9 Social protection design and implementation in Ethiopia

Prospects for a more inclusive approach

Zeremariam Fre, Gabriel Temesgen Woldu and John Livingstone

Introduction

Pastoral areas in Ethiopia contribute to the dietary needs, employment and income of the local populations who regulate the management and utilisation of natural resources through customary systems. However, these pastoral production systems are being constantly challenged by both human-made and natural catastrophes. Extreme environmental degradation, caused by the overutilisation of natural resources combined with recurrent droughts, increases the vulnerability of pastoralist communities, affecting the security of their livelihoods.

Policy and strategic discourses have long maintained that development approaches have largely neglected pastoralist communities, with a bias towards increasing livestock productivity, often at the expense of socio-cultural systems and with little understanding of the indigenous knowledge base and the institutions that govern the system. As a result, national policies have generally marginalised pastoralists from mainstream development planning without due consideration of the dynamics of pastoralist livelihoods.

The chapters in this book have examined the successes and challenges of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), with a focus on its implementation in the pastoral areas in the Afar region of Ethiopia. The authors have also reflected on the alarming impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on pastoral livelihood systems, as well as the broader questions around the implications of the pandemic in terms of establishing safety nets in the Global South. This has generated many lessons and revealed some critical areas that require further policy interventions.

This concluding chapter is structured as follows. First, it identifies and analyses the PSNP-related cross-cutting issues within the context of Ethiopian pastoralism and agro-pastoralism. This is followed by a discussion on the PSNP design, implementation and evaluation in the Afar region. The third section examines the roles of different actors as well as local-national-global synergies, and the fourth analyses the affordability and sustainability of the PSNP intervention. The fifth section discusses the relevance of informal social protection systems and their contribution to community-led social protection strategies among Afar and other communities in Ethiopia. The sixth section deals with the role of social

DOI: 10.4324/9781003203513-9

protection in promoting inclusiveness and equality. The seventh section offers a range of critical issues that go beyond the lowland–highland dichotomy, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and role of the digital revolution in relation to social protection among the Afar pastoral communities. The last section identifies major knowledge gaps within the study and makes recommendations for future further research and policy actions.

Is the PSNP design appropriate for pastoral and agro-pastoral communities?

Since 2005, Ethiopia has been developing the PSNP in order to protect the lives and livelihoods of the millions of its people threatened by food insecurity and natural disasters. As pointed out in the introductory chapter and discussed in detail by the authors throughout the book, the PSNP provides a safety net for households that are both chronically food insecure and poor and affected by recurring shocks. The PSNP provides food and/or cash transfers to food insecure households in chronically food insecure *woredas* (districts) in exchange for labour-intensive public works, while labour-poor households have received unconditional 'direct support' transfers. The majority of those targeted (about 85%) are engaged in public works, with the remaining 15% receiving direct payments. In the public works component, the beneficiaries participate in activities such as building community roads, schools, health posts and toilets, as well as soil and water conservation activities, water supply and terracing and other social infrastructures. Direct support is aimed at households with lower capacity, in particular, those with disabled or elderly members, pregnant women and a preponderance of young children. In the Afar region, unlike in other parts of Ethiopia, PSNP resources are transferred in kind, in the form of food items, which the communities prefer to cash, as this reduces their exposure to the risks of inflation and unfavourable currency fluctuations. The PSNP transfer is provided to households on a monthly basis for six consecutive months from January to June.

The PSNP has brought many positive contributions to the wellbeing of the pastoral communities. In Chapter 3, Fre and colleagues itemised these as (i) moving away from a humanitarian response to a more development-oriented approach to addressing the food gap; (ii) enabling people to work together to protect their common resources; and (iii) enhancing the overall welfare and cohesion of the community because most of the public works cannot be carried out by a single household. Chapters 2, 4 and 6 also highlight the benefits of the programme in terms of asset protection, as households are not forced to sell their livestock during periods of food shortages and are able to retain one predictable source of income while simultaneously helping the most vulnerable and those unable to work. Challenges to the PSNP system are identified in Chapter 6 where, according to Weldegebriel and Kebede's findings, it appears that the PSNP has been less effective than hoped. The authors reveal that the multiple risks associated with recurrent drought and livestock disease have prevented the achievement of household asset protection and long-term self-sufficiency.

The Afar region features both pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihood systems, each with a distinct way of life. In Chapter 4, Teka et al. reveal that out of the total 2,295 surveyed households in the Afar region, 47.6% are living below the minimum calorie intake required and with a Gini coefficient of 0.592. They also argue that a higher level of poverty is evidenced within the pastoral communities than in the agro-pastoralist communities of the region. Married household heads, female-headed households, large family size, lower educational attainment, distance to marketplaces and low access to financial institutions are particularly associated with higher levels of poverty. In Chapter 6, Weldegebriel and Kebede support the view that participation in the PSNP, for all pastoral households, is likely to increase consumption per adult equivalent among beneficiaries. When they disaggregated the consumption per adult equivalent of beneficiaries by gender, they found that the positive impact of the programme is accentuated for male-headed households. This result is in line with the findings of Teka et al. in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, Weldegebriel and Kebede, using the multidimensional food security index developed for all households, based on meals frequency and availability of common food items, find no clear evidence of the impacts of the PSNP in terms of improved food security.

The various authors clearly point out the flaws of the programme and its components. In Chapter 3, Fre and colleagues note that the PSNP programme operates on a 'one household' basis (with one household equal to five family members); this limitation means that polygamous households with more than five members receive the same allocation as a single household with up to five members. Another challenge is the fact that public works programmes have failed to take into account climatic conditions and the extensive mobility required by pastoralists in search of water and feed for their livestock. Similarly, some of the public works programmes in the lowlands were not appropriate for local environmental conditions, with elements such as terracing and particular kinds of soil and water conservation activities that were appropriate for the highland regions. In addition, the PSNP's approach is a short-term one because it only provides food to sustain the daily life of the beneficiaries and does not provide credit or related asset-building interventions. Thus, it lacks the transformative element envisioned in the programme's conception. Consequently, as pointed out by Haile and colleagues in Chapter 2, since the start of the social protection programme in pastoralist areas, no PSNP beneficiary has graduated from the programme, either in the Afar villages or in any of the pastoral communities.

In Chapter 5, Samuel and Shewadeg set out the drawbacks of a one-size-fits-all approach to the design of interventions made worse by poor coordination of implementation agencies in the pastoralist areas. Furthermore, as highlighted in both Chapters 2 and 3, the Household Asset Building Programme (HABP)/livelihood activities implemented in the highlands were not implemented in the lowland areas, mainly because of religious beliefs that prohibit interest-based lending and borrowing practices. Fear among loan providers that loan default rates would be high in the pastoral communities was an additional hindrance. The implementation of the HABP in the pastoralist areas could have helped households to

escape poverty, complementing and deepening the livelihood-development elements in the PSNP. Despite the fact that the PSNP has been linked with sustainable livelihood trajectories, addressing longer-term food security will continue to be a challenging task for the pastoral communities.

In Chapter 6, Weldegebriel and Kebede claim that there is a missing link in the approach adopted to the participation of local institutions, and the use of bottom-up approaches to design and implementation, as opposed to the top-down, expert-led approach employed by national social protection policies and interventions driven by global actors. The authors argue that, in Ethiopia, social protection interventions in pastoral areas have largely been imported, or shaped by external perspectives, satisfying the expectations of global stakeholders rather than drawing on local knowledge and experience and building on local social capital. If the aim is to bring about lasting impact, it is vital to integrate local institutions into programme design and implementation. However, most of the development stakeholders operate independently and deploy different strategies to address common protection challenges nationally, regardless of local variations and peculiarities. In addition to this failure to integrate customary institutions and local perspectives into formal safety net provision, the programme has also failed to address the pressing needs of young people. The authors also argue that despite the positive and significant impact in temporarily addressing household food security, the PSNP does not seem to have a significant impact on the welfare of pastoralist youth, nor on their vulnerability or food security status. Moreover, the youth fall outside the targeting criteria of the PSNP. Consequently, the programme has provided only very limited assistance for youth. The programme's effectiveness is impacted by these design flaws and is further undermined by weak institutions and weaker coordination mechanisms.

From a short-term perspective, the PSNP provides temporary employment for youth in the form of unloading grain sacks for distribution, as discussed by Fre and colleagues in Chapter 3. Young people can also participate in public works activities for six months in return for food. Although only on an ad hoc and temporary basis, this involvement in the programme has enabled many to continue their studies and has provided a short-term alternative to unemployment. However, the design of the PSNP could be greatly enhanced by including youth as a distinct social group with particular needs and characteristics, requiring a more tailored intervention within the broader safety net programme. To make the PSNP more effective and for it to have an impact beyond merely increasing the availability of food for households in crisis, the programme needs to engage youth actively and be based on an appreciation of their ambitions and unique circumstances.

Traditional social protection systems among the pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in the Afar region of Ethiopia

Pastoralists have informal social protection systems, which are the first line of response to asset shocks among these vulnerable communities. Pastoralists

mitigate risks through their mobility and specialised skills developed over long years of experimentation. They have been able to put in place coping strategies to protect their herds and livelihoods. Pastoralist strategies primarily emphasise the rational utilisation of resources and the formation of social networks that help them to deal with unpredictable and devastating shocks, such as variable climatic conditions, disease outbreaks and conflicts.

The Afar communities are composed of a mixture of clans; however, each locality has a major clan and affinity. Chapters 3 and 5 show how the communities organise social, economic and political support in times of crisis. The Afar communities are known for their deep-rooted, community-based welfare and social protection practices, which have evolved and grown out of practical experience. Until a few decades back, traditional, self-sustaining, informal social networks made very significant and quite effective contributions towards helping people and communities to adjust to adverse socio-economic situations, as well as to maintain livelihood equilibrium. Chapter 3 emphasises the role of Islam, mosques and the clan system in the provision of a safety net in the region. Fre and colleagues note that *Zakat* (the religious obligation on every Muslim to contribute 2.5% of their assets or income to public welfare) entails a duty for all community members to help the needy and those who are unable to help themselves. In Chapter 8, Tsegay also notes that, within this form of social organisation, the forms of mutual support, in-kind or in cash, that are most commonly used are those which can be fulfilled by close or extended family members and neighbours. This includes remittances and faith-based support, including *Zakat*.

The authors of Chapter 5 discuss how this ability of the customary support systems to provide social protection coverage to a large and growing number of affected households is often ignored. At the same time, people within the governance systems and institutions that define pastoralist systems in Ethiopia recognise that this ability is now gradually deteriorating. The authors identified the different types of social support systems (customary social safety nets) among the Afar pastoral groups which have complemented the PSNP in many ways. Among the Afar, a customary system referred to as the *Medaa* plays a significant role in promoting mutual assistance in times of drought and conflict through the enactment of a set of rules called *Adaa* (customary law). For example, these laws enable the Afar, like many other pastoral groups in Ethiopia, to support vulnerable households through the provision of lactating cows (*Hantila*) and restocking livestock (*irbu*).

In Chapter 6, Weldegebriel and Kebede highlight the obligations around reciprocity and sharing which extend beyond members of the immediate family. This system reaches out to include clan members who are considered vital resources to draw upon for risk management and economic survival. Research in these regions revealed that targeted resources (intended for the named beneficiaries) were being diluted as programme inputs and transfers have had to be shared between a wider network of recipients, not necessarily reaching the poorest and most vulnerable as the original PSNP targeting guidelines had intended. These conflicting ideas regarding how the already built-in informal social practices

support or compromise the effectiveness of the PSNP transfers deserve further empirical study. Furthermore, though these social protection systems are an integral aspect of local social organisation and, inter alia, play an important role in resolving conflicts between clans, national social protection strategies have failed to develop an all-encompassing, inclusive approach that revitalises the in-built customary social safety nets and other informal support systems. Further research and experimentation need to be developed to integrate formal and informal support systems in ways that might strengthen efforts to bring about long-term food security.

These are some examples of the kinds of knowledge gaps that future studies could address. In addition, there is a need to document and analyse local level stakeholders' wisdom, practice and perspectives, which could hopefully feed into a more inclusive and effective PSNP strategy for the pastoral areas in Ethiopia.

Reflections on the role of local, national and global actors: could there be an exit strategy enabling people in the Global South to stand on their own two feet?

There remains a huge gap in Ethiopia in terms of bringing together local, national and global actors to make a meaningful contribution to the provision of social protection services. Most national and global social protection actors become active during the post-disaster situation. Their post-emergency orientation is limited to support and assistance to pastoralists to protect some livelihood assets lost to the impact of immediate shocks. Interventions of this kind are often short in duration and do not go beyond restocking herds and do not result in sustainable means to deal with the structural protection challenges that make pastoralists vulnerable to recurrent shocks.

In Chapter 5, Samuel and Shewadeg examine the roles, scale and impact of local, national and non-state actors in the provision of social protection. In the Ethiopian context, the participation of non-state actors is important in various aspects of implementation, such as the translation of the targeting guidelines, in supporting regional capacity to enhance training efforts and implementing the PSNP in selected areas. Non-state actors participated in the piloting phase of the PSNP – from its inception to the design and implementation of the programme – in both the highlands and the lowlands.

There are observed complementarities between local and national stakeholders who aim to engage poor pastoralist households in community-initiated rangeland management. The gaps and weaknesses of bringing together local, national and global actors have been identified by Samuel and Shewadeg as follows:

- Lack of proper implementation strategies often culminating in the disadvantage of women and other marginal groups.
- Funding and technical support tend to ignore customary institutions, often benefiting only formal government programmes with little or no investment in building the capacity of the informal system.

- Poor institutional and policy frameworks that neglect to safeguard the needs and interests of politically marginalised groups and the socio-ecological systems on which they are based, failing to engage fully with local communities.
- Missing links between national social protection support providers and the local counterparts, leading to a lack of synergy between knowledge and practice.
- Failure to integrate local actors, recognise their contributions and design a system that benefits from their experiences.
- Duplication of efforts, with some beneficiaries targeted by two or more different programmes or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), while the exclusion of important target groups from social transfers persists.
- There is scant knowledge among international NGOs with respect to the context of their interventions, as the interaction they have with national and local social protection providers is minimal, and this often means that their interventions remain aloof.
- The engagement of local actors, including clan and religious leaders, in efforts to improve pastoralist communities' livelihoods under national social protection programmes remains unresearched, and this might be regarded as a missing link in efforts to strengthen the resilience of pastoralist communities to different asset shocks, including flood, drought, conflict and epidemics.

There are plans for the government of Ethiopia to completely take over the financing of the PSNP by 2025, implying that PSNP V will become the last donor-supported programme. Future research must address the challenges of affordability and sustainability of the intervention in terms of public finances, as serious questions remain over the long-term capacity of the Ethiopian government to afford such transfers.

As Samuel and Shewadeg point out in their chapter, domestic financial capacity is still a distant prospect, and current programmes remain dependent on external assistance. Some of the challenges associated with donor-sponsored funds are delays in funding, a mismatch of funding windows or fiscal years and the timing of disasters. Furthermore, donors have been reluctant to support the scaling up of pilot projects. Hence, the local and federal governments have to build their domestic revenue-generation capacities to achieve affordable social protection programmes.

As noted by Tsegay in Chapter 8, safety net policies are difficult to put into a single basket, as they reflect a multiplicity of national and global actors and their intertwined interests. Notwithstanding the solid international backing for social protection in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), there is a critical gap within the donor-recipient relationship. While donors push for SSA countries to scale up and expand their programmes, they are not providing the requisite financial or technical support. Hence, the question of affordability becomes critical, and the question of who bears the costs also has an intergenerational dimension.

Does the PSNP promote inclusiveness and equality among women and youth?

Pastoralism and agro-pastoralism as a way of life is constantly challenged and is always in a state of transition. As a result, many of the pastoralist and the agro-pastoralist youth (men and women) are abandoning traditional pastoralism due to multiple challenges such as climate-related hazards, loss of livestock assets and the decline in animal and crop production and productivity. Beyond natural hazards, pastoralist youth also face challenges engendered by unemployment, poor health services, poor educational services and attainment, socio-economic disadvantages and a lower level of political participation. Furthermore, in the Afar and Somali regions, where gender inequality is sharp, women are vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV), female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage and other harmful traditional practices. Youth and women face various risks and disadvantages associated with their social exclusion and these exacerbate their vulnerability to multidimensional poverty. This is a major cause for concern, as it is likely to have negative implications with respect to the broader aim of transforming the livelihoods of pastoral youth and women.

In Chapter 3, Fre and colleagues reveal how, in many parts of the Afar region, limited local infrastructure and economic opportunities offer few occasions for young people to earn alternative incomes in the villages. Although there are some economic opportunities, including casual labour, cart driving and selling firewood, there are many unemployed young people. Some of the youth have left their villages in search of employment abroad, usually in Saudi Arabia and Djibouti. Young women who remain unemployed have no opportunities or prospects other than marriage.

In Chapter 6, which looks at the vulnerability, mobility and aspirations of pastoral youth in the Afar, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella regions of Ethiopia, the authors give some examples of the diverse interests and aspirations of the youth. Many Somali youth believe that pastoralism needs to be modernised if it is to survive as a viable livelihood strategy. The Oromo youth aspire not only to go to larger towns and cities to live with extended family but also to migrate beyond their home regions and earn a living in other sectors. This suggests that the diversity among pastoral youth must also be clearly understood in order to target programmes accordingly.

The authors of Chapter 6 also highlight the fact that young women aspire to have professional careers or run their own businesses, thus escaping their traditional roles as custodians of the family. This is despite stereotypical gender roles, sexist attitudes, young women's lower levels of confidence in their own abilities, and earlier age of entry into parenthood. Furthermore, this chapter highlights how the desires and aspirations of pastoral youth vary by region, culture and certain economic factors. For instance, some young people in agro-pastoralist areas and those who do not attend school wish to continue with the agro-pastoralist lifestyle, keeping livestock and practising small-scale farming (irrigated and rain-fed). By contrast, urban-based children and youth seek jobs outside the agro-pastoralist economy. However, there

is very little documented information on the rural–urban linkages of the semi-urbanised Afar youth, including women, who are closely connected to the urban areas through trade and migrant labour. This would be a very interesting area for future study, as there is clearly a knowledge gap around many of these issues.

The authors also argue that the contribution of the PSNP in terms of targeting women as primary economic beneficiaries has been insignificant, as they lack the skills and knowledge that they would have gained from formal education. Hence, in making the PSNP more effective, beyond the simple objective of increasing the availability of household food, the programme needs to engage youth and women actively and develop an appreciation of their aspirations.

Two contrasting results are presented on the impact of the PSNP on inclusiveness and equality. According to research in the Afar and Somali regions, the programme is likely to increase income derived from livestock resources by close to 50% for all pastoralist households, around 45% for male-headed households and 78.5% for female-headed households. In this regard, the PSNP may actually help to narrow the income and resource gap between male and female households, suggesting that it can be used as a tool to promote inclusive development in pastoralist communities as discussed in Chapter 6.

On the other hand, with regard to the diversification of livelihoods and incomes away from pastoralism and agro-pastoralism, the impact for those participating in the PSNP is negative and reduces income from other activities for pastoral youth. Similarly, the impact of participating in the PSNP is negative for female-headed households and reduces diversified income. This negative impact can, perhaps, be partly explained by the demand for household labour in public works, which reduces its availability for other income-earning activities, thus creating a crowding-out effect. This competition for labour between public works and other activities could be serious if the timing of both activities overlaps. Moreover, the fact that engaging in diversified activities, such as trade, requires relatively high levels of initial capital, savings and skills and that these are generally lacking in pastoral areas, may explain the lack of positive impact on pastoral youth. Thus, it can be argued that the PSNP measures may not be adequate to transform the lives and livelihoods of the pastoralist youth, and those other initiatives should be promoted alongside the programme.

If it is, in fact, the case that the PSNP contributes to increased livelihood incomes for male-headed households, rather than female-headed ones, this would imply that it might actually worsen income inequality in an already male-dominated society. However, given that both Afar and Somali societies are male-dominated, the PSNP could be implemented in ways that help to narrow the income and resource gap between male and female households, and it could be used as a tool to promote inclusive development in pastoralist communities with careful attention to programme design. In addition, addressing the multifaceted vulnerabilities of pastoralist youth and women, inter alia, calls for the implementation of other employment interventions, such as providing access to financial services, skills development, improved market integration and improving the investment climate in pastoral regions.

Towards gender-responsive social protection for the pastoral communities: short- and long-term perspectives in light of COVID-19

Gender-disaggregated data presented in this book underlines the fact that women and men are affected differently by the measures put in place. It is clear that they benefit from and participate in the PSNP in different ways.

The choice of public works as a social protection tool is central to the programme's aim of delivering short-term assistance in ways that strengthen livelihoods and local economies over the medium to long term. Generally, women's domestic responsibilities tend to constrain their ability to participate not just in the programme but also in the decision-making and consultative processes around it. If social protection is to be delivered in inclusive ways that that allow men and women to benefit equally, programmes must be designed with an eye to gender relations and the gender division of labour in the communities served.

Greater attention is being paid to gender-responsive safety net approaches, encompassing issues of culture, intra-household resource sharing and the ownership of productive assets. It is increasingly recognised that safety net programmes have paid inadequate attention to the particular needs, roles and characteristics of women, youth and other social groups.

There are a number of issues around social capital, as well as specific gender issues in Afar society, in which women's subordination is particularly sharp, even in comparison with the pastoral Somali region. In Tigray, there is a distinct set of gender issues related to the persistence of gender-based violence, notwithstanding a greater pace of positive social change. In this volume, the authors emphasise the need to complement, rather than undermine, traditional social capital and trust-based social networks and to design programmes in ways that allow for much greater local and private sector participation. But while traditional institutions enjoy a high degree of legitimacy, they tend to exclude women. The degree to which women are able to participate in local decision-making institutions is severely limited. It is not clear what channels are available to women to influence the design of social protection programmes or the selection of activities under the public works component of the PSNP. This is not to suggest that women are totally excluded in local social organisation. Traditional institutions consult with women to some degree, and women have their own institutions and traditional practices that provide for savings and loans within women's circles, self-help groups and more formal organisations. These can be vehicles for the broader and deeper involvement of women in programmes.

Women's involvement in social protection programmes of this kind might itself stimulate positive social change helping to shift attitudes and perceptions. Women's employment under such safety net programmes might have longer-term economic and social impacts. For example, women who gain work experience and enter the labour market through social protection programmes might take that experience into new private sector jobs. Occurring patchily and at different paces in different places, social change and economic diversification have

been associated with a growing role for women in the economy but not (yet) in public life, politics and governance. This will have to change if effective social safety nets are to be developed.

But it is important to integrate social protection policies into broader economic policies that should primarily be directed towards job creation and enterprise in a growing economy and related issues of skills and training.

A note of caution here is that there is a risk that programmes such as the PSNP might undermine the effectiveness of traditional social protection mechanisms and the traditional social capital that underlies them. Even a cursory assessment of the tax base for social programmes suggests that the prospect of a taxpayer funded social security system is a distant one. Indeed, Ethiopia seems to be heading into a new crisis of indebtedness, having borrowed heavily from non-traditional sources, notably China, in order to fund large investments in roads and other infrastructure.

In addition, the impact of COVID-19, constraining economic activity at the same time as imposing additional burdens on the state, adds to the pressure on public finances, with diminished tax revenues and increased public expenditure. This suggests that traditional institutions will have to step up and play more significant roles in the development of both safety nets and effective COVID-19 responses.

COVID-19 has had multiple impacts on vulnerable pastoralists and smallholders. Lockdowns have been the primary response, with closed borders interrupting pastoral migrations and trade. The crisis is likely to be protracted. As the pandemic's first phase peaks, containment measures may be eased, but they may be reintroduced depending on its progression and evolving characteristics. Within this context, shock-responsive social protection mechanisms and cash transfers could help to boost the recovery of affected livelihoods and/or to stabilise incomes, if they are scaled up and modified in COVID-secure ways. It is argued in this volume that local institutions and social networks, which are particularly strong in pastoral communities, can play important roles in shaping effective COVID-19 responses.

But there are a number of key questions that must be addressed in future research:

- Can donor-funded safety net and humanitarian programmes be integrated into development programmes and provide the basis for future tax-supported safety nets? (Is there a realistic prospect of governments being able to pay for safety nets? Or are governments capable of coordinating a patchwork of donor-supported activities that, together, constitute a reasonably effective safety net? What is the appropriate degree of decentralisation? Is central government too distant, and do devolved administrations have the requisite implementing capacity?)
- Can such programmes be designed in ways that empower women and build on, rather than supplant, social capital? (Or will the expansion of safety net programmes undermine local efforts and lead to unsustainable dependency?)

How can any of these mechanisms and approaches work effectively when women and youth do not have a say in their design and management?

- How can traditional social protection mechanisms cope when everyone in a given region is hit equally hard by an unpredictable shock? Do the traditional, already built-in, informal social practices support or contradict the PSNP?
- Can existing programmes provide the basis for effective COVID-19 responses? (How might existing programmes be scaled up and modified to address the pandemic?) How can social networks inform and enhance COVID-19 responses? (Can local people provide local knowledge that makes responses more effective?)

These questions require comprehensive answers on the basis of context-specific research in each distinct social setting. The chapters in this volume point to some first steps towards a rethinking of the approach to social protection under the PSNP, involving more localised bottom-up approaches to implementation with community institutions, men and women placed at the centre of programme design and development.

Beyond the highland–lowland dichotomy: lessons and experiences from the Afar region and its neighbours

The Afar people have strong social, economic and cultural interactions with their neighbours and with highland farming communities, in particular in the Amhara, Tigray and the Somali regions. They exchange goods and services, such as grains and salt. Such mutual interactions between highland and lowland markets encourage both groups to engage in non-traditional employment and promote alternative sources of income. In Chapter 2, Haile et al. identify each system's comparative advantages and disadvantages. For instance, pastoralist areas are a rich source of livestock for highlanders, which is an important production asset in the agricultural system of the highlands. Equally important are food grain sales, as they are a major source of cash income for highlanders, supplying food for the pastoralist lowlanders. For a long time, there has been an established salt trade from the lowlands, from Berahle and other places in the Afar region, to the Tigray region and other highland areas. Over the past few decades, some of the communities mentioned have also been involved in conflicts linked to cultural differences as well as resource competition over territory, land, water and pasture.

PSNP implementation has not differed much across the highlands and the lowlands. For instance, the programme in both areas stays in place for six months, the support includes either food or cash and the modalities of the public works enable each eligible beneficiary to work for five days per month. Moreover, public works are geared towards communal land rehabilitation or the construction of community infrastructure such as roads, health centres, schools and water points. Haile et al. argue that, except for a few operational implementation procedures,

the PSNP has been almost identical in most of its components across the lowlands and the highlands. What stands out is that, since 2015, there has been increasingly limited rates of success of the livelihood component for the lowland regions.

As we have noted, the PSNP has been criticised for its blanket approach to implementation modalities, which ignore local realities and the major ecological, social and economic differences between livelihood zones. The public works schedule in the highlands (from January to June) is mainly criticised for overlapping with the peak agricultural production period. There are similar issues for the pastoralists in the lowlands, in that the public works schedule failed to consider climatic conditions, seasonal variability and the pastoralists' extensive mobility. As previously mentioned, some of the public work programmes in the lowlands involved terracing and soil and water conservation, which were the same activities as in the nearby highland models and more relevant to the highlands.

Despite the pervasive differences between the highlands and lowlands in terms of livelihood trajectories and the implementation of the PSNP's public works, Haile et al. argue that many of the best practices can be scaled up and replicated from the highland to the lowland systems, with appropriate adaptations to local conditions. Highland social protection polices focus on both increasing consumption and the promotion of farm production through facilitating support to loan systems, improved agricultural services and supplementary irrigation. As the authors note, achievements have been registered in rehabilitating degraded lands through the PSNP's public works in the highlands by activities designed and delivered in close collaboration with the local community. Biological and physical conservation have been part of the public works in the highlands. This has resulted in the enhancement of spring waters and raising the water table, thereby enabling a shift in the farming systems of the local community from rainfed to irrigation, resulting in increased agricultural production and productivity. Public works in the highland areas also contribute towards gully rehabilitation, which supports agricultural production as well as grazing.

Another best practice that can be replicated is enhancing transparency of beneficiary targeting in the PSNP. One of the processes utilised in highland areas is the posting of beneficiary lists in public places. This has not been a major feature of implementation in the pastoral lowland areas. Replication of this system in the pastoralist areas would increase trust and credibility of the beneficiary selection processes and reduce conflict and tensions between individuals, families and clans.

A third element is mobile banking, which is increasingly used for cash transfers to the PSNP beneficiaries in the highland areas. Mobile banking enhances efficiency, minimises current bureaucratic processes for accessing services and helps to contain the COVID-19 pandemic by reducing person-to-person contact.

The PSNP and the COVID-19 pandemic: opportunities and challenges

As the pandemic spread and governments around the world scrambled to offset its impact on economies and livelihoods, debates were revived on the nature and

feasibility of social protection systems and their ability to respond to new challenges caused by COVID-19.

In Ethiopia, some aspects of the PSNP continued notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic, but their effectiveness was limited. The following developments and adaptation issues are worth noting:

- The challenges posed by COVID-19 went far beyond the disruptive effect on existing plans and implementation instruments. For instance, in the Somali region, three-quarters of the pastoralist communities had reduced food consumption over 2020 and into 2021, and markets almost reached a state of collapse, leading to a significant loss of household incomes.
- Although the public works component was postponed, PSNP cash payments to beneficiaries continued and, in some areas, were paid as lump sums to encourage households to stay at home during the pandemic. PSNP beneficiaries were also allowed to draw on the savings programme that PSNP clients were required to enrol in and which guaranteed them a grant when graduating at the end of the programme. New training on health and water and sanitation (WASH), oriented towards COVID-safe practices, was also relayed through the PSNP.

However, further negative impacts were reported as the disease took root across the pastoral regions. The COVID-19-driven consequences include the following:

- Delays or cessation of the public works that household members were required to carry out
- An increase in new 'transitory' caseloads, in addition to the existing 'chronically vulnerable' PSNP caseloads
- The inability of the PSNP to adapt quickly enough to implement a timely response in any new areas and new populations impacted by COVID-19
- Funding constraints on the part of both government and donors affected the ability of the PSNP to scale up to reach new clients within its existing implementation areas
- Increased levels of poverty, gaps in the provision of health care services and higher levels of childhood malnutrition, together with the presence of comorbidity factors such as the prevalence of tuberculosis, all combined to aggravate circumstances that were already challenging
- Restrictions on movements and access to markets greatly constrained economic activity and led to sharp reductions in incomes
- Distance learning modalities that were introduced in order to maintain educational services did not reach all parts of the country, in particular pastoral areas with limited connectivity, and children have not been able to access other services provided through schools, such as school feeding programmes
- Delayed payments because of bureaucratic hurdles and delays in the delivery of in-kind food items

Despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government continued to implement its economic policy reforms and, importantly, was able to use the PSNP, in collaboration with the institutions responsible for the Humanitarian Food Assistance (HFA) emergency programme to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

Implications for the Global South: opportunities, challenges and ways forward

Although the underlying rationale and need for safety net interventions are substantively justified in SSA countries, in comparison to Latin America and Asia, social protection policy in Africa lags behind. In Chapter 8, Tsegay points out the significant opportunities that exist to enhance mutual learning on pastoralism-oriented safety net policies. The chapter highlights how social protection mechanisms among pastoral communities need to be seen from two divergent, but potentially convergent, conceptual viewpoints – an understanding of informal networks, on the one hand, and formal social protection networks, on the other.

Pastoral communities make considerable contribution to national economies by bolstering food security, but the sector has been facing numerous challenges. Tsegay describes the serious challenges to the resilience of pastoral communities over the past five decades. These challenges have been exacerbated by, among other things, dysfunctional national policies; marginalisation from political centres and development processes; a general misunderstanding of pastoralist contribution to food security, national economies and ecological sustainability; climate shocks; conflicts and violence; and, recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Tsegay points out that some political leaders have introduced social support programmes in order to assert a form of control over the populations served and in order to garner electoral support, with dubious implications for both programme design and sustainability.

Despite the above challenges, pastoralism and agro-pastoralism function as livelihood safety nets for many households by providing employment opportunities on a very large scale in arid and semi-arid rural areas. Countries in SSA, along with their development partners, have long been in search of social protection programmes that can bolster pastoral livelihoods and potentially bring risk adaptation and mitigation approaches together. It is important to recognise the potential of the PSNP as a model for the Global South in general and SSA countries in particular, as well-designed safety net measures can play a role in reducing the risks of livestock losses, as well as the loss of human lives, and livelihood insecurity. Such a strategy should also include provision of basic food supplies and establishing a system that protects the pastoral communities in both current crises and potential crises and disasters that may lie in the future. The core concept is one of a safety net that supports livelihoods development, and that is attractive. Tsegay further suggests that, in order to implement an efficient social protection system, countries require the institutional capacity and tools to

facilitate the selection of beneficiaries, implement service delivery and enable the monitoring of both processes and outcomes. In addition, the chapter highlights the need to integrate climate change, risk and social protection in the broader spectrum of pastoral social policy in order to ensure pastoral development and address the communities' vulnerability. Furthermore, Tsegay calls for resilience-sensitive development planning that is compatible with the safety net programme and considers pastoralists' mobility and their patterns of movement when providing in-kind support, as well as in designing public works projects that promote livelihoods and environmental management. Lastly, the author highlights the fact that development planners should focus on creating an integrated approach – with both technical and financial support – and foster the programme's role in creating climate-resilient pastoral societies.

Chapter 8 calls for governments and development partners to promote 'South–South cooperation' and develop context-specific measures. Caution is necessary when scaling up social protection programmes in order to ensure both horizontal and vertical institutional coordination, encompassing the policy, programme and administrative levels.

Recommendations for future action, some knowledge gaps and ways forward

The following recommendations for policy and practice are intended to contribute towards the process of strengthening social protection policies for pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in Ethiopia and beyond.

Tailoring the PSNP to the specific needs of pastoral livelihood systems: The existing social protection policy instruments in Ethiopia have a nationwide focus and have been largely designed for the country's highlanders, ignoring the specific context and needs of pastoral livelihood systems in the lowlands. The PSNP policy was conceptually designed to suit sedentary highland mixed-farming communities where it has had a relatively better impact. The scheduling of transfers, public works and activities and the modalities for the payment of transfers should have been tailored to pastoral communities that are semi-sedentary and for whom mobility is vital to their economy and way of life.

Pastoralists and pastoral livelihood systems suffer from the tendency towards short-termism among policymakers and the 'generalisation' of social protection policy. Accordingly, there is an inadequate understanding of the social, political and cultural fabric of the pastoralist livelihood systems. Pastoralist communities also have very little political power and poor representation in national decision-making bodies. But, if it is to be effective, the programme must take into account the dynamics of pastoral livelihood systems, the agro-ecology, climatic conditions, production potentials, socio-economic and cultural realities that characterise the pastoral areas, and design programme modalities that fit the pastoral communities. This book proposes that national-level institutional development should involve determined efforts to build an understanding of pastoral systems

and regions and that knowledge of pastoralism, as a cultural as well as a livelihood system, be included in educational curricula at all levels to increase awareness and understanding among the decision makers of tomorrow.

Establishment of financial and credit institutions: Currently, the PSNP fails to incorporate transformative elements into its programme design and is unable to break the cycle of persistent poverty among pastoralists. While it produces short-term positive impacts, the PSNP cannot ensure long term self-sufficiency for pastoralist communities because the programme is essentially intended as a short- to medium-term intervention to shore up productive assets. There are key underlying structural and political factors which are unaddressed that make pastoralist households vulnerable to adverse shocks.

This requires a strategic approach and the careful design of policies that can be transformative. Policymakers should focus on developing an integrated approach to the creation of climate-resilient pastoral societies, building on the coping mechanisms and social capital of these communities and incorporating the development of non-traditional ('non-pastoralist') income sources into programme design, employing tailored approaches to each element. Serious consideration should also be given to the establishment of financial and credit institutions that are relevant to the needs of pastoralists, taking advantage of the expansion of mobile banking and other relevant technologies. Lastly, the existing social protection programme needs to include complementary household asset-building activities by introducing locally customised support service facilities to include the credit services mentioned above but also the kinds of participatory extension services that are needed to strengthen pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods to enhance their productivity.

Consolidating formal and informal social protection: Pastoralist communities in Ethiopia are founded on strong in-built social support systems. These ensure that better-off households fulfil traditional social responsibilities and assist disadvantaged households and groups. There is a missing link between national social protection support providers and their local counterparts. There is also a lack of synergy between the modern and the traditional in terms of both knowledge and practice. Thus, policymakers should emphasise the complementarities between the traditional, informal, social practices and the formal practices, integrating bottom-up practices with global and national policies. It is suggested that, in the social protection interventions, a process be put in place that enables customary social support systems, which operate at clan level or through religious organisations, informally, to move towards formalisation through the introduction of appropriate rules, regulations and structures.

Livestock movements and the need for an integrated health approach: Human and livestock health in the pastoral areas of Ethiopia has received marginal attention in the past. Maintaining a disease-free ecology in pastoral areas is still a challenge because of a number of factors, including the movements of unquarantined livestock as a result of rustling, unregulated cross-border trade

with neighbouring countries and other causes. Hence, there is a need for an integrated health approach alongside existing practices in social protection interventions.

Lessons learnt from the highlands that are applicable to lowland systems: Notwithstanding the pervasive environmental, socio-economic and cultural differences between the highland and lowland communities, best practices can be utilised from the highland to the lowland systems. These include, among others, transparency in targeting, the expansion of telecommunication facilities, the integration of PSNP public works activities with local livelihoods and the promotion of institutional pluralism.

Inclusive socio-economic development: Because the PSNP does not specifically target social protection programmes for the youth, a new programme could be developed by finding ways to promote job-creating investments in local economies. For example, the establishment of livestock processing plants could create salaried employment for pastoralist youth. In and around many pastoral-area towns, commercial milk and animal feed enterprises have been established over recent years. These could be promoted and stimulated by supportive tax regimes and economic policies. Such initiatives would not only promote employment opportunities but might also result in long-term economic benefits through multiplier effects and the generation of added value in the large-scale livestock sector. Social protection under the PSNP should be seen as part of a larger economic development agenda for the pastoral areas.

Economic diversification, with the establishment of new activities and small-scale enterprises, requires relatively high initial levels of capital, savings and skills, which are generally lacking in pastoral areas. To address the multifaceted vulnerabilities of pastoral youth and women, other interventions, such as access to financial services, skills development, improved market integration and improving the investment climate in pastoralist regions to increase employment opportunities for pastoralist youth and women, are suggested. In order to promote the inclusion of women, it will be important to address the major knowledge gaps identified in the discussion above. First, we need to understand how women's exclusion undermines safety net provision, if it does. Then it will be necessary to understand how interventions can be shaped to support and take advantage of women's growing participation in diversifying local economies.

Advocating for a 'One Health' approach: COVID-19 is by definition a '*Zoonotic virus*' i.e., transferable from livestock to humans and vice versa. Combining human and animal health (especially among pastoral communities), interventions should be enhanced to respond to COVID-19 issues so that it is possible to report on cases, monitor the spread of animal and human communicable diseases and transmit new health and hygiene messages. Furthermore, the health system should recognise and build on the existence of community-based animal health workers (CAHWs) and community health workers (CHWs)

who, in these regions, are experienced in dealing with animal and human disease outbreaks. Thus, the relevance of the 'One Health' approach becomes evident in dealing with both existing and emerging endemics and pandemics among the pastoral as well as cross-border area.

Digital transformation: The PSNP had to demonstrate adaptability, flexibility and responsiveness in order to absorb new caseloads resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The PSNP should develop alternative disbursement methodologies, such as mobile money services or vouchers, and temporarily lifting conditionalities, such as mandatory labour on public works or attendance in schools. Introducing the use of vouchers to enable pastoralists to buy fodder and veterinary drugs for their livestock, as well as food for themselves, is key to safeguarding both human and livestock health. More fundamentally, digital transformation offers the prospect of more efficient, responsive and participatory safety net programmes, with information flowing both ways, so that local actors can play greater roles in the design of tailored interventions.

It has been argued throughout this volume that safety net programmes need to build on traditional social capital and the informal social protection that is provided by traditional institutions. 'Institutions', here, refers to practices and culture as well as to the organisations that are led by elders and clan leaders. These institutions can play important roles in the design of safety net programmes that are tailored to local conditions. And these same institutions can also make responses to COVID-19 more effective and efficient, relaying awareness messages and COVID-safe practices to community members in ways that they can understand, and facilitating the flow of information to the authorities about local outbreaks and the ways in which particular local practices and behaviours might facilitate or retard the spread of the disease.

Perhaps the fundamental insight here is that both safety net programmes and the COVID-19 responses that the former support can be greatly enhanced in terms of their effectiveness by bottom-up, participatory approaches that involve local people and institutions, building on local social capital and utilising existing social networks and be made more efficient by deploying digital technology to link people and institutions, formally and informally.