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An impact evaluation of Ethiopia's Food Security Program

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**(drawing on work undertaken in
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The Context of the Food Security Program

- Historically, Ethiopia has been one of the largest recipients of emergency food aid in Africa for the past decade:
 - Emergency appeals approach has been costly: avg cost of \$265 mn from 1997-2002, reaching > 5 mn people per year
 - Emergency appeals have had limited effectiveness at protecting productive assets and mitigating drought shocks
- In 2005, the Government of Ethiopia revised its strategy of distributing food aid
 - Emergency appeals replaced with a standing safety net in areas suffering from chronic food insecurity
 - Focus of new program was to provide more reliable and timely support to chronically food insecure households
 - Increased funding for complementary programs to foster graduation from the safety net
- Program is supported by a number of donors including the World Bank, DfID, USAID, WFP, CIDA, Irish Aid, and the EU



The Food Security Program: Core components

- Major components of the Food Security Program (FSP)
 1. Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP)
 - Labor intensive public works
 - Use safety net to build productive community assets
 - Transfer payments in **cash** rather than **food** in some areas to improve market development through safety net
 - Direct Support (DS): unconditional transfers to labor-scare households including elderly and disabled
 2. Other Food Security Programs (OFSP)
 - Other components: subsidized fertilizer, subsidized credit, other inputs or assets

Purpose of the impact evaluation

- General:
 - Measure the impact that the FSP has on the well-being of the chronically food insecure population;
 - Improve understanding of how well the program is being implemented:
 - Targeting
 - What do beneficiaries actually receive? When do they receive it?
 - What public works are of actual use to beneficiaries?
 - What are beneficiaries' perceptions of how well the program works?
 - Investigate the complementary roles played by the PSNP and the OFSP in achieving positive outcomes for the food insecure
- Use the Food Security Bureau's M & E log frame to guide the choice of process and outcome indicators to be assessed

Evaluation Design: Methods

- An ideal evaluation design require “before/after” , “with/without” data based on random assignment
- In the case of the PSNP:
 - Program has been purposively placed
 - Program has been operating for at least one year when final agreement was obtained on an evaluation
- Consequently, evaluation design used the following:
 - Interview both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries within the same locality (which gives “with/without”)
 - Insert retrospective questions on past asset levels; crop choice; non-ag activity; assets (including livestock); past levels of food insecurity (which gives “before/after”)

Evaluation Design: Methods, cont'd

- Use a quasi-experimental approach to identification of FSP impact on household food security and welfare,
 - Specifically, use the difference-in-differences matching estimator of Heckman, Ichimura and Todd (1997, 1998)
 - We match using the recall data found in the baseline survey, detailed information on program eligibility and on shocks.
- A further survey is planned for 2008 which will permit the assessment of the longer term impact of the program. So what is being presented here is an *interim* evaluation

The impact evaluation: Findings

- Targeting was good. Beneficiaries:
 - Had less land
 - Fewer non-land assets
 - Had more months of food insecurity
- Assets constructed under the public works component were perceived by beneficiaries to be of value. This was especially true of road construction and rehabilitation, well construction and soil and water conservation
- However
 - There were significant delays in payments made to beneficiaries
 - In many regions covered by the program, overlap between PSNP and OFSP has been limited

Findings, cont'd

- Program participation can be defined in terms of:
 - Receipt of any money for undertaking public works
 - Receiving at least half of eligible payment for public works
 - Receiving both PSNP and OFSP benefits

- Under the first definition:
 - Virtually no evidence of impact

- Under the third definition, beneficiaries:
 - Are more likely to be food secure, are more likely to borrow for productive purposes, use improved agricultural technologies and operate non-farm own business activities.
 - However, relative to the control group, beneficiaries did not experience faster asset growth.

How has it informed policy and practice?

- Specifics:
 - Much greater attention paid to administrative/logistical aspects of program. Follow-up activities included examining what obstacles prevented funds from being disbursed in a timely manner and what could be done to redress this.
 - Increased efforts are being made to improve integration of PSNP and OFSP and remove obstacles that might prevent beneficiaries from using new agricultural technologies (eg dialogues regarding appropriate size of credit packages)
 - Data collected as part of this evaluation have been used in dialogue between government and donors regarding what criteria should be used as benchmarks for graduation. As this discussion unfolded, there was a switch away from an income based approach to an asset based approach.

How has it informed policy and practice?

- More generally:
 - Increased appreciation, especially within government, to the value of an external evaluation
 - Has helped to create a 'culture of evaluation'

Factors that made it more difficult to undertake an effective, influential evaluation

- Starting evaluation after implementation limits the quality of pre-program information
- A multi-stakeholder format, while having advantages, also has costs:
 - Lots of transactions costs associated with communications
 - Attempts by some stakeholders to do “end-runs” around established channels of communication
 - Wide variations in technical expertise makes effective communication tricky
- Relations between government and donors sometimes fraught (in part because of differing interpretations of ‘partnership’ and ‘ownership’ and also because other policy issues ‘spilled over’ to evaluation)

Factors that made it easier to undertake an effective, influential evaluation

- Timing: An interim evaluation provides information that can inform “mid-program” changes to implementation ‘before its too late’
- High level of commitment to the program on the part of both government and donors meant that there was an “audience” for these results
- Commitment on the part of the evaluation team to the principal of “no surprises”.
 - Ongoing communication with government and donors
 - Series of bilateral and “multi-stakeholder” meetings
 - In-country team member
- The key here was the importance of creating trust and open lines of communication

Positive Factors, cont'd

- A lot of attention was paid to the “process of evaluation”. For example:
 - Close interaction with the Food Security Bureau, Central Statistics Authority and donors on scope of evaluation, sample design and questionnaire
 - Close collaboration with CSA on details of sampling, detailed questionnaire development and implementation
 - The key here was to enable all stakeholders to have input into the development of the evaluation design – and so therefore to increase buy-in and acceptability of the results – without compromising the integrity of the evaluation design or the independence of the evaluators

