

# Sustainability of Productive Safety Net Program in Amhara Regional State: Case Studies of Kalu and Wadela Woredas

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**Abstract:** *Productive Safety Net Program as post-drought recovery intervention implemented in kalu and Wadela woredas starting from 2005. The primary aim of this intervention was to realizing sustainable livelihood to public work participants through constructing drought proof development. Sustainable livelihoods framework employed as a road map to investigate and assess the five years recovery program. Based on this research finding the top down policy and strategy, inadequacy of resources provisions and community level assessment gave little attention to asset status, vulnerability, and capacity of chronically food in secured households. Due to the above, the recovery program challenged to create sustainable, resilience and successful rural livelihood to chronically food in secured households in the study area.*

**Keywords:** Productive Safety net program, Sustainable livelihood framework, Public works, Public work participants, drought disaster

## 1. Introduction

Drought induced disaster with other vulnerability factors, destroy property, causing loss of life, significant reduction of GDP [1] in poor countries and drains their potential for development (IIRR [2], 2004; and Save the children, 2007). According to (DPPC [3], 2007), drought leading to crop failure and acute food shortage affecting millions of people in Ethiopian. Its impact has not only destroyed livelihoods of the poor, but also weakening their coping and survival capacities. As DFID [4] (2008) described, the Ethiopian government has had to entreat international partners to provide emergency food relief for between 1 million up to 14 million drought victims. In fact, this emergency food assistance saved lives but not livelihoods. As the DFID further argued the frustration, success and lessons of over 20 years of emergency appeal each year since the mid 1980's led to the ratifications of the National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management (NPDPM [5], 1993). Its main objectives have been to build drought proof economic and social development in drought prone areas. The consensus between government and donors to move beyond the cycle of relief was manifested by the introduction of a joint program so called PSNP.

Accordingly, as part of the national drought recovery program (PSNP) implemented in various drought prone areas including, but not limited to Kalue and Wadela Woredas since 2005. Based on FRDE[6](2004), many actors assumed that public works program through cash transfers, as social protection, can play a transformative role in the lives and livelihoods of poor people. Moreover, it can also play a significant role in the transition out of emergency relief. Hence, this research has been done to examine as to whether PSNP achieved or failed to achieve sustainable rural livelihoods in the study areas.

## 2. Research Objective

The entire chain of drought risk, livelihood theoretical frame works, drought disaster policy directions and practices inspired this research. Accordingly, the overall objectives of this study were twofold: one, to investigate the five years PSNP implementation in the Kalue, and Wadela Woredas. Second, to assess consequent livelihoods' sustainability dilemma and corresponding challenges based on sustainable livelihood frameworks.

## 3. Theoretical Literatures and Empirical Evidences

As the common wisdom of the day, success of any disaster recovery programs or poverty alleviation interventions should be knowledge based. In fact, drought disaster recovery and the corresponding rural livelihood sustainability quite often require a clear understanding of the link between science, policy and practice. With due consideration to the above, relevant literature review, empirical evidences and conceptual frameworks are presented in the following manner.

### 3.1 Sustainable Livelihood

The concept of sustainable rural livelihoods is increasingly central to the debate about rural development, poverty reduction and environmental management. Within the above context, sustainable rural livelihood framework regards the asset status of poor individual or households as fundamental to understanding the options open to them, the strategies they adopt for survival, and their vulnerability to adverse trends and events (Ellis, 2000). According to Scoones (1998), sustainable livelihood framework provides a holistic and integrated view of the processes by which people achieve (or fail to achieve) sustainable livelihoods. This is why sustainable livelihood framework is the widely agreed

entry point for projects and policies that is oriented to poverty reduction and long-term livelihood sustainability (Ellis, 2000).

### **3.2 The Link between Sustainable Livelihood Approach and Drought Disaster Reduction**

A number of researchers have suggested that sustainable livelihood framework is one of recent approaches for drought disaster risk reduction. The use of a sustainable livelihood approach has been recommended for development activities starting from 1990s, (Chambers and Conway 1992; Scoones 1998; Carney 1998, 2002; Ashley and Carney 1999). This approach signifies that people operating in a vulnerable context have access to certain assets. If external shocks occur on these assets and no measures are taken, the vulnerable population will fall in to disaster risk (IIRR and Save the children, 2007). To this end, an analysis of the livelihood vulnerability context can help outsiders understand how a particular group may be vulnerable to drought and other hazards (IIRR, 2004). As DFID (2000) strategy paper halving world poverty by 2015 described, the poor are usually hardest hit because they often only have access to low cost assets which are more vulnerable to disasters. The strategy to reduce disaster risk is through improving the five livelihood assets, this in turn requires sustainable livelihoods framework approach (IIRR, 2004; and Save the children, 2007)

### **3.3 Drought Disaster in Ethiopia**

One implication of drought in Ethiopia is leading to crop failure and acute food shortage. It invariably leads to ruin poor people livelihood and weakening their coping and survival capacities (DPPC, 1993). On top of that, according to Daniel (2007) drought disasters have caused tremendous negative consequence, even if agriculture remains by far the most important sector in the Ethiopian Economy.

Evidences shows that, drought induced disaster expanded to southern, and central part of the country over recent years (IIRR, 2004; and Save the children, 2007). As RRC [7] (1985) explained, since 1974, the country is still in the grip of a devastating drought. Its trends and impacts increased in 1990's it affected up to 20% of the population, in 2003 over 13 million people affected. The major factors which turn drought hazards in to disasters are the existence of multiple vulnerability factors including, lack of alternative income source, degraded natural resource, rain fed agriculture, lack of modern technology, the recurrence of drought and lack of diversification of livelihood ( IIRR, 2004; and Save the children, 2007). As the documents further elaborated, although drought disaster seems trivial in Ethiopia, it is in

fact crucial in terms of today's concern of sustainable development of the country.

### **3.4 Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP)**

Jamey Essex (2009) notices that the FFW [8] program works through distributes food aid to recipients in exchange for labor. PSNP has been using by aid agencies to plan and deliver food aid. In fact, governments, international institutions including WFP[9], Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) announced PSNP as a flexible and cost-effective tool to deliver targeted aid, promote community development and improve long-term prospects of food security. Implementation of PSNP across drought prone areas including, but not limited to Kalu and Wadela Woredas were considered as a paradigm shift from the predominantly emergency humanitarian food aid to construction of drought proof development via multi-year framework (FDRE, 2004). As the FDRE policy document further elaborated, the main objectives of PSNP are, to provide households with enough income (cash/food) to meet their food gaps and their by protect their household assets from depletion; and build community assets to address root causes of food insecurity. In the study areas, PSNP has providing with an initial payments which was 6 birr/day for 5 working days per month to a total of 5127 PWP[10] s', starting from 2005. In return to their participation in public works, including rural roads rehabilitation, a forestation, soil and water conservation activities on communally owned assets.

### **3.5 A Framework for Investigating Sustainable Rural Livelihood**

According to Ellis (2000) investigation of sustainable livelihood can be applied at a range of different scales-from individual to household, clusters to extended kin grouping, village to region or even Nation. Hence, sustainable livelihood outcomes can be assessed at different levels. The specification of the scale of analysis is therefore critical (Scoones, 1998). However, there is clearly scope to operate simultaneously at many different scales of policy provided the limitation of the particular scale is chosen identified and understood (Ellis, 2000). As Ellis further argued, the recent tendency has been to move away from large domain policies towards village, households and individual level policies. This is because at village or community level a single livelihood strategy could not be applied since different households will adopt different livelihood strategies based on assets and access status. In line of this argument, this research paper utilized the Scoones (1998) SLFs [11] to assess sustainable outcomes of PSNP at household level.

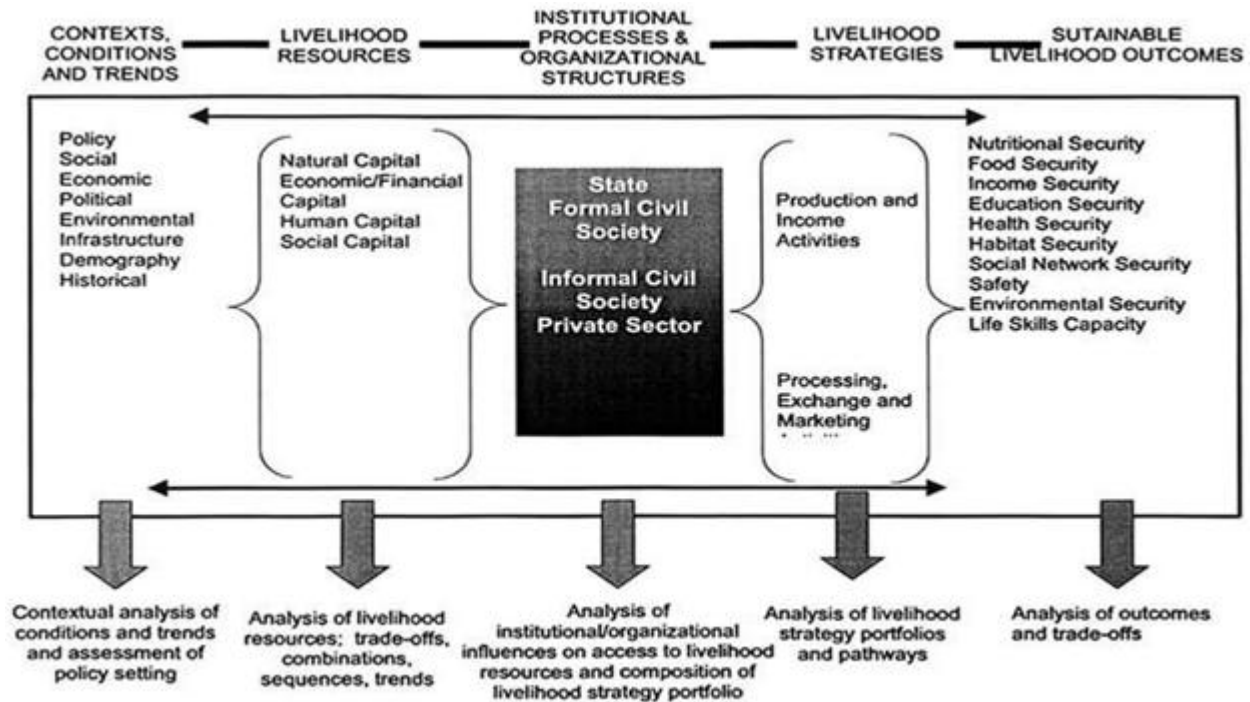


Figure 1: The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework adapted from Scoones 1998

#### 4. Research Method

This research examined the role of PSNP in achieving sustainable rural livelihoods in the study areas. In order to investigate the inquiry under study both qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilized. With regard to instruments, in case of Choriso kebele (kalu) both structured and semi-structured interviews and questionnaires used to gather relevant data from 4 key informants, 107 sample households and 2 experts. Whereas in Yedoget kebele (wadela), Semi-structured interviews used to get data from 15 PWPs, 3 WAOE[12] and two Keble level administrative staffs and 2 focused group discussions. Additionally, policies, strategy documents and reports assessed to gather pertinent data. Finally, the results analyzed within the blueprint of this framework (Figure.1)

#### 5. Results and Discussion

With the primary aims of discussing research results, the five years drought recovery program, and consequent sustainability outcomes assessed in the following fashion.

##### 5.1 Sustainability of Agriculture

As the matter of mutual consensus, agriculture is a dominant means of rural livelihood. Accordingly, its sustainability is quite often considered as a prominent parameter to measure a success story of any rural livelihood rehabilitation policy and program. Hence, the role of PSNP and sustainability outcomes of agricultural livelihood were analyzed by considering sustainability of the following five livelihood assets as outlined by Scoones (1998).

##### 5.1.1 Capital Sustainability

Cash, credit, saving and other economic assets, including basic production equipment and technologies are essential for the pursuit of any livelihood strategy. With general aims

of boosting economic and financial requirements of agricultural productivity, a five years income generating employment opportunity (PSNP) was providing 6birr/day for 5 working days for about 5,127 chronically food insecure households, since 2005. By doing so, unlike previous emergency-based food assistance, PSNP provided predictable financial income (cash) to meet PWPs' minimum food requirements. Because of the above, food in secured households have been protected from famine, and loss of life. However, the money which has been injected to targeted households were too limited to purchase livestock holdings, chemical fertilizers, improved seeds, herbicides and related agricultural inputs. Based on key informants' response, shortage of finance and corresponding lack of livestock holdings have caused: First; households were unable to cultivate all of their lands, this in turn led to agricultural production entitlement decline. Second; reduction in coping strategies - livestock holding is a key household strategy to manage risk. Livestock provide insurance that can be exchanged during bad years when other income sources are insufficient for households. In other words, the availability of livestock holding to these drought victims could provide substitution capabilities among assets and activities. However, lack of this asset has minimized PWPs' survival and coping strategies, since drought induced crop failure has not been compensated by redeployment of livestock asset or switch between them.

##### 5.1.2 Natural Resource Sustainability

Since rural livelihoods are reliant on the natural resource base, sustainability of these resources are crucial. According to field level observation, physical structures coupled with afforestation are practiced on degraded communally owned lands. In this aspect, though it needs further research the extent which soil conservation and afforestation practices maximized moisture retention, and improved level of ground water, its importance could be significant. Despite the fact that, PWPs' land and related natural resources have been

equally affected by repetitive drought incidences, PSNP excluded PWPs' degraded land from five years rehabilitation package. As it is clearly described by FDRE (2004), public works must be 'communal' with the exception, investment activities (e.g. irrigation development undertaken on the lands of poor woman headed households). As a matter of consensus, sustainability of rural natural resource requires sustainability of both communally owned land resource, and individual household farmland. To this end, public work program was supposed to give equal attention to PWPs' resources. Since this was not the case, PSNP posed a negative spillover effect on overall environmental sustainability in the study areas.

### 5.1.3 Sustainability of Physical Assets

In line with FDRE (2004) national drought disaster policy, public works have been performed to promote drought proof developments: with the primary objectives of achieving long term self-sufficiency and self-resilience to public work participants and the community in general. In this regard, based on field level observations, communally owned degraded physical assets like economic and social infrastructures, like small-scale village level rural roads, elementary schools, and clinic compounds have been rehabilitated by public works. However, from sustainability perspective, physical asset development and rehabilitation process have faced a number of challenges. One of the most important hurdles was that, the entire process, and selection of recovery project packages have been universally applied top down development approach, which inherently lacked meaningful participation of PWPs'. Owing to this, PWPs' lacked sense of empowerment and ownership on projects, due to the fact that, the interventions inadequately responded to households' asset status, aspirations and livelihood requirements. Most of all, as key informants, and focused group discussion results revealed, lack of training and awareness creation during project commencement, the existence of free riders, labor competition, and local administrative malice have posed sustainability dilemma on physical asset reconstruction in the study areas.

### 5.1.4 Sustainability of Labor Capital

One of the primary goals of PSNP has been to sustain human capital in the study areas: through introducing skills, knowledge, ability to labor, good health and physical capability. These are crucial aspects for successful pursuit of different rural livelihood strategies. In an employment-based program as the PSNP the work requirement is an important cost to PWPs'. According to this research finding, households spent on average more than 15 days per month on public works to fill on average 39% of household food income. Owing to this, households have faced shortage of time and labor to deal with other livelihood portfolios. The PWPs' dependency' on PSNP could indicate that the intervention has not tackled the underlined root causes of food insecurity. This could cause a possibility that majority of households may fall in to vicious circle of poverty and malnutrition if the PSNP cease as per its schedule.

### 5.1.5 Sustainability of Social Assets

Social assets are the ability of actors to secure benefits by the virtue of their membership in social networks (Krishna, 2000). Moreover, it is the state of being in common within

community based on trust (Moser, 1998). As focused group discussions and interviews results revealed, village level traditional social arrangements including sharecropping and labor exchange, transfer of food and related household commodities among community members, have served as a survival and coping strategies to poor farmers during manmade and drought associated risks and famines. Implementation of the program has touched the essence of social assets of the community in various forms. To begin with, the positive aspect, in relative terms, the intervention has improved financial resources' of PWPs' through work for food programs. Owing to the above, PWPs' have gotten relative guarantee and confidence to borrow and access relevant economic and social resources from better off households.

In the contrary to the above, as a range of data sources disclosed, due to favoritism potential beneficiaries were excluded where as rich households were included to be part of the program in the initial targeting process. In addition, some members of the community were exploiting communally owned resources without adding value to public works (the existence of free riders). Moreover, some part of the community hold a perception that PWPs' have gotten special treatments from the government: have played potentially counter-productive on traditional social assets, mutual support and coexistence. Most of all, a relative deterioration of those traditional social arrangements could pose greater challenge on sustainability of survival and coping strategies of PWPs' in the study areas.

### 5.2 Sustainable Livelihood Strategy Outcomes and Resilience

As Hussein and John (1995) similarly argued, rural livelihood strategy changed, shaped and reshaped through risk and non-risk factors. Within the context of repetitive drought incidences, rehabilitation programs need to realize successful, resilience and sustainable rural livelihood; in such a way that adverse drought events can be withstood without compromising future survival (Elli, 2000). With due consideration to the above, PSNP has been implemented in the study areas to bring sustainable rural livelihood through drought proof development (FDRE, 2004). This program announced by many actors as a flexible and cost-effective way to deliver targeted aid, promote community development and improves long-term prospects for development and food security.

Nevertheless, due to the top down nature of drought disaster management, institutional impediments, inadequate resource provision, and partial rehabilitation of degraded livelihood capitals/assets/, the intervention has been unable to bring sustainable rural agricultural livelihoods to the food in secured households'. In fact, the last five years of recovery works has been challenged to make drought led disasters history through realizing drought proof development. A case in point, according to Kalu district Food security Bureau (2000) report, since 2005-2008, belg season rain shortage damaged around 6,072,200 kg of food, and killed a number of livestock. In this aspect, as Scoones (1998) argued, the last five years public works and recovery program that implemented in the study areas have not created resilient

rural agricultural livelihood which cope with and recover from stresses and drought shocks.

Another sustainability dilemma was that, 50% of PWPs were considered as self-sufficient and graduated from the program in 2011. Nevertheless, all of PWPs' who claimed to be graduated were re-instated in the program for additional five years, owing to the fact that, PWPs' were not able to sustain their life without the PSNP. Based on an assessment made by this research, the ever-growing dependence on the program could partly explain that, the concerted effort of recovery program has not able to break the vicious circle of food insecurity, as per its time frame, in the study areas.

As it has been well articulated by (ISDR [13], 2005) states have the power as well as the responsibility to protect their citizens and their natural assets by reducing the losses from drought disaster. In line with this argument, post-drought disaster policy and institutional arrangements established to restore or improve the pre-disaster condition of chronically food in secured communities (FDRE, 2004). Nevertheless, a mega project like PSNP has faced the following problems, which related with the entire chain of theory-policy and practice of drought disaster management.

#### **5.2.1 Post-Drought Disaster Management Policy Direction of the Country**

Scoons (1998) argued that, rehabilitation of drought led rural asset depletion and chronic food insecurity can be applied at a range of different scales-from individual to household, household clusters to extended kin grouping, to village, region or even Nation with sustainable livelihood outcomes assessed at different levels. The specification of policy direction and the scale of analysis are therefore critical to bring drought victims back to normal condition.

According to NPDPM (1993), and FDRE (2004) the scope, level of analysis and direction of the national post-drought disaster reconstruction policy and corresponding strategies have prioritized community level intervention. Which mean, the cause and consequence of drought disaster, the required recovery or rehabilitation measures, and consequent sustainability of rural livelihood outcomes have been analyzed and interpreted at community level. As the result, household contexts including vulnerability factor, livelihood activity, asset status, and the strategies that chronically food in secured households adopt for survival have got inadequate attention. Ellis (2000) argued that, there is clearly scope to operate simultaneously at many different scales of policy, provided the limitation of the particular scale chosen, identified and understood. The recent tendency, according to Ellis, has been to move away from large domain policies towards village, households and individual level policies.

#### **5.2.2 Awareness Creation on PSNP**

Awareness creation program on implementation of the PSNP was given to program officers, professional extension staff, and the targeted beneficiaries in the in the study areas at different times. For instance in 2006, initial training held for experts at the Koblocha district. Given interview results from experts, the trainings were sources of confusion that lacked mutual consensus among participants. In fact, most important pillars of program implementations including,

whom to include in the program, how to select these targets, how to identify different assets, how to evaluate the graduation criteria among others, lacked common understanding among implementers. As a result, the experts were obliged to put in place their own different understanding in to public works.

#### **5.2.3 Initial Targeting of PSNP Beneficiaries**

According to administrative documents of the study areas, PWPs were selected by community level committee and administrative committee; based on household asset holdings such as social capital, human capital, natural resource and related livelihood assets. A huge program like PSNP required a deep stakeholders' analysis of household asset holdings, capacity and vulnerability factors. However, based on the data obtained from key informants and group discussions, committees were selecting beneficiaries without having the necessary knowledge, skills and training. In addition to the above, selection of beneficiary PWPs' was exposed to favoritism. Consequently, the initial stage of targeting process was characterized by inclusion of undeserved better off households, and exclusion of the right candidate in the program. Hence, as to an assessment made by this research, significant number of chronically food in secured households were not put in place at the center of PSNP in the study areas.

#### **5.2.4 Targeting Graduates-Exit Strategy**

In line with FDRE (2004), through continuous rehabilitation package coupled with OFSP [14] intervention (household financing to engage in income generating activity), PWPs' were expected to graduate from the program and then be food secured after five years. However, institutional aspects of facilitation of exit strategy or the process of targeting candidate graduates have faced a number of hurdles to realize program objectives. Among which, program implementers were inadequately equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge with regard to household asset estimation and compare against established benchmark which 4200 Ethiopian birr. In addition to that, access to credit facility and household level business plan development were inadequately funded, ill implemented, and partially monitored. On top of the above, facilitation of graduation-exit strategy has faced difficulties, due to the fact that regional and local administrators were not able to create broad based coalition among development partners and stakeholders, who engaged in various development activities in the study areas.

## **6. Summary**

PSNP as post-drought disaster reconstructions program has injected resources, so as to strengthen sustainable and resilience of rural livelihood to chronically food in secured communities. For these to happened: a consistence, predictable and multi-year-framework intervention has filled desperate food demands of PWPs'. As a result, besides fighting famine, it discouraged PWPs' desperate search for daily labor around urban, maintain communities together and redirect these labor resources to reconstruct degraded natural resource, which is the base of their livelihood. In addition to the above, PSNP protects household assets, which could have been forcefully sold to filled part of their

food consumption. Above all, as part of long term vulnerability reduction, degraded communal assets have been rehabilitated through a forestation and soil conservation practices.

However, from the perspectives of PWP's, the program has not adequately introduced sustainable, resilient and successful rural livelihood strategies, in such a way that adverse drought events can be withstood without compromising future survival. This is due to, first despite drought disaster seriously weakens the capacity of PWP's through depleting livestock holding and related household farm lands, PWP's private productive assets has not been reconstructed. Second PSNP provided no space to PWP's participation and ownership in program design, implementation and feedback. Third, since PSNP has been labor intensive; it created labor and time competition among other PWP's livelihood strategies. Consequently, it compromised the pursuit of other livelihood activities. Finally, though the program clearly argued that the post-drought disaster reconstruction should create drought disaster proof preventive measures still these days', drought lead disaster has caused livestock deaths and crop failure. In this context, the intervention insufficiently achieve sustainable livelihood through reduction or elimination of the underling drought risk factor.

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