

**PRODUCTIVE SAFETY NETS PROGRAM AND HOUSEHOLD LEVEL GRADUATION IN
DROUGHT-PRONE AREAS OF THE AMHARA REGION OF ETHIOPIA:
A CASE STUDY IN LAY GAINT DISTRICT
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Abstract

Even though the governments of Ethiopia in successive eras had implemented different policies, strategies and programs to alleviate poverty and food insecurity, still millions of people are dependent on food handouts for many decades. The general objective of the study was therefore; to identify the constraints faced the safety net beneficiaries by using Lay Gaint district as a case study site. Questionnaire survey, key informants interview and focus group discussions were employed to collect the primary data. A total of 201 households were covered by the questionnaire survey. The study revealed that 56% of the sample households were safety nets beneficiaries. About 82% of the sample households were disappointed for the criteria used in the selection of the beneficiaries because of inclusion and exclusion errors. The majority of the poor (61.1% of respondents) who is the subject of the program were not clear to the selection criteria employed. Almost all the sample households informed that there was blurred information about graduation in general and the time of graduation in particular. The binary logistic regression results showed that households total income, livestock owned, total crop production, kilocalorie intake and geographical location were significant variables used to predict households' graduation from safety nets. These call upon government officials to put considerable efforts in creating awareness to the benchmark used and the time of graduation from the safety nets.

Key words: FSP, PSNP, targeting, graduation, Lay Gaint, Ethiopia

Introduction

The three major famines which had occurred in 1973-74, 1984-85 and 2002-03 in Ethiopia had stimulated academicians and scholars to take conscientious research to the predicaments of food security at household level (Pankhurst, 2009). Early warning and disaster preparedness, government's controversial resettlement program and massive food-for-work program were launched during the *Dergue* regime as a means to reduce famine, poverty and food insecurity (Pankhurst, 2009). Despite seemingly impressive temporary achievements during the *Dergue* regime, the program had failed for a number of administrative, technical and policy related issues. Given the Ethiopian history of chronic food insecurity and recurrent famines, food security has placed priority policy issue and supporting the agricultural and rural development sector was the focus for the current government of Ethiopia (Devereux and Guenther, 2009). Consequently, the current government has designed several policies and strategies in relation to poverty reduction in the last couple of decades such as sustainable

development and poverty reduction program (SDPRP), the plan for accelerated and sustainable development to end poverty (PASDEP) and the agricultural development lead industrialization (ADLI) (Devereux and Guenther, 2009). The food security program (FSP) and its flagship component, the productive safety net program (PSNP) support the agricultural development and social protection in drought prone areas of the country (Jones and Holmes, 2009).

Scholars such as Workneh (2009), Yared (2001), Teshome (2006) articulated that rural development policies run by the current government have intertwined by serious predicaments. According to them, the illusion starts from the poor conceptual understanding of the word *food insecurity*. To the policy officials, food insecurity in most cases associated with transitory food insecurity or emergency relief distribution lacking recognition to the dynamic nature of food insecurity. Yared (2001) rightly stated that by and large policy makers attached little value of food security to the cross-cutting issues such as agriculture, health, nutrition, education,

water supply and enhancing livelihood diversification. Above all, the safety net program currently implementing in the food deficit areas of the country is full of difficulty starting from targeting the needy people to graduation of the safety net beneficiaries that pushes them to develop dependency syndrome. The hypothesis of this paper therefore, was building assets of the beneficiaries were the core of graduation from PSNP.

Description of the Study area

The study was carried out in *Lay Gaint woreda* (district) in the Amhara National Regional State of Ethiopia. The district covers a total area of 1320.3 km² and it is one of the densely populated *woredas* in the Region with

a population density of 185 persons per km² (CSA, 2010). The topography is rugged with elevations varying between 1200 m asl to above 4000 m asl (Figure 1). The area receives annual rainfall of 898.3 mm; June, July, August are the rainy months. The mean temperature ranges from 4⁰C (on top of Guna Mountain) to 28⁰C (at the bottom of the Tekeze river valley). The dominant soil types are *lipthic leptosols*. Based on the traditional agro-ecological classification (which uses only temperature as a reference), three temperature zones are found in the area: *Dega* (cool) *Woina-Dega* (temperate) and *Kolla* (hot tropical).

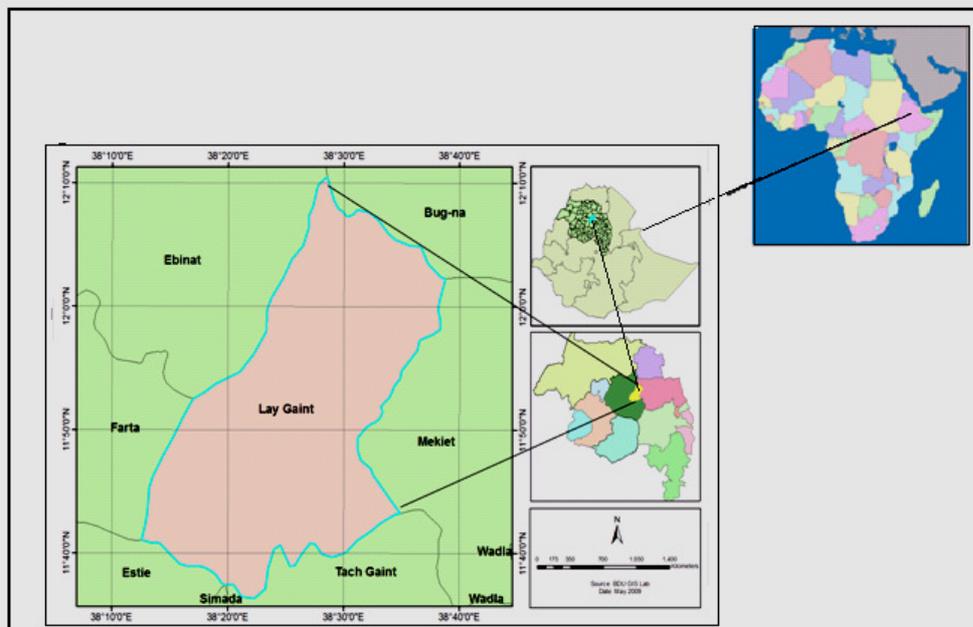


Figure 1 The relative location of Lay Gaint, Ethiopia

Methodology

Data collection and analysis

The study employed purposive, cluster and random sampling methods to select specific sampling sites. Selection of the study district was purposive based on the researcher’s prior knowledge of the area. The specific rural *kebele* administrations (RKAs – the lowest tier in the administrative structure of the country) were selected in a cluster sampling approach where all the RKAs in the district were first clustered into the three major traditional agro-ecological zones (*Dega*, *Woina-Dega* and *Kolla*) and then three RKAs were selected one each from the three zones in a random

sampling procedure. Households in each RKA were further grouped into wealth categories based on information obtained from focus group discussions (FGDs), key informants (KIs) and secondary sources as shown in Table 1. Finally, a total of 201 households were sampled for a questionnaire survey from the three RKAs using proportional stratified random sampling technique based on the sampling frames obtained from the RKA offices. In addition to the household survey, a total of six KIs and three FGDs were conducted in each of the three RKAs. The fieldwork was carried out between March and April 2011.

Table 1 Criteria used for wealth-based categorization of households in the study area

Criteria	Better-off	Middle	Poor
Family size	6 -12	6 - 8	4 - 7
Landholding (ha)	1.75 - 3.00	1.00 - 1.75	0 - 1.00
Total annual income (Birr)	4000 and above	2600 - 4000	1100 - 2600
Shoats owned	20 -25	10 - 20	2 - 7
Cattle owned	4 and above	2 - 4	0 - 1
Oxen owned	2 and above	1- 2	0 -1
Other assets owned	Having eucalyptus trees, engaging in petty trading, own tin roofed house.	Good quality of grass thatched and tin roof houses	Poor quality of grass thatched roof and no significant perennial trees
Food security status	Consume from own produce throughout the year.	Consume from own produce from 6 to 8 months	Consume from own produce not more than 3 months.

Source: Modified from Ellis and Bahigwa (2003)

The survey questionnaire covered issues such as food security strategy, PSNP, targeting and graduation of the households from safety nets. In-depth interview and focused group discussions were held with the subjects such as future food security status of the households, the criteria used in the selection of beneficiaries, and the efficiency of government strategies in reducing poverty and food insecurity at household level in the study area. The data generated by the structured questionnaire were entered into the statistical package, SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists), and were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, tables and percentages. Information collected through in-depth interview, FGDs, life history narratives and observations were documented and analyzed textually to substantiate the statistical results from the structured questionnaire.

Measurement of Variables

Binary logistic regression model was selected to identify the determinant variables influencing households' graduation from PSNP. The dependent variable was dummy (graduation from PSNP) and for those who graduate to the intended time was designated as *Yes* and valued **0** and *No* valued as **1**. A total of 15 predictor variables were selected to explain the dependent variable (Table 7). The omnibus test of model coefficients had a χ^2 value of 85.0 on 14 degrees of freedom, which is highly significant at $p < 0.01$. The predictive efficiency of the model showed that out of the 201 sample households included in the model,

157(78.1%) were correctly predicted. The sensitivity and specificity were found to be 87.7% and 65.5%, respectively. The correlation matrix showed that none of the variable was greater than 0.6, indicating that there was less correlation effect between the predictor variables.

Results and Discussion

The Food Security Situations of the Study Area

The study area is characterized by erratic rainfall, land degradation, high population pressure and poor asset ownership. As a result, around 79% of the sample households were not able produce their yearly minimum kilocalorie consumption from own production. The district agricultural expert also evidenced that the food they produce can be consumed not more than six months of the year. Monthly food deficit is severe from February to September and is largely filled by food transfer and other income generating activities. Appreciating this dilemma, the regional and local governments have implemented three interrelated programs such as voluntarily resettlement, PSNP and other food security program to reduce poverty and food insecurity at household level.

Voluntary Resettlement program

The agricultural land in the study area is small in size as well as degraded and fragmented and rainfall is also unpredictable which made the livelihoods of the farm households to become more precarious. One of the major options to surmount the

predicaments of chronic food insecurity was resettling the defenseless households into fertile, moisture reliable and sparsely populated areas in the region. In this regard, a question was asked for the respondents to assess their willingness to move into the resettlement areas. The survey result revealed that 76% of the sampled households were not happy to move into the resettlement sites. From the discussions it can be said that the majority of the sampled households complained about the resettlement program,

though the government aspires to resettle some more people in the future. As shown in the Table 1, 72% of the sampled respondents in *Kolla* zone and 90% in *Dega* zone were not voluntary to move in the resettlement areas. Consequently (as the key informants informed), the local government officials have reinforced the poor households to move into the resettlement areas by prohibiting them from safety nets and if this is the case, it is considered to be a harsh measure which challenges the phrase ‘voluntary resettlement’.

Table 1 Respondents’ willingness to move into the resettlement areas

Agro-ecological zone	Alternatives			
	Yes	% respondents	No	% respondents
<i>Dega</i>	7	10	63	90
<i>Woina-Dega</i>	25	36	45	64
<i>Kolla</i>	17	28	44	72
total	49	24	152	76

Analysis of the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in the Study Area

For the last couple of decades, *Lay Gaint* district was frequently affected by drought lowering the agricultural production in which more than 90% of the livelihoods of the household are extracted. As a result, about 60% of the food gap was filled by safety nets and other income generating activities. Currently, about 56% of the sample respondents are safety nets beneficiaries (Table 2). From the total female headed households, 79% were safety nets beneficiaries. The majority of the safety nets beneficiaries (71% of the total) were from the

poor category. *Kolla* agro-ecological zone was the highest safety nets beneficiaries (75.4%) because of meteorological and agricultural drought frequently occur in the area.

As shown in Table 2, there was a problem of inclusion and exclusion of beneficiaries during targeting. As a result, 29% of the poor were not included from the safety nets program, while about 60% of the rich and the middle categories were included to the safety nets program. One key informant in *Dega* agro-ecological zone informed that the better-off households who do have relatives either from *kebele* administrations or district officials were selected to be a member of PSNP.

Table 2 Safety net beneficiary by wealth categories and ecological zone (% respondents)

Options	Wealth categories				Agro-ecological zones			
	Better- off	Middle	Poor	total	<i>Dega</i>	<i>Woina-Dega</i>	<i>Kolla</i>	Total
Yes	7	50	71	56	38.6	55.7	75.4	56
No	93	50	29	43	61.4	44.3	24.6	43
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

As shown in Table 3, about 82% of the total sampled households were dissatisfied to the services obtained from the program. Dissatisfaction was the highest for the better-off households, because the majorities (93%) of them were not included as a member of the safety nets. Agro-ecologically, *Kolla* zone showed the highest level of dissatisfaction in the implementation of the program.

Table 3 Sampled households opinion to the satisfaction of the program (% respondents)

Alternatives	Wealth category			total	Agro-ecological zone			Total
	Better- off	Middle	Poor		Dega	Woina-Dega	Kolla	
Yes	10.7	34.3	16.8	18	22.4	24.3	6.6	18
No	89.3	65.7	83.2	82	78.6	75.7	93.4	82
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Components of PSNP

Food-for-Work (FFW) Program: FFW had started during the *Dergue* regime and currently it broadens its scope to the drought prone areas of Ethiopia. The strong side of the FFW program is it allows household members to work for their benefits rather than receiving handouts. The survey result showed that the major works accomplished were building roads (80.1%), reforestation (82%), making irrigation ditches (71%), engaging in soil conservation measures (79%) and building schools/clinics (82%). The serious problem perceived during the interview was, the works made were not sustainable because beneficiaries primary motive was to collect safety nets. All the key informants and focus group discussion participants unanimously said that FFW/CFW does not bring significant improvement to their livelihoods.

Cash-for-Work (CFW): CFW program is one of the dominant forms of social protection in low income countries, and are popular by donors due to its ease of implementation, compared to other forms of social protection strategies (McCord and Slater, 2009). As shown in the Figure 3, the majority of the poor households had acquired daily average income in between 9 and 10 birr¹. Particularly for *Kolla* and *Woina-Dega* zones, though they are the most chronic food insecure in the district, their daily income from CFW was extremely low to purchase food. Better-off households with their ample labor force took the lion share which was on the average 134 birr per household (Figure 3). The survey data revealed that the average daily income from CFW was 13 birr.

Receiving safety nets in the form of CFW and FFW are the most discussed issues. In the study area, 85% of the sampled households preferred to receive safety nets in the form of FFW. But more than 90% of the beneficiaries in *Kolla* zone preferred to take cash handouts because of its inaccessibility to the main delivering center. Likewise, Gentilini (2007) indicated that people in remote and inaccessible places in Ethiopia tends to prefer cash rather than food transfer. On the other hand, the direct support beneficiaries preferred food than cash handouts because of scarcity of labor to purchase food at the market. As far as temporal preference is concerned, the majority of the sampled households (82.1% of the total) preferred to take food transfer during food shortage seasons instead of food surplus seasons. Rogers and Coates (2002) asserted that cash transfer allow beneficiaries to purchase any thing they wish and maximize consumer choices as food transfer restricts to consumer choices.

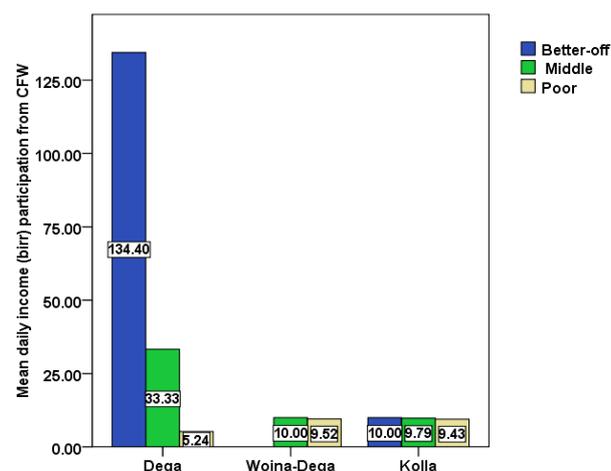


Figure 3 Daily CFW income for the beneficiaries by wealth categories and agro-ecological zones

¹ 1 US dollar was equivalent to 17.66 Ethiopian birr

Targeting problems of the Safety Net Beneficiaries

Identifying the geographic region or households that need support of the safety net transfer is a pre-requisite for the overall program. According to Farrington *et al.* (2007) and Jayne *et al.*(2000) the processes of identifying and design implementation mechanisms to ensure support provided to those beneficiaries, with minimal errors of inclusion and exclusion are vital in targeting the beneficiaries. Accordingly, a

question was asked to assess households familiarity to the criteria used in the selection of the safety nets beneficiaries. But the majority of the poor (61.1%), who is the subject of the program were not clear to the criteria employed (Table 4). Hoddinott (2011) in his focus group discussion evidenced that there was little understanding of the program criteria for determining groups that should be targeted to safety net beneficiary due to ignorance of the criteria.

Table 4 Sampled households’ perception about the criteria used in selecting the beneficiaries (% respondents)

Options	Wealth category			Total	Agro-ecological zone			
	Better- off	Middle	Poor		Dega	Woina- Dega	Kolla	Total
Yes	42.9	48.3	61.1	52.2	50.0	55.7	57.4	52.2
No	57.1	51.7	38.9	44.8	50.0	44.3	42.6	44.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

In relation of to the identification of individuals or group of persons and/or officials responsible in the selection of the beneficiaries, 85% respondents pointed that the beneficiaries have to be selected by the community because the community knows the poor in their locality more than any other officials (Table 5). Farrington *et al.* (2007) stated that the community based-targeting incorporates group of community

members and community leaders in deciding who should benefit to the safety nets. Likewise, Del Ninno *et al.* (2009) and Nigusse and Mberengwa (2009) cited in Zenebe (2012) suggested that group of village elders and/or special committees of community members or a mix of them are considered to be eligible persons to select the beneficiaries.

Table 5 Responsible people/officials in the selection of the PSNP beneficiaries

Group of people/officials responsible to select the beneficiaries	Frequency	% of respondents*
The public/the community at large	171	85
Kebele officials	5	2.5
DAs and Kebele officials together	35	17
Woreda <i>cabinee</i> members/government officials	130	65
Officials free from corruption/nepotism	192	95
I do not know	5	10.5

* Total is not 100% because of multiple options

On the other hand, 65% of the respondents stated that governmental officials out of their locality are imperative in targeting the beneficiaries. In general, poor targeting cannot differentiate the poor from the better-off households. Little (2008) evidenced that food transfer in the drought prone areas of Ethiopia is poorly targeted and there is little difference between the amounts of food transfer received by the poorest and the better-off households.

In regarding to the criteria employed in the selection of the PSNP beneficiaries, the majority (90%), (89.5%) and (88.5%) of the respondents

agreed that female headed, the poorest households and size of the family, respectively have to be considered (Table 6). The district food security expert suggested that households who suddenly become acute food insecure as a result of severe loss of assets and which are unable to support themselves were entitled to be members of the PSNP. Hoddinott (2011) found that landless households, unable to work/disable and the poorest of the poor were frequently used criteria for targeting but female headed households were not considered in targeting.

Table 6 Sampled households' criteria in targeting the PSNP beneficiaries

Criteria employed	Frequency	% respondents
Incapable to work and who do not have relatives	101	50.2
Do not own productive assets	151	75.1
Widowed and female headed households	189	94.0
Households who do not own land	91	45.3
Family size of the household	178	88.5
The poorest of the poor	180	89.5
Wealth differentials	161	80.1
Poor but are able to improve his livelihoods	131	65.2

The general situations in targeting the beneficiaries revealed that the majority (82%) were disappointed to the existing criteria in targeting the beneficiaries. The reasons given were local administrators were full of corruption, targeting does not consider family size and considerable number of the poor households were not included into the program due to poor targeting and relative centered implementation. The key informants added that the program is suffered from lack of transparency and be deficient in accountability. One development agent from *Dega* zone informed that sometimes the poorest households were deliberately excluded from the program to move into the resettlement sites. Likewise, Bishop and Hilhorst (2010) in their case study of Ethiopia argued that everyone in the poorest wealth group was excluded from the PSNP as a means to move in the resettlement areas.

The Predicaments of Graduation from Safety Nets

Graduation, to become food self-sufficiency and no longer in need of external assistance is a controversial issue in the study area. The district food security expert informed that for the last three years the food security status of the households had greatly improved and many of the PSNP beneficiaries are on the edge of graduation. This could be the reason that the government of Ethiopia is too ambitious to graduate all the current safety nets beneficiaries within three years. For that reason, in all the *kebeles*, quota was given to graduate the whole beneficiaries within three years. As a result, the district officials forced the *kebele* officials to accomplish according to the quota given.

The situations lead to identify graduation indicators and assess whether they can graduate or not to the given intended time scale. In relation to this, Frankenberger and Sutter (2007) suggested land, livestock and some productive equipment as indicator of graduation. The same

authors also added that households owned at least one ox, four shoats, one cow, consume from own production not less than 9 months, 2-3 meals per day are the benchmarks used for graduation. Hoddinott (2011) also added indicators such as pair of ox and milking cow, transformed from thatched houses to corrugated iron sheets and who can meet his food gaps better than others. The district food security expert also stated that 4,200 birr per household per year from all resources owned is taken as a benchmark for graduation and those beneficiaries having a total income greater or equal to this yardstick criterion are food secure and could be automatically graduated from the PSNP.

As indicated, asset ownership particularly the amount of livestock owned was the prime indicator for graduation. To this end, the average livestock owned of the 56% sampled beneficiaries was 0.58 ox, 0.6 cow, 2.0 shoats, 0.2 equine and 0.63 calves. In addition to this, the food gap was also investigated and all of them consume less than 6 months from their produce. The average income of the households which is used as a benchmark for graduation was less than 600 birr. In all accounts, the safety net beneficiaries faced a challenge to graduate with the intended time scale. For example, so far 100 safety net beneficiaries graduated from the total 88,438 core beneficiaries' means there is a serious problem to the overall program in making the beneficiaries food self-sufficiency. For example, a study made by Hoddinott (2011) pointed that fewer than 5% (n = 3,700) reported graduation from safety nets; there appears to have been little graduation to date. This showed that the local authorities faced problems in monitoring the extent of chronic food insecurity currently prevailing in the study district. This might be the reason that most of the beneficiaries are not willing to graduate and most of them lack openness to report the tangible and intangible assets owned at the present situations.

Determinant Variables Influencing Households' Graduation from PSNP

The variables that determine households' graduation from PSNP are presented in Table 7. Identifying the factors that affect households' graduation from PSNP was imperative because the ultimate goal of the program is to graduate the beneficiaries from the PSNP. The factors that determine graduation from PSNP were grouped into natural and socio-economic in nature.

The binary logistic regression results showed that geographic location was vital predictor variable in determining households' graduation from PSNP. Being other variables constant, an increase of inaccessibility/remoteness of a place from the center of delivery by one unit the marginal effects to be graduated from safety nets decreases by a factor of 0.98 and 0.14 at P < 0.01 for *Woina-Dega* and *Kolla* zones, respectively. *Woina-Dega* and *Kolla* zones are remote and inaccessible from the main town of the district and are highly food insecure and are less likely

to graduate from safety nets for the coming three years.

It was assumed that households engage in non-farm activities can enhance the graduation of the beneficiary households. The regression result showed that an increase in the participation of non-farm activities by one unit the odds ratio of being graduating from PSNP increases by a factor of 0.312 at P < 0.05.

Total production is another determinant variable helps to graduate households from safety nets. The binary logistic regression results also ascertained this hypothesis. Being other variables constant an increase of total production by one unit increases the probability of the households to graduate from PSNP by a factor of 1.59 at P < 0.05. Building assets especially the livestock sector enhances the graduation of the households. The regression result showed that an increase of one unit of livestock, the probability of the odds ratio to graduate from safety nets increases by a factor of 1.15 at P < 0.01.

Table 7 Binary logistic regression results

Predictor variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
<i>Dega</i> (reference)			17.717	0.000***	
<i>Woina-Dega</i> (1)	-1.301	0.583	15.608	0.000***	0.988
<i>Kolla</i> (2)	-1.203	0.607	13.183	0.000***	0.149
Non-farm income	1.165	0.481	5.864	0.015**	0.312
Off-farm income	0.000	0.000	0.047	0.829 ^{NS}	1.000
Total production	0.464	0.180	6.610	0.010**	1.590
Total livestock	0.143	0.039	13.646	.000***	1.154
Credit	-0.573	0.405	1.997	0.158 ^{NS}	0.564
Expenditure	0.000	0.000	1.111	0.292 ^{NS}	1.000
Kcal	0.230	0.905	5.543	0.019**	1.046
Per capita income	0.090	0.107	3.203	0.074*	1.187
Household size	-0.085	0.103	0.685	0.408 ^{NS}	0.918
Age	0.012	0.014	0.779	0.377 ^{NS}	1.012
Sex	-0.558	0.616	0.823	0.364 ^{NS}	0.572
Constant	-2.559	0.734	12.165	0.000	0.077

* Significant at 0.1, ** significant at 0.05, *** significant at 0.01, ^{NS} = not significant

Conclusion

Chronic and transitory food insecurity in Ethiopia in general and the study area in particular are the most frequently observed challenges and the ends of these predicaments need a thorough investigation and immediate interventions. Appreciating the situations, the current government took diverse development measures to alleviate the multifaceted problems faced the rural poor households. With the aim to

reduce poverty and food insecurity, governmental and NGOs had implemented interrelated programs such as voluntary resettlement, productive safety nets and other food security programs. The study revealed that these programs were suffered from serious limitations during planning and implementation. Among these, voluntary resettlement program which had been taken by different government systems in Ethiopia is the most blamed by the

sampled households. From the discussion it was learnt that targeting beneficiaries were full of corruption and there is inclusion and exclusion errors. The majority of the respondents (85%) reported that the PSNP beneficiaries in their locality have to be selected by the community because the community knows the poor more than any of other officials. The survey and the in-depth interview results pointed that the beneficiary households are not able to graduate for the coming three years. The present study strongly believes that poor targeting results dependence syndrome, uneconomical of scarce resources and impediment of household graduation from the safety nets. The regression results revealed that households total income, livestock owned, total crop production, kilocalorie intake and geographical location were significant variables used to predict households' graduation from social protection program. Therefore, to graduate the beneficiaries to the given time scale; households should be assisted to enhance their source of income through other food security programs. This leads to take selective interventions in improving infrastructure, extension services and credit availability to sustain household level food security which can be taken as a base for graduation.

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