fao.org/economic/ptop)). Some evidence of such synergies and complementarities has been identified, but the evidence has also raised new questions. These inquiries are related to the types of synergies and how to take advantage of them, the correct sequencing of programme rollout, the institutional reforms that need to take place and the political economy behind these options, and thus improve the results of the programmes.

To answer some of these questions, the project entitled “Improving the Coordination between Social Protection and Rural Development Interventions in Developing Countries: Lessons from Latin America and Africa” - which is being developed by Universidad de Los Andes (UNIANDES), through its Centre for Economic Development Studies (CEDE), and financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) - seeks to gather evidence of the benefits of such coordinated interventions.

The goal of the project is to gather evidence for policymakers and donors of the benefits of the coordinated interventions that could provide inputs regarding the appropriate institutional

and operational design, and enable them to use these inputs as a basis for improving anti-poverty interventions targeted at rural households, thus helping small farmers to take a proactive part in rural transformation.

The main objective of the project is to try to influence governmental institutions related to rural development and social protection (anti-poverty) policies, so they can take advantage of identified synergies between social protection and productive initiatives. The project was implemented in seven countries, three in Latin America and four in Africa.

### Evaluation Methods

Two studies were commissioned to FAO as part of a larger impact evaluation of the IN-SCT pilot (IFPRI 2019). The first study was a quantitative evaluation of the productive impacts of the IN-SCT, and the second was an institutional analysis that examined the policy and institutional architecture, as well as the operational arrangements, that facilitated or hindered effective coordination between the PSNP and complementary interventions and services provided by other sectors (Prifti, 2019; Kebede, 2019).

The quantitative evaluation design had three treatment arms: one made up of the IN-SCT participants who were either new or existing PSNP clients benefiting from IN-SCT add-on package; another arm that consisted of PSNP clients who lived in woredas where the IN-SCT was not operating and were therefore not participating in the pilot; and the pure control group, which included households in the same communities as those in the first arm but that were neither PSNP clients nor received support from the IN-SCT. Baseline data were collected around May 2016 and follow-up data 24 months later. This Brief presents the impacts observed among participants from the first treatment arm as compared to those in the control group, through the use of the double-difference approach which subtracts the



differences in outcomes at baseline from the differences at endline. The sample consisted of 1 920 households that had pregnant and lactating women or children under two years of age.

The institutional assessment was carried out using both primary as well as secondary sources of information. These included policies, directives and programme documents and manuals, interviews with key actors involved in the design and implementation of the IN-SCT and PSNP programmes, from the highest government structure (federal level) to the lowest administrative level (kebele), and focus group discussions with programme participants and implementers.

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