Politics of Social Protection: The Case of Graduation Programming from Productive Safety Net Programme in Tigray Region, Ethiopia

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Melete Gebregiorgis Tekle

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Members of the Examining Committee:

Dr. Andrew Fischer

Dr. John Cameron

The Hague, the Netherlands
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Inquiries:

International Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

t: +31 70 426 0460
e: info@iss.nl
w: www.iss.nl
fb: http://www.facebook.com/iss.nl
twitter: @issnl

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

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List of Acronyms

BoFED	Bureau of Finance and Economic Development
BRAC	Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee
CCI	Community Complementary Investment
CFPR-TUP	Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction-Targeting the Ultra Poor
CFSTF	Community Food Security Task Force
CRPC	Chronic Poverty Research Centre
DA	Development Agent
DCT	Donor Coordination Team
DPs	Development Partners
DRMFSS	Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FFW	Food for Work
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHH	Female Headed Household
FSCD	Food Security Coordination Directorate
FSP	Food Security Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGN	Graduation Guidance Note
GPS	Graduation Prediction System
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
HABP	Household Asset Building Programme
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
JRIS	Joint Review, Implementation and Supervision
KAC	Kebele Appeals Committee
KFSTF	Kebele Food Security Task Force
MHH	Male Headed Household
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

NUFFIC	Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation
OFSP	Other Food Security Programmes
PIM	Programme Implementation Manual
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
PWs	Public Works
RC	Regional Council
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
RFSTF	Regional Food Security Task Force
RRT	Rapid Response Team
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
VUP	Vision 20 Umurenge Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WC	Woreda Council
WFSTF	Woreda Food Security Task Force

Glossary of Local terms

Woreda: an administrative division managed by a local government, equivalent to a district with an average population of 100,000. A Woreda comprises of a number of kebeles or Peasant/neighborhood Associations.

Kebele: part of a woreda with an average 500 household equivalent to a Peasant or neighborhood Association

Limat Gujile: Farmers' development group comprising of 25 to 30 household Heads

Gemgam: self-criticism and evaluation from others in meetings

Medeb: An assignment usually performed on a campaign basis as a result of its seasonality and importance

Abstract

The study is aimed at exploring the main actors and their motives in promoting ambitious graduation plans from Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia. The results show that the main actor behind promoting graduation is the government through its agencies and institutions with limited involvement from Development Partners. The main driving force behind the high interest to pursue graduation is the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) that aims to graduate all Public Works beneficiaries by 2014 with aspiration to enable the country to be self-sufficient and avoid food-aid dependency. This increased political commitment to promote graduation in Tigray region. Though graduation is justified technically, the study found that political considerations outweigh technical food security and social protection decision making which might compromise the livelihood of chronically food insecure households.

The current politicised graduation system increases the possibility of graduating households slide back to chronic or transitory food insecurity due to the vulnerable nature of rural livelihoods as a result of natural shocks and people's multiple deprivations. Although PSNP is considered as one of the social protection initiatives in developing countries that represent 'revolution from the South' believed to be basis for broadening and institutionalizing social protection provisioning; the study argues that the current graduation system prevents institutionalization of social protection in Ethiopia which might lead to proliferation of short term targeted interventions or emergency relief systems that do not address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability of the rural poor.

Relevance to Development Studies

Addressing poverty resulted from political, social and economic deprivations and vulnerabilities is one of the main focuses of Development Studies. Social protection as one of the key development policy responses to tackle chronic poverty and vulnerability in developing countries have been gaining attention among governments, development researchers and international agencies. The design, implementation and sustainability of social protection initiatives depend on multiple actors and their linkages particularly in countries that implement social protection through external assistance. The study aims to contribute to the existing politics of social protection literature by focusing on the graduation programming in Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia.

Keywords

Social protection, graduation, Productive Safety Net Programme

Chapter One
Introduction

Poverty reduction continues to be one of the pressing agendas among governments and international agencies in response to chronic poverty and vulnerability. Although social protection has a long history globally, integrated social protection initiatives in developing countries have emerged in recent decades as key policy response in order to tackle poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity. These initiatives are aimed at protecting basic levels of consumption, enhancing household incomes, building human capital through creating access to health, nutrition and education services, and improving agricultural productivity through creation of productive community assets. Some of the main factors for the rise of social protection in developing countries include high inequality and poverty as a result of negative impacts of Structural Adjustment Programmes, financial and economic crisis, widespread of HIV/AIDS pandemic and persistent food insecurity.

Though social protection in developing countries take different forms, their common characteristic is their focus on addressing poverty and their role in contributing towards developmental objectives. In the 1990s social protection in developing countries has gone through a significant transformation termed by scholars as a 'Revolution from the South'. This transformation is due to the shift in thinking about the causes of poverty from personal failings of the poor to their vulnerability resulted from economic, social and natural hazards which constrain them from taking advantage of economic opportunity. Without social protection these hazards deteriorate the poor's livelihoods and can encourage risk-averse nature of the poor which will further affect their future well-being. Moreover, current social protection in developing countries has a more 'productivist' tendency in addition to protecting livelihoods with an objective of playing developmental role (Barrientos 2011, Hanlon et al. 2010, Barrientos and Hulme 2008).

Most of the social protection in developing countries focus on varied forms of social assistance including unconditional cash transfers targeted at the poor or through categorical targeting, cash or food transfers conditional on supply of labour for community public works projects and conditional cash transfers aimed at building human capital through school attendance and health care check-ups. Some of these programmes include cash transfer programmes in Latin American countries, India's Employment Guarantee scheme and South Africa's Unconditional Child Support Grant (Barrientos 2011). Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme, the case study, is the second biggest social protection scheme in Africa introduced in 2005 as an alternative to emergency food aid and rapidly scaled up to reach more than 7 million beneficiaries (Hanlon et al. 2010, FSCD 2013b). According to Slater and McCord 2013), PSNP's unique nature in its design and implementation makes it a 'flagship' to Africa's social protection.

PSNP has preventive, protective and promotive objectives through provision of predictable cash or food transfers to serve consumption purposes and prevent household asset depletion. Its community Public works component enhances agricultural productivity through environmental rehabilitation and

improves household income through its complementary Household Asset Building Programme that provides financial and extension services. PSNP provides conditional transfers to labour abundant chronically food insecure households for their participation in Public Works (PWs) that can account up to 80% of the total beneficiaries and unconditional transfer to labour scarce households through its Direct Support (DS) component covering the remaining 20% of the programme. Moreover, it reaches transitory food insecure households through its contingency and risk financing budget based on annual emergency assessment (MoARD 2009, World Bank 2011). These characteristics enabled PSNP to be considered as a transformative scheme and a lesson for other African countries' social protection programmes that face difficulty to establish similar momentum due to resource, administrative, political and other related constraints (van Uffelen 2013, Slater and McCord 2013). As a result, PSNP has become one of the well renowned social protection initiatives in the world.

For instance, European Union's 2010 report on development states that PSNP is a good example for transforming safety net to social assistance initiative with a positive impact on poverty reduction, asset prevention and accumulation while enhancing social inclusion through targeting some of the marginal groups such as orphans through its direct support component. The report adds PSNP can be replicated in other Sub-Sahara African countries by focusing on most food insecure regions and taking local contexts into consideration. (van Uffelen 2013) also indicated that through transforming long practiced relief oriented emergency system; PSNP characterizes a paradigm shift towards development oriented multi-year predictable safety nets. The programme's unique feature is also attributed to the government's ability to maintain its ownership and implementing PSNP as a national agenda despite its initiation which was largely donor-driven shaped by international trends in social protection (World Bank 2011). As a result, the programme is different from many African social protection schemes that are implemented on short-term pilot basis heavily influenced by donor's agenda (Devereux and White 2010) that often favour endless pilots or extreme complexity for their accounting purposes without long-term commitment (Hanlon et al. 2010).

Regardless of its local and global celebration, PSNP is subject to social protection debates similar to the other social protection initiatives in developing countries considered as a 'revolution from the South'. Most of these social protection schemes in developing are targeted transfers that employ various targeting mechanisms which are prone to a varied level of inclusion and exclusion errors. The targeting mechanisms and provision of grants vary across countries with different level of complexity. For instance, Child Support Grant in South Africa has a complicated means testing mechanism (ibid.). PSNP is criticised for its focus on the working poor who can provide labour and have the potential to be self-sufficient, its high exclusion error, its seasonality which doesn't its seasonality and small amount of transfers prevents beneficiaries from accessing guaranteed adequate income (Devereux and Teshome 2013, Hanlon et al. 2010, Devereux et al 2006).

The grant provision is complicated for *Oportunidades* where women have to make sure that their families attend health services, school attendance of 85% and participation of women in various community activities such as cleaning of schools and streets (Hanlon et al. 2010). According to Molyneux (2007), the

programme overburdens women and compromises their possibility to escape poverty due to multiple conditionality that deters them from pursuing activities that can improve their livelihoods. In general, these social protection interventions have shown improvements in income, schooling, and health services and so on. However, the extent to which they can address chronic poverty is unclear (Barrientos et al. 2005).

PSNP's targeting error mentioned above is not limited to the initial beneficiary selection but also during the selection of food-sufficient beneficiary households who are expected to leave the programme through a process called graduation. Graduation is a key goal of PSNP and refers to an exit process whereby beneficiaries leave the programme once they are able to be food-sufficient. However, the issue of graduation has been controversial among key stakeholders mainly donors falling into two sides. Members of the donor groups who were against graduation argued that PSNP should protect livelihoods while others that shared the government's stand believed that the program is a means which assists food insecure people to graduate out of food security programme. Following agreement among the stakeholders it was operationalized in 2008 through selection of graduates based on regionally determined asset based benchmarks (Sandler et al. 2010).

However, the process of graduation has many practical and conceptual challenges. Some of the challenges are inappropriateness of asset based benchmarks to link with evident improvement in food security status, low and sporadic benchmark setting process, lack of adequate financial capacity for building household assets and complex graduate selection (ibid.) which makes the process prone to inclusion and exclusion errors. Despite these and other challenges that prevent sustainable graduation, ambitious graduation plans have been promoted by PSNP decision makers with the objective of graduating the PWs caseload by the end of 2014 and graduation continues to be the major objective of PSNP.

The ambitious plan is problematic considering the target population that are chronically food insecure and chronically poor households who face multiple vulnerabilities due to lack of employment opportunities, land shortage and dependency on small-scale rain fed agriculture which is prone to high variability and recurrent droughts. Why is then ambitious graduation plans promoted, who are the main actors influencing the target setting process and what is its implication for institutionalization of social protection in Ethiopia. The study also raises a broader question about how our understanding of the politicised process of social protection graduation in Ethiopia, here examined through the PSNP, informs a more general understanding of claims that such programmes represent a 'revolution from the South' and as basis for broadening and strengthening of social protection.

The study finds that the government is the main actor promoting ambitious graduation plans in order to achieve the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), a five year strategic plan deemed to be unique as a result of high popular participation in the design process and its potential to pave the road towards gradual transformation to industrialization. The GTP indicates relieving Ethiopia from food aid dependency as one of its aspirations to be achieved through integrated Rural and Agricultural Development initiatives, large scale infrastructure development and other sectoral interventions (MoFED 2010). This has increased the political commitment to graduate all PSNP Public

Works beneficiaries by 2014. The political commitment stems from the government's interest to enable Ethiopia to be food self-sufficient and reverse the country's negative image created due to long-term dependency on food aid; and pronounce the government's success in poverty reduction. Though PSNP graduation process is technically justified through household asset assessment, the study found that political considerations outweigh technical decision making in the target setting process which might compromise the well-being of the chronically food insecure households. This increases the possibility of graduating households slide back to chronic or transitory food insecurity and might undermine sustainability of the positive improvements witnessed through implementing PSNP.

PSNP is one of the social protection schemes in developing countries regarded as a 'revolution from the South' among social protection scholars and believed to be a base to broaden and strengthen longer-term sustainable social protection provisioning. The programme is considered unique due to its rapid scale up to reach the poorest and vulnerable, its strong national ownership and its 'productivist' tendency in addition to protecting and preventing livelihoods. The paper, however, argues that the current politicised graduation system prevents institutionalization of social protection as a longer and broader term initiative which might lead to proliferation of short term targeted interventions or emergency relief systems that do not address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability of the rural poor.

In order to explore the graduation process, the research uses primary and secondary data sources from Federal to community level PSNP structures including graduates by employing bottom up approach of generating evidence. The approach was chosen to gain better understanding about the main challenges in the planning and implementation of graduation at lower levels which was found to be valuable input for the interviews at higher levels of implementation. Tigray region was selected for the field research due to its increased current interest in promoting large scale graduation when compared to previous years. Within the region Ganta'Afeshum woreda, Eastern zone was selected for its dramatic rise in the number of graduates that. The woreda was able to graduate 1,303 households between 2010 and 2012 while 2013 graduation was 4,095 households.

Sasun Berehawariat kebele, on the other hand, was randomly selected out of the kebeles that have shown good performance in achieving graduation targets set for 2013. Selection of well performing kebele was also believed to be better approach by the researcher to gain better access to reliable information at woreda level due to the sensitive nature of PSNP graduation. Accordingly, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with graduates, one FGD with members of the Kebele Food Security Task Force and one individual interview with kebele Development Agent were carried out at community level.

The FGDs with graduates took place in a health centre and church in order to include participants from different parts of the kebele. Since the timing was peak agricultural season, only five graduates participated in each FGD though adequate information was gathered about the challenges and graduation process at community level. Among the graduates there were farmers who have better livelihoods and are satisfied with their graduation. However, few of the graduates were discontent about graduating with genuine concern on their food security status without PSNP transfers. One of the participants was dis-

satisfied about her graduation not because of inability to maintain her livelihood without PSNP transfer but due to inconsistency of graduate selection process in which she claimed that there are still other households who are in the programme though they have better livelihoods than her. In order to minimize biased information and avoid expectation from the FGD participants, the graduates were informed that the research is an academic exercise with no affiliation to the government or development agency. Moreover, previous experiences with community based research have helped to obtain relatively genuine information.

At woreda level three individual interviews were carried out with Food Security and woreda administration personnel that enabled to gain better understanding from experts and people at leadership position. At zonal level two Food Security Coordinators were involved in an interview and regionally four interviews were carried out with experts and staff at leadership position. Moreover, Relief Society Tigray (REST) staff was also interviewed as the organization is the biggest NGO that works in Tigray and implements PSNP in few woredas funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Earlier working relationship with Food Security personnel at regional level as a researcher in PSNP and other rural development interventions coupled with knowledge of the region has been vital for open discussion during the field work and obtaining reliable information despite the politically sensitive nature of PSNP graduation.

Federal level interviews were carried out with three Food Security Coordination Directorate personnel and two members of the Donor Coordination Team (DCT). Detailed job description of interviewed personnel is not provided for anonymity purposes. In general three FGDs, 13 individual interviews and one group interview with two participants were carried out during the research process. Involving most of the implementers at the different ladders of implementation structure allowed better learning about the understanding, translation and repercussions of the graduation target setting process and the motives behind promotion of PSNP graduation. Apart from primary sources secondary documents are also used to obtain evidence on graduation at Federal, regional, woreda and kebele levels. Studies made by consultants and scholars are also employed as important sources for triangulation and better understanding of social protection in Ethiopia and other countries. The evidence is analysed by identifying the role of various actors in the graduation process and the target setting process. It employs politics of social protection framework developed by Hickey (2008) on the multiple actors and processes that shape social protection design, implementation and sustainability in Africa by focusing mainly on national politics and global dimensions.

The paper is organized in five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction by focusing on the research problem and methodology. Chapter two lays out the conceptual framework used as a basis for analysing the study and literature review on social protection. Chapter three provides a general overview of PSNP and its graduation programming in Ethiopia. Major findings and discussions are presented in chapter four. Conclusion of the study findings are addressed in chapter five.

Chapter 2 Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework: Politics of Social Protection

Politics understood as the practice of power, is central to social protection programming and policy making as social protection initiatives are concerned with re/distribution of resources (Chopra and te Lintelo 2011). The central role of politics in social protection was addressed in Karl Polayani's study of the Poor Laws in the nineteenth century showing the role of the parliamentary process in shaping public opinion and overturned the Speenhamland policies that led to transformation in welfare policy in the UK (Block and Somers 2003). According to Hickey (2008), however the role of politics in shaping social protection in Sub Saharan African Countries have been overlooked and more attention was given to fiscal and administrative capacity of implementing the interventions.

Politics of social protection is multi-dimensional which involves interaction among multiple of actors and processes that shape the design, implementation and sustainability of the initiatives (Niño-Zarazúa et al. 2012). Hickey (2008) identified four aspects of politics in Africa that shapes social protection programming and their multi-directional linkages. These are political institutions; political actors and agencies; socio-economic forces and the global dimension. Institutional features include the embedded 'rules of the game' in the society that can be either formal political institutions such as rules of election and the way of doing things that are established in policy legacies or informal institutions such as patron-client relationships. Although elections are often thought to be highly related to social protection spending, the fact that successive elections have been held in most sub-Saharan African countries before institutionalizing social protection suggests that analysis of politics should focus on political institutions and political discourses (Niño-Zarazúa et al. 2012).

Actors comprise individuals and agencies operationalize the rules of the game in ways that shape distribution of resources and power such as political elites, political parties and governmental agencies. Though decisions about the type and extent of social protection are informed by technocratic justifications, it is fundamentally political and politicians play a key role in legitimizing the policy discourse. Socioeconomic forces are public attitudes, levels of citizen voice, urbanization levels, economic inequality and social fragmentation (Hickey 2008, Sheperd et al. 2005). These forces are deemed influential in shaping policies on the basis of focus of social protection provisioning in urban areas that are mostly funded by local resources. Since PSNP is not funded by tax payers' resource and fully funded by external actors socio-economic factors such as public attitude might be insignificant in shaping graduation programming.

The global forces are international donors and global trends in development models that shape the provisioning of social protection. The role of donors is significant for highly indebted poor countries where donor agencies in-

fluence domestic policies as part of the preconditions for debt reduction and further assistance. There have been debates if social protection in Africa responds to domestic demand or if it is a donor driven trend. However, the 2006 African Union's 'Livingstone Call for Action' aspires for every African country to have social transfer programs and the adoption of the African Union Social Policy Framework in 2009 indicates strong support from national governments towards adoption of social protection (Hanlon et al. 2010, Niño-Zarazúa et al. 2012, Hickey 2008, Pankhurst and Rahmato 2013). The dominance of international actors in designing, financing and sometimes implementing social protection has been shaping the scale, location and duration of the interventions in Africa. However, in some cases national governments hold strong position to drive social protection independently even with donor funding (Devereux and White 2010).

An analysis of the politics of social protection policies and programmes is one of the key areas that enable to get insight on the transformation potential of those policies and understand the importance of various actors and their interaction in shaping policies (Chopra and te Lintelo 2011). By using the above as a basis for analysis, the research investigates the role of various actors in Productive Safety Net Programme graduation process in general and target setting in particular by focusing on national politics and international trends. Accordingly the paper finds that the government is the main driving actor in driving the graduation agenda with limited involvement from development partners.

2.2 Social Protection as a 'Revolution from the South'

Social protection is a component of Social Policy aimed at improving livelihoods through a variety of inter-related policies and interventions with protective, preventive, promotive and transformative objectives. Although its definition differs across various agencies and the objectives of specific schemes, social protection generally refers to 'all interventions and policies-from public, private and voluntary organisations and social networks-to support communities, households and individuals in their efforts to prevent, manage and overcome vulnerability' (CPRC 2008:1). In a narrow view social protection is a means of providing assistance to individuals and households in a short term basis until they are able to cope with shocks and improve their livelihoods. In its broader view it is a means of transforming socio-economic relationships by addressing structural causes of poverty and inequality (Barrientos et al. 2005).

Social protection constitutes social insurance, social assistance and standards and regulations. Social insurance refers to contributory and non-contributory schemes that enable financial assistance during specified contingencies such as unemployment, old age, disability and so on. Social assistance also termed as social transfers are policies and interventions that address poverty and vulnerability through in cash or in kind transfers to poor households. These transfers can be unconditional as in most old age, disability or child grants or conditional on a specific requirement such as sending children to school, regular attendance of health centres and contributing to community public works activities. Standards and regulations are regulatory measures to ensure equity in access to livelihood opportunities such as labour market regu-

lations and standards termed as social security (Sheperd et al. 2005 and CPRC 2007).

Social protection as a solution to poverty and vulnerability in developing countries has received pronounced attention from international agencies and governments in the last two decades. There are a number of factors that led to adoption of social protection as a key component of development policy in the developing world. The negative impacts of the structural adjustment policies and their failure to address poverty has led to the understanding that a globalized economy can exacerbate vulnerabilities and affect well-being of citizens. The recent adoption of Millennium Development Goals has also directed attention towards reduction of poverty and vulnerability. In Africa additional vulnerabilities such as HIV/AIDS pandemic and food insecurity as a result of recurrent drought characterise the factors for the rise of social protection in the continent (Barrientos & Hulme 2009, Barrientos 2011 and Devereux & White 2010).

Social protection in the form of social transfers introduced in the last decade benefits more than 150 million poor households or about half a billion individuals in developing countries. The main features of social protection in developing countries is their focus on poverty reduction as a result of recognition of multidimensionality of poverty and vulnerability, provision of income transfers in combination with access to basic services or productive employment and its focus on asset building. This shows that social protection in developing countries has gone through a paradigm shift with a strong 'productivist' view aimed at playing a developmental role in addition to protecting people's livelihoods. Hence the recent development in social protection in developing countries is considered by scholars as 'revolution from the South' (Hanlon et al. 2010, Barrientos and Hulme 2009, Barrientos 2011).

Some of the highly innovative and domestically designed social protection initiatives are Latin America's conditional cash transfers implemented at scale with substantial impact on poverty and vulnerability mainly through improvement of health, nutrition, consumption levels and schooling. For instance, Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* reaching 12 million households by 2010 or about 20% of all households in the country is considered an innovative response to multidimensional poverty which was implemented by Municipality of Campinas in mid 1990s and later expanded to the rest of the country. Moreover, Mexico's *Oportunidades* reaches 40% of households in rural areas and selects the poorest households. By reaching 5% households below food poverty line *Chile Solidario* characterizes an innovative anti-poverty program inspired by capabilities approach (Barrientos 2011, Barrientos and Hulme 2009).

India, South Africa and Ethiopia have also introduced large scale social protection interventions reaching the poor and vulnerable members of their population. India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is labour intensive social assistance programme which is aimed at guaranteeing basic income security to the rural poor and benefitted 48 million households by 2008. South Africa's Child Support Grant is the largest unconditional social protection scheme in Africa initiated in 1998 and scaled up to 8 million beneficiaries in 2009. The second largest is Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme introduced in 2005 as a response to chronic food insecurity and transformed the earlier institutionalized emergency food aid appeal system to a predictable and productive social protection scheme by rapidly scaling up to

reach more than 7 million people in rural Ethiopia (Barrientos 2011, Barrientos and Hulme 2009, Hanlon et al., Ufflen 2013). These and other large-scale social protection schemes in developing countries are well pronounced initiatives in social protection literature that represent a paradigm shift towards addressing poverty and vulnerability.

2.2 Debates in Social Protection

There are a number of debates in social protection in particular and social policy in general on the modality of provisioning. Some of the debates include the provisioning coverage either through targeting or universalistic principles, the choices between conditional or unconditional transfers and the duration of coverage either time specific short-term or long term sustainable provisions (Deveraux and Sabates-Wheeler 2005). The social protection schemes discussed in the previous section are criticised based on one or more of the social protection debates despite their celebration as 'revolution from the South' by social protection scholars. Since the paper mainly deals with the graduation target setting process in PSNP, this section focuses on the targeting versus universalism debates in social protection/social policy.

Universalism is a modality of provision where social benefits are accessible for everyone despite their socio-economic status while in targeting benefits are directed towards specific category of beneficiaries. The argument for targeted transfer is mainly based on efficiency and equity arguing that if available resources are targeted at the 'deserving poor', leakage to the non-poor is avoided and the poor will disproportionately benefit. However, targeting is costly as it requires beneficiary selection through means testing which is more problematic in poor countries where administrative capacity is not strong. In addition, targeting leads to different levels of inclusion and exclusion errors whereby the poor are excluded from getting the provision while the non-poor are erroneously included either as a result of the targeting process or elite capture (Sheperd et al. 2005, Devereux 1999).

Although the challenge is not strong for externally funded schemes, targeted initiatives funded through local resources lead to political costs through lack of support from the non-poor to initiatives that only target the poor (Devereux 1999). According to Mkandawire (2005), targeting usually tends to reinforce social and economic stratification by dividing the middle class from provisions accessed by the poor and argues that despite the masking of debates based on efficiency, the choice between targeting and universalism consists of selection of resource redistribution mechanisms in society and raises a question about polity's values and its responsibilities to all its members hence is fundamentally political economy problem. The political implication of targeting is also indicated by Sen (1985) who stated that beneficiaries of targeted initiatives have weak political voice to influence sustainability of programs and maintain quality service provision hence services that selectively reach the poor tend to be poor services.

Fischer (2012) shows the risk of social and economic stratification and subordination bent of the social protection interventions in developing countries by illustrating current conditional cash transfers. He stated that evaluation of these programmes show their impact on poverty reduction through improved consumption, health care and schooling with less clear longer term im-

pact on employment or development. This could be resulted partially from the poor quality and segregated service delivery system of those social provisions that target the poor. He argues that these targeted social protection provisions tend to undermine long term political economy sustainability and movement towards more universalistic provision of social policy.

The above discussed inherent challenges of the social protection provisions in developing countries in general and the politicised nature of PSNP graduation in particular raise a question about our understanding of the claims that the schemes represent as 'revolution from the South' and are basis for broader social protection provisioning.

Chapter Three Overview of PSNP Graduation in Ethiopia

3.1. Background to PSNP

The majority of Ethiopians live in rural areas depending on small scale rain-fed agriculture for their subsistence. Agriculture sector is the main engine of growth in Ethiopia accounting for 41.6% of its GDP and more than 80% employment (MoFED 2010). Poverty and food insecurity are more prevalent in rural than in urban areas with headcount poverty rate 30.4% in rural areas and 25.7% in urban areas in 2010/11. The food poverty head count index also indicates similar trend amounting to 34.7% and 27.9% in rural and urban areas respectively (MoFED 2013a & 2013b). The main causes of poverty and food insecurity in rural areas include drought, population pressure, land degradation, diminishing land holding, lack of technological innovation in agriculture, limited employment opportunities, lack of asset endowment, health related risks, lack of appropriate policies and strategies in the past few decades and past conflicts (MoARD 2009 and Woldehanna 2004). As a result of complex nature of poverty and food insecurity, the country has faced recurrent droughts and famines for many generations. The first recorded famine dates back to the ninth century (Sen 1981) and Ethiopia faced the most severe starvation in the mid 1980 with an estimated mortality of 1 million people (World Bank 2011).

Despite the long history of famine and food shortages in rural areas, achieving food security became one of the central issues in public policy discourse since mid-1970's when the imperial era was replaced by a military regime, the Derg. The imperial regime failure to respond to the crisis made management of disaster response and food security as a central concern in Ethiopian politics. Some of interventions during the Derg were environmental protection, water management and irrigation projects through short term and long term Food for Work projects (FFW), large scale resettlement and credit provision. However, serious droughts and harvest failures returned in mid 1980s mainly affecting Tigray and Wollo which led to institutionalization of emergency relief aid (Pankhrust and Rahmato 2013, van Uffelen 2013).

After the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power in 1991, a wide range of policy changes took place in economic, political and social spheres. The government developed a National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management that created strong coordination with international development partners. With the objective of building productive assets Employment Generation Scheme was adopted in 1993 aimed at replacing free food aid provisions with food for work. Moreover, National Food Security Strategy was developed in 1996 whereby pilot food security programs were implemented in four regions. Though Ethiopia has been the recipient of an average of 700,000 tons of food aid for over three decades, the food security situation of the people have been deteriorating due to asset depletion as emergency aid has been unpredictable and delayed which forced people to sell their assets to fulfil their needs. Accordingly, an average 4 million people required emergency assistance and declared 'at risk' with the number of food aid beneficiaries varying between 5 to 14 million since 1998 (MoARD 2010, Deve-

reux et al 2006, Uffelen 2013, Kehler 2004, and World Bank 2011, Kassa 2011).

These recurrent calamities were alarming and called for a transformation regarding policies aimed at tackling chronic food insecurity. According to van Uffelen (2013), food crisis in Southern and Eastern Africa led to reconsideration of the humanitarian response to food security in Africa and the 2003 mass starvation in Ethiopia which made 13 million people dependent on emergency food aid for survival became the turning point for designing of long term predictable response to food insecurity. As a result, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi declared food security a top national priority and called for consultation forum with development partners by establishing the New Coalition for Food Security in 2003.

Consultation processes among the government, UN agencies, donors and NGOs through the New Coalition for Food Security technical group has led to development Food Security Strategy. Prior to reaching consensus on the future interventions to design, the type of reform to replace the emergency aid system was highly debated. The government claimed that food insecurity is mainly caused by shortage of land hence argued for reform through large scale resettlement of the chronically food insecure households. On the other hand, development partners were not willing to support resettlement programme and opted for safety net based on the growing international trend and the prior experience of pilot Food Security Programme interventions in Ethiopia. Continuous deliberations led to the design of Food Security Strategy and the government identified Productive Safety Net Programme, Other Food Security Programmes (OFSP) and Resettlement as the three main pillars of the programme to be financed through own resources and support from development partners (World Bank 2011).

Revised in 2009 and subsequently incorporated in the Growth and Transformation Plan as one of the major strategies for Agriculture and Rural Development, the current Food Security Programme has four main pillars aimed at addressing food insecurity and poverty in rural Ethiopia. These are PSNP, Household Asset Building Programme (HABP), Resettlement and Complementary Community Investment (CCI). PSNP is donor-financed programme with the aim 'to assure food consumption and prevent asset depletion for food insecure households in chronically food insecure woredas, while stimulating markets, improving access to services and natural resources, and rehabilitating and enhancing the natural environment' (MoARD 2010:5). HABP, a complementary initiative financed mainly by government with certain support from donors, is aimed at diversifying household investments and building assets through improving access to financial services and markets. Complementary Community Investment is an infrastructure development initiative fully funded by the government with the objective of enhancing the household level investments through access to water resources, irrigation, roads and so on. Resettlement is also fully funded by the government and aimed at resettling households to areas where there is potential for better agricultural productivity (MoARD 2009, Rahmato 2013, World Bank 2011).

During its initial design PSNP has gone through a number of debates and compromises among the government and development agencies about the modality of implementation. Some donors opposed the productive nature of the initiative and supported unconditional transfers while the government

strongly argued for conditional transfers in order to curb potential perverse incentive due to 'free hand outs' and dependence on external assistance. Development partners were also concerned about the implementation capacity of the government and favoured implementing the programme on pilot basis through involvement of NGOs but the government demanded to implement the programme through government structures at its full scale. After continuous negotiations on various aspects of the programme the following basic principles were developed and agreed upon by stakeholders. These principles are i) PSNP transfers should be predictable, reliable and timely, ii) the programme should encourage shift towards cash transfers rather than food transfers, iii) provision of transfers should be conditional for those who can work, iv) the programme requires long-term funding commitment from development partners and v) PSNP is a core government programme not donors' project (World Bank 2011, Devereux and white 2010). The negotiation processes and the agreements reached indicate that though PSNP was initially donor-driven initiative and almost exclusively funded by development partners, the government was able to maintain strong ownership of the programme as a domestic agenda.

At its early implementation in 2005 the programme targeted 4.8 million beneficiaries with increasing number to 7.3 million by the end of its first phase in 2009 (FSCD 2013b). Beneficiaries of the programme receive cash or food transfers for six consecutive months either by participating in community Public Works or as Direct Support beneficiaries without contributing to community projects. The Public works initiatives are aimed at building community assets to boost agricultural productivity and enhance access to basic services through environmental rehabilitation, maintaining roads, building or maintenance of health posts and schools. The Direct Support are those chronically food insecure households unable to contribute to PWs projects as a result of labour shortage in the household such as Female Headed Households, elderly, orphans and people with serious health problems.

The beneficiaries are selected through geographical and individual targeting mechanisms employing administrative and community systems. Chronically food insecure woredas selected for PSNP are those that have been receiving emergency aid for three years in the past ten years prior to the programme's design. Within the woredas chronically food insecure households are those households who have continuous food shortage of 3 months or more and have been receiving food assistance. Moreover, households who recently lost assets and became more vulnerable or those with no alternative means of support were considered as target groups. Community knowledge was also implemented through selecting of beneficiaries by the Community Food Security Task Force which is further verified in community meetings (MoARD 2006, Sharp et al. 2006).

As any targeted social protection programme, PSNP is criticised for its inclusion and exclusion errors during targeting. An assessment made by Sharp et al. (2006) indicated that inclusion error was high during the initial targeting due to lack of adequate skills at lower level structures. Regional interest had also contributed to the inclusion error in Amhara region where better-off households were targeted due to high concern to achieve graduation. The error was minimized during consecutive retargeting processes. On the other hand, there is still very high exclusion rate of chronically poor households due to quotas

provided from regions and woredas resulted from budget limitations. The Programme Implementation Manual indicates by 2009 the rural households living below the food poverty line were 38.5% while PSNP supports only about 10% of the rural population (MoARD 2010). The following table shows the number of regions, woredas and beneficiaries in the programme from 2005 to 2014.

Table 1: PSNP Programme Coverage

Year	Number of Regions	Number of Woredas	Number of beneficiaries (in millions)
2005	6	192	4.83
2006	7	234	7.192
2008	7	274	7.192
2009	8	282	7.355
2010	8	290	7.574
2011	8	305	7.535
2012	8	319	7.642
2013	8	319	6.88
2014	8	319	5.9

Source: FSCD Agricultural Development and Food Security Progress Report 2013b

As can be seen from the above table, the number of woredas in the programme has been increasing due to incorporating of new woredas recently affected by shocks. Currently the programme covers 47% of the total 670 rural woredas in Ethiopia. Out of the 7.6 million beneficiaries in 2012, the programme reached 6.4 million Public Works beneficiaries (85% of the total) and 1.1 million Direct Support beneficiaries (15% of the total) (MoARD 2012). Considering the total population of the 2007 census that estimates 73.7 million people in the country (http://www.csa.gov.et/), PSNP covers about 10.3% of the total population in Ethiopia. The recent reduction in the number of beneficiaries is attributed to beneficiaries' exit through retargeting process to correct inclusion errors or movement of people out of their kebeles but mainly through graduation process which will be discussed in the next section in detail.

Different studies showed that the programme has a positive impact on asset holdings, consumption and incomes. For instance, the 2011 impact assessment indicates that the programme has significant impact on household food security with a national average of 1.05 months improvement lowest registered in Tigray with 0.75 months and highest in Amhara by 1.88 months. In Tigray those households who have been receiving transfers for five years have improved their food security status by 1.64 months. Moreover, the study showed that participation in the programme improved livestock holdings significantly except for Tigray which showed no impact. The improvements in food security and livestock holdings are more evident when beneficiaries get access to financial services through the Household Asset Building Programme (Berhane et al. 2011). Other benefits of the programme include smoothing consumption, protecting distress asset sales, improving productive investment as a result of Public works activities and improved access to public services (Berhane et al. 2011, Devereux et al 2008). However, Rahmato (2013) argues that although the programme has shown pronounced improvements, lack of strong integration between PSNP and other rural development initiatives prevents the programme

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from fully achieving its poverty reduction and livelihood transformation objectives.

3.2. PSNP Graduation Programming

Supporting the poor and vulnerable to be self-sufficient and enabling them to move out of external assistance has received attention in recent social protection programming. The process through which beneficiaries leave the social protection programmes upon reaching a certain threshold is called graduation and defined by Devereux (2010) as 'a process whereby recipients of cash or food transfers move from a position of depending on external assistance to a condition where they no longer need these transfers'. The principle of graduation varies among countries and implementing agencies but it generally refers to an improvement in income or food security status measured in terms of crossing a threshold in terms of income, consumption or asset poverty lines through which beneficiaries are considered as self-sufficient (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux 2011, Slater and McCord 2013). Asset accumulation models that consider assets as key to well-being have shaped social protection programming in the world (Sabates Wheeler and Devereux 2013). Apart from their income earning potential, assets represent wealth and status which can be source of security through creating better access to credit (Hulme and McKay 2008). As a result, some of the social protection schemes that have graduation component consider crossing asset based thresholds as indicator for self-sufficiency.

For instance, Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee's (BRAC) 'Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction-Targeting the Ultra Poor (CFPR-TUP) is a programme launched in 2002 aimed at graduating the ultra-poor through provision of consumption support, saving services, skills training and income generating asset transfers. Though the specific measurement varies across countries and contexts, the general BRAC graduation model criteria comprises having productive assets such as livestock, consumption of two meals per day, having diversified income sources, accessing safe drinking water and sanitary latrines. The programme is considered successful as a result of integrated and well sequenced provision of subsistence allowance that prevents beneficiaries from depleting their asset for consumption purposes and the skills training enable them to be engaged in income generating activities (Hashemi and Umaira 2010, Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux 2011).

Rwanda's Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) is another social protection intervention that employs asset ownership as criteria for graduation. The programme was launched in 2002 with the objective of poverty reduction through employment creation in Public works, relief transfer to direct support beneficiaries and enhancement of income generation through financial services. Targeting for the programme and graduation takes place based on community social mapping exercise that takes place twice a year. Beneficiaries graduate once they move from one wealth group to another based on ownership of asset, nutritious food consumption and access to health and education services. The graduation system is criticised for its tendency for pre-mature graduation due to political pressure to relieve resources for others and interest to show the programme's achievement (Devereux 2010, Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux 2011).

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In Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme graduation takes place when beneficiaries reach an asset threshold as a proxy indicator for food sufficiency. The Programme Implementation Manual (PIM) states that graduation can be realized through access to Other Food Security Programme provisions and broader integrated development interventions in addition to PSNP transfers. Though the idea of graduation was integral part of the PSNP from its design in 2004, clear guidance on its concept and operationalization was developed in 2007 after continuous consultations among Food Security Coordination Directorate and Development Partners. The Graduation Guidance Note (GGN) is the main guide for planning and implementation of graduation which was developed based on benchmark setting study carried out by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) (MoARD 2006, Sandler et al. 2010).

According to the GGN, graduation is a two-tier process that constitutes graduation from PSNP as a first stage and graduation from the Food Security Programme as a second stage. Graduation from PSNP determined by crossing asset benchmarks indicates household food sufficiency and is defined as 'a household has graduated when, in the absence of receiving PSNP transfers, it can meet its food needs for all 12 months and it is able to withstand modest shocks' (MoARD 2010:11). Apart from benchmark based graduation households can leave the programme through self-graduation if they prefer to spend their labour and time on other more rewarding activities. FSP graduation indicates a level of food security defined as 'access by all people at all times to sufficient food for an active and health life' (ibid). The following figure shows the two-stage graduation process.

Figure 1: PSNP and FSP Graduation Process
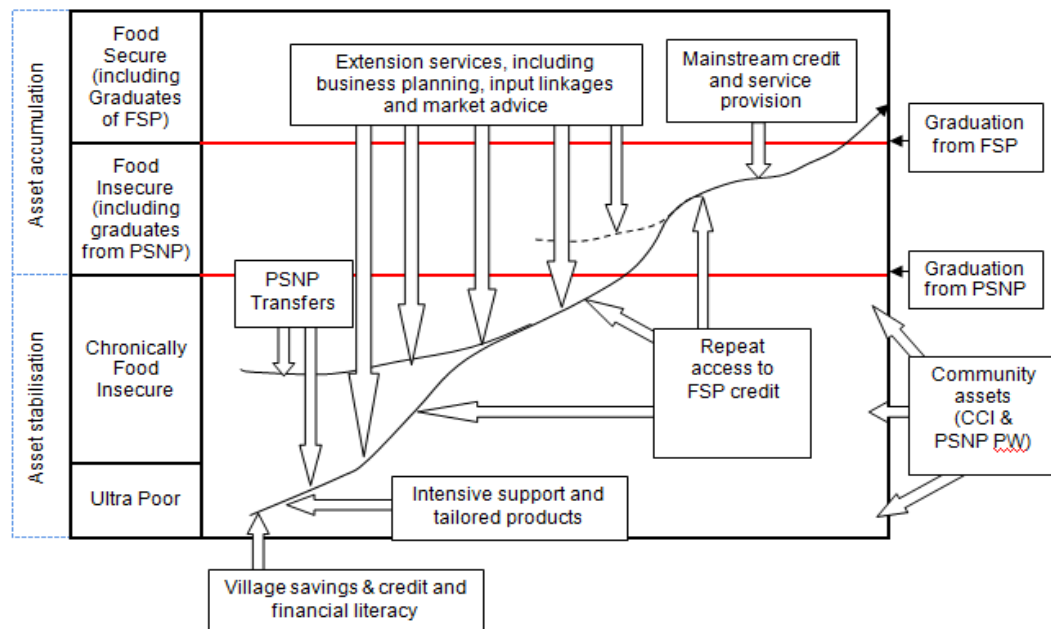
Source: MoARD 2009: 17

As can be seen from the above figure, graduation takes place through integrated initiatives while PSNP transfers enable beneficiaries to smooth their consumption and protect their household assets from distress sale the Public Works projects will contribute to enhance agricultural productivity and access

to public services. PSNP beneficiaries get access to credit and extension services to improve household incomes through Household Asset Building Programme. Although its current focus is in pastoral areas, Complementary Community Investment facilitates graduation through construction of large scale infrastructure such as irrigation facilities. Once households are food-sufficient through the integrated Food Security Programmes, they graduate from PSNP but continue to receive financial services and technical assistance to be able to graduate from the Food Security Programme which indicates a level of achieving food security and ability to withstand shocks. Although graduation from FSP is set in principle, no operationalization has taken place yet.

Asset based benchmarks were chosen based on recommendation from IFPRI's study. The study justified assets as an appropriate measure for food-sufficiency as productive assets such as livestock and tools are means of food production and income generation. Assets are also relatively stable across time, easy to measure and can be sold during shocks to protect food consumption. Accordingly, regions determined their respective benchmarks based on local context and the extent of exclusion error they planned to accommodate as IFPR's study showed various benchmarks with different exclusion errors. The regional benchmarks are Ethiopian Birr (ETB) 4,200 per capita (USD 220) in Amhara, ETB 5,600 per capita (USD300) in Tigray, ETB 19, 187 per household (USD 1,020) in Oromia (currently under revision), and ETB 2,998 per capita (USD 160) in SNNP (MOARD 2007, Sandler et al. 2010, Berhane et al. 2011, Gilligan et al 2006). Thus households are considered food-sufficient when they cross monetized asset benchmark during the time of assessment. Although the regional benchmark differences are justified by differences in crop productivity and the rate of exclusion errors in the regions (Gilligan et al. 2006), interview result with Federal food security expert indicate that the differences indicate sporadic nature of the benchmark setting that do not consider the local context across regions.

3.3. PSNP Graduation in Practice

Graduation was put to practice in 2008 by using regional specific benchmarks for selection of graduates. In SNNP and Oromia graduation targets are set at woreda level while Tigray and Amhara set their targets at regional level by using woreda household asset assessment as a base (Sandler et al. 2010). The following table total number of households graduated from PSNP disaggregated by region between 2008 and 2013.

Table 2: Number of Graduated households by region and year

Region	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
SNNPR	3,805	4,635	4,625	28,903	67,021	73676	182,665
Amhara	-	57,333	4,306	123,836	112,398	31430	205,467
Tigray	-	7,159	16,476	33,746	42,012	90215	189,608
Oromiya	2,033	25,543	279	748	13,596	8190	50,389
Dire Dawa	-	-	602	155	-	220	977
Harari	-	-	-	-	601	996	1,597
Total	5,838	94,670	26,288	187,388	235,628	205727	754,539

Source: FSCD Agricultural Development and Food Security Progress Report 2013b

As indicated in the above table by the end of the first phase in 2009 only 94,670 households graduated from the programme and the total graduation so far is 754,539 households (about 2.2 million individuals) accounting to approximately 27% of the total programme beneficiaries at the beginning of the second phase in 2010. Highest graduation took place in Amhara where 205, 467 households graduated out of 1.8 million beneficiaries while the lowest is in Oromia with a graduation of 50, 389 households out of 1.3 million beneficiaries by 2013. Graduation in Tigray and SNNPR are almost similar as Tigray has graduated 189, 608 households out of 1.23 million beneficiaries SNNPR gradutd 182, 665 households out of 1.26 million beneficiaries by 2013. According to the FSP document of 2009 the low performance during PSNP's first phase is attributed to lack of proper reporting and documentation or lack of clarity on the benchmarks for graduation. Challenges in the implementation of the other components of the Food Security Programme and high level of poverty were also identified as the major challenges that deterred large scale graduation (MoARD 2009 and 2010). This indicates that the ambition to undertake large scale graduation doesn't consider the local context of rural areas and prevailing administrative and fiscal capacity of the programmes.

In order to facilitate graduation the Food Security Programme was revised in 2009 by replacing Other Food Security Programme by Household Asset Building Programme and Complementary Community Investment that strengthened the credit provision and extension services; and creating an op-

portunity for building capital intensive infrastructures. These new components are believed to support PSNP beneficiaries to build asset hence be food-sufficient and graduate from PSNP. During the new phase of FSP and PSNP an agreement was reached by the government and Development Partners on a safeguard mechanism that enables households selected for graduation to stay in the programme for one year that allows them to maintain their livelihood if shocks occur (ibid).

The variation in the graduation among regions has resulted from occurrence of drought and capacity gaps in the implementation of graduation, varying commitment from implementers and shortage of financial resources for credit. In the regions where targets are set at regional level, regional interests also played a role in the planning and implementation of graduation. For example, in Amhara there was an interest to graduate all Public Works beneficiaries by 2013 and ambitious graduation plans were promoted in earlier years (Sandler et al. 2010). Recently the annual graduation target has been reduced and 50% cumulative graduation was planned for 2013 which was justified by regional decision makers as a result of drought and fiscal constraints to fully provide financial services from the Household Asset Building Programme (FSCD 2013c). In Tigray on the other hand the implementers were planning low targets during the earlier years of implementation with a justification that the region is drought prone and there is high level of poverty (Sandler et al. 2010) but currently promoted to enable all Public Works beneficiaries by 2014. In Oromia lack of finance for HABP is identified as a major challenge for the limited graduation (FSCD 2013a).

Studies indicate that although there are positive graduation stories where households are able to be self-sufficient and lead resilient livelihoods without PSNP transfers, the process has faced both conceptual challenges. Some of the challenges include inadequacy of asset based benchmarks to link with improvement in food security or livelihood status and resilience of graduates towards future shocks. Lack of integration among PSNP and other Food Security and rural development interventions, randomness of regional benchmarks, low benchmark setting that do not address inflation, complex graduate selection process and inadequate financial and implementation capacity of Household Asset Building Programme to enhance asset creation were also identified as major challenges (Sandler et al. 2010, Rahmato 2013, Slater and McCord 2013). These challenges indicate that promoting large scale graduation from PSNP is problematic as a result of multiple vulnerabilities of the chronically food insecure households in Ethiopia. Devereux (2013) argues that the asset based graduation practice indicates that there is lack of proper understanding about the livelihood of rural Africa whereby seasonality has great effect on the poverty and food security level of households. He also stated that graduation puts unrealistic expectation and assumptions on the role of Public Works in solving structural poverty and insecurity.

Chapter 4 PSNP Graduation: Actors and Target Setting Process

4.1 The Role of Actors in the Graduation Process

Social protection is a multi-faceted initiative undertaken with involvement of various stakeholders that determine its design and implementation features. PSNP designing, implementation and monitoring is the responsibility of various Food Security line ministries, government agencies, Development Partners (DPs), the community and other actors. The Programme Implementation Manual (MoARD 2010) specifies the institutional and management arrangements at all levels while the Graduation Guidance Note (MoARD 2007) provides a specific guide on the role of different actors in the graduation process. The key actors and their specific role in the graduation process are discussed as follows.

4.1.1. Federal Level

PSNP is implemented within the government structure whereby Ministry of Finance and Economic Development is responsible for overall financial management and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) oversees the coordination and management of the programme. The Food Security Coordination Directorate (FSCD) that is accountable to the Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector (DRMFSS) within the MoA is responsible for the general day-to-day management and coordination of PSNP and other components of the FSP through different technical and management committees (MoARD 2010). According to the Federal and regional level interview results, the FSCD provides guidance materials, technical support for the overall design and implementation of the graduation programming. FSCD with involvement of Development Partners has a regular monitoring and feedback mechanism through the Rapid Response Team (RRT) that provides continuous support during the planning and implementation of PSNP including graduation.

FSCD also undertakes a consultation process with implementers at various levels and Development Partners in a bi-annual Joint Review and Implementation Support Mission (JRIS) whereby graduation is one of the focus areas. In addition to their involvement in JRIS and RRTs, Development Partners play a role in the graduation process through their involvement in technical and management committees. Donor Working Group (DWG) and Donor Coordination Team (DCT) are also committees within the PSNP structure responsible for ensuring donor harmonization in the planning and implementation of PSNP (ibid). Sandler et al (2010) stated that DPs have provided their inputs during discussions on graduation figures estimated for financial planning purposes. Interviews with DCT members show that Development Partners do not have direct role in setting annual graduation targets as targets are set either at woreda or regional levels but they contribute to graduation process through different consultation processes and funding studies that are aimed at improving the graduation system. Currently their main focus is supporting operationalization of the new Graduation Prediction System (GPS) that is planned to be implemented to ensure evidence based graduation which uses livelihood specif-

ic indicators and assist kebeles to realistically estimate the graduation potential and simplify the graduation process.

4.1.2. Regional and Zonal Levels

There are a number of structures and committees in Tigray region that are responsible for the management and implementation of PSNP. These include Regional Council (Cabinet), Food Security Steering Committee, Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (BoFED) and Regional Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development. Regional Food Security Office plays a major role in the overall PSNP management and implementation. Within the regional office there are technical committees involved in the day-to-day technical decision making process. Regional Food Security Task Force is a consultative committee comprised of members from various sectors of the government and development partners responsible for monitoring the programme. During the initial graduation implementation phase the Food Security Office provided a Graduation Guidance Note (GGN) by incorporating region specific benchmarks for graduation. In addition, it provides technical support and monitoring of graduation planning and implementation. Though the GGN doesn't specify the annual graduation target setting, the Food Security Office sets targets by using woreda asset assessment as a base.

According to the Programme Implementation Manual, the Regional Council chaired by the Regional President is the highest decision making body that ensures regional development priorities are reflected in PSNP (MoARD 2010). Since PSNP is one of the components of the woreda and regional development plans, the regional council evaluates the implementation of PSNP during its meetings. One of the graduates who took part in the FGD discussion and represents her kebele in the regional council stated that one of the main focus areas in recent council meeting was PSNP graduation. According to her, pre-mature graduation was raised as a current concern from various woredas and the regional president Ato Abay Woldu informed the council members to be cautious not to graduate households before they reach the graduation benchmark in order to reach graduation targets. His instruction contradicts with the way graduation target for 2013 was set which dismissed the target proposed by the Food Security Office which was made based on asset assessment of households. Though harmonization of sectoral plans is vital for bringing integrated development in the region, political interest might outweigh technical considerations if decisions are based on political motives rather than realistic improvement of people's livelihoods.

Zones are administrative structures that comprise a number of woredas. In Tigray, Amhara and Oromiya zones are used as a communication link between the regions and woredas. In SNNP however, the administration has more autonomy with its own Zonal councils (MoARD 2010). Eastern Tigray zone encompassing five woredas including the study site, Ganta'afeshum woreda, and has become active recently in the planning, implementation and monitoring of PSNP. Through its two PSNP Coordinators, the zonal food security office serves as a bridge of communication between the regional and woredas counterparts through technical assistance and monitoring of the programme. The interviewed coordinators stated that they also organize experience sharing visits among the woredas within the zone in order to learn from the best performing woreda in implementation of PSNP including graduation performance. More-

over, the zonal food security coordinators with the support of zonal administration officials mobilize beneficiaries to graduate from PSNP in order to reduce dependency mentality that is believed to be rooted due to long term food aid provision. Since the regional graduation took place in Adigrat, administration city of the woreda and Eastern zone, zonal level implementers and leaders have also been highly involved in organizing and facilitating the graduation event.

4.1.3. Woreda Level

The Woreda (district) level structures that play roles in PSNP are Woreda Council (Cabinet), Woreda Rural Development Office including Woreda Food Security Office, technical committees and other line offices. Under the Food Security Office, Woreda Food Security Task Force (WFSTF) is one of the key players in the graduation process. The WFSTF comprises members from various sectors and desks such as Food Security Desk, Natural Resource Management Desk, Women's Affairs Desk, Health Office, Education Office and other relevant line ministries and departments (MOARD 2010). It is responsible for adjusting graduation criteria, provision of technical support to Kebele Food Security Task Force (KFSTF), approving graduation list from kebeles and performing other duties related with graduation and PSNP in general.

The Graduation Guidance Note states that the Woreda Council is the highest decision-making body responsible for graduation with specified duties such as approving the list of graduates, solving unresolved appeals submitted from Kebele Council, providing input to improve the graduation process (MoARD 2007) and mobilizing lower level administration officials and PSNP beneficiaries for graduation. Since campaign based implementation of development interventions is practiced in all sectors, the Cabinet members are responsible for making sure plans are implemented based on the woreda priority. Campaign based approach refers to assigning various sector experts and members of the woreda administration in a specific activity called *medeb* (assignment) depending on seasonality, priority and urgency of the intervention. For instance, during peak planting season woreda council and other government sector staffs support the Agriculture office in promoting the use of fertilizers, improved seeds, and new farming and planting techniques through mobilizing farmers in meetings held at community level. This approach applies to graduation and other PSNP related assignments whereby the woreda council makes the issue a priority and assigns its personnel accordingly.

Interviewed zonal PSNP Coordinators stated that the main responsibility of mobilizing beneficiaries to graduate rests on the Food Security Office and the woreda council gets involved when necessary. They added that when the assignment was given from the region to reach 70% graduation in each woreda, Ganta'afeshum woreda council was highly involved in mobilization with the support of Food Security Office personnel and members of Woreda Food Security Task Force. According to the interview result with the Development Agent the mobilization campaign started at woreda level with kebele council members as part of regular administrative meetings that take place four to five times a year. The campaign then continued to kebele and community levels focusing on members of Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a ruling political coalition of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), with the objective of convincing them to graduate which motivates

the remaining PSNP beneficiaries to follow their lead. He added that there are 400 households who are members of TPLF out of the total 1078 and mobilization starts with the members whenever there are assignments to be implemented.

The zonal coordinators revealed that mass mobilization with all PSNP beneficiaries continued to the community whereby each woreda council member, Food Security staff and other line ministry personnel were assigned to different kebeles and sensitize PSNP beneficiaries to graduate with the support of local administration officials and Development Agents (DAs). The process of promoting graduation through the party members indicates that graduation is a politicised initiative which might create indirect pressure to the party member beneficiaries who despite their livelihood situation. This was confirmed by one of the interviewees at regional level who stated that some party member PSNP beneficiaries volunteer to graduate before an actual improvement in their food security status in order to show their loyalty to their party (TPLF) and gain political acceptance.

4.1.4. Kebele and Community Levels

Since PSNP adopts administrative and community system of implementation, actors at lower levels play a crucial role in the graduation process. The main actors specified in the Graduation Guidance Note are Kebele Council (Cabinet), Kebele Appeals Committee (KAC), Kebele Food Security Task Force (KFSTF) and Community Food Security Task Force (CFSTF) (MoARD 2007). Though not indicated in the guidance note or other official documents, the study found that Development Unit and Network are the lowest level groups that play indirect roles in the graduation process.

KFSTF comprises members from the kebele administration, Development Agents, health centre/post, schools and Women's Affairs, Farmers' Association and so on. It is responsible for overall monitoring of PSNP implementation and provides support to Community Food security Task Force. In the graduation process it creates awareness among CFSTF on the graduation benchmarks and implementation procedure. It also verifies the list of graduates submitted from CFSTF to be approved by the Kebele Council. Kebele Appeals Committee is responsible for hearing and solving appeals from selected graduates if they feel they are targeted inappropriately (ibid). In practice, however, the FGD with graduates and members of the KFSTF indicated that Kebele Appeals Committee is not functional in their kebele and appeals are heard by the KFSTF.

As the KFSTF is involved in fine tuning the list of graduates hearing appeals by similar structure might create conflict of interest hence deter effective appeal handling system. Once the KFSTF verifies the list of graduates the Kebele Council deals with unresolved appeals, holds community meeting to get comments on the proposed list of graduates and approves the graduates' list to be further reviewed at woreda level. Though unresolved appeals can be heard by Kebele Council or at woreda level, few of the FGD participants who are dissatisfied about their graduation believe that appealing at the kebele level to similar people who are involved in approving the list of graduates is less likely to solve applicants' grievances. Hence, they decided not report their appeals despite their feeling of inappropriate selection to graduate.

The kebele is subdivided into three sub-kebeles and there is Community Food Security Task Force (CFSTF) in each sub-kebele (kushet) and is the main actor involved in identification of graduates. Once households with better asset holding are identified by CFSTF, formal asset registration is done either by the Development Agent or PSNP foremen then monetized with current market price sent from the woreda. The CFSTF holds community meetings to verify and evaluate the list. After verification by the community the list is further verified by Kebele Food Security Task Force with final approval by the Kebele Council. However, two of the FGD participants who graduated in 2013 revealed that community meetings were not held to verify the list of graduates which might have affected the possibility of reinstating those who have genuine concerns of maintaining their livelihood without PSNP transfers. They added that most of the current graduates are not aware of their graduation status and only few people were informed by the kebele administration officials and participated in the graduation ceremony.

When asked why community meetings were not held and only few graduates were informed, FGD participants of the KFSTF provided two reasons for doing so. The first one is kebele administrators' concern about the community's reaction due to the high number of graduation in 2013 that might affect the campaign on boosting agricultural productivity in the farming season. The main justification for their action is as measure taken to revise the list as they believe most of the Female Headed Households (FHHs) identified to graduate should be reinstated in the programme. FHHs face multiple vulnerabilities such as lack of alternative employment opportunities and lack of labour for agricultural activities. Culturally women are not allowed to plough land and FHHs are forced to give their land for share croppers which reduce the produce they obtain. Moreover, the share croppers get animal feed out of the fields they plough which makes it difficult for FHHs to own livestock due to shortage of fodder. Interview with the Development Agent revealed that apart from their prevailing vulnerabilities, some FHHs tend to inflate their asset holdings during the registration process either from lack of awareness or intentionally not to be rated as low performer. Low performing farmers in any development intervention are subject to community evaluation and self-criticism called *gemgam* in various community or group meetings in which some FHHs try to avoid despite its risk towards pre-mature graduation.

The lowest level groups that play indirect role in the graduation process are Development Unit which comprises 25 to 30 household heads and its sub group called Network with a membership of 5 household heads. Development Unit also called Development Group is farmers' development group locally known as *lim'at gujile* is a group established with the aim of improving popular participation in development interventions through knowledge transfer on modern agricultural technologies among farmers. According to Segers et al. (2008), Development units were established in 2005 by the initiation of Ministry of Agriculture in Tigray region. Setting up of the Units followed a system of organization that has been previously in place in the form of Government groups known as *mengistawi gujile*. Government Groups are 'the post-revolutionary versions of the groups of about 30 neighbouring households set up by the TPLF to facilitate the organization and mobilization of the rural population in liberated areas' (ibid: 103). Earlier the group leaders were responsible for transferring messages from administration officials to their neighbours

and mobilizing for assignments such as soil and water conservation activities. After the establishment of the Development Units based on the previous system, interview results with various interviewees indicate that the units are involved in sharing experience, evaluating members' performances and supporting each other across all development interventions in agricultural productivity, food security, education, health and so on.

Interview with the Development Agent reveals that the Development Unit is further sub-grouped into 5 or 6 Network groups established few years ago which are led by model farmers. Models are those who are better performing farmers who have improved their livelihoods due to adoption of new technologies and agricultural productivity boosting techniques which are promoted by the government. Model farmers are encouraged to be at the community leadership positions either in a formal government structure or farmers' associations so as to motivate others through experience sharing. Therefore, Development Unit and Networks are led by model farmers who are believed to be capable of supporting the remaining group members to follow their lead. The progress of all Development Units and Networks is monitored by the kebele Development Agents, employees of Agriculture Office, whereby one DA supervises five Development Units.

During the discussions at kebele level divergent views were expressed with the role of Network and DU in the graduation process. Graduates who took part in the first FGD stated that Networks and Development Units play an indirect role in verification of household assets which is used as an input to the assessment made by the Community Food Security Task Force. Most of the graduates who participated in the second FGD revealed that asset assessment and identifying of graduates is done by the Development Agent and the Kebele Chairman. This view was challenged by one of the participants who work as a Network leader and informed that Networks leaders identify PSNP beneficiaries with better assets within their group and report to the Development Units and Community Food Security Task Force. The Kebele Food Security Task Force members in the FGD, on the other hand indicated that Networks are involved in identification and verification of household assets. The divergent views among the graduates indicate that there is no adequate transparency about the graduation process.

Woreda, Zonal and regional interview results indicate that Networks and Development Units are involved in the graduation process. Woreda food security expert indicated that both groups assess household assets. Zonal and regional experts also revealed that identifying households with better assets is one of the roles played by Network and Development Unit as they are responsible for integrated development activities that take place in their communities. One of the regional food security experts interviewed added that constant meetings among Network members to evaluate performance of each member through *gemgam*, group evaluation and self-criticism, is sometimes one of the reasons for PSNP beneficiaries to agree to graduate despite their interest to stay in the programme. While continued monitoring might encourage farmers to enhance their efforts to improve their agricultural productivity by learning from each other, it might have a negative consequence on people's livelihoods if it is used as an indirect way of pressuring them to graduate from PSNP.

As can be seen from this section various Federal to community level actors are involved in PSNP graduation which directly or indirectly affects the

design and implementation of programming graduation processes. The involvement of the various actors enables to create harmonization of various sectorial considerations within PSNP graduation design and implementation. While involvement of community members is in place to improve transparency and reduce the risk of pre-mature graduation; lack of adequate understanding on the objective of graduation and the roles of different actors in the process makes the process very complex which might lead to exclusion of beneficiaries from the programme before evident improvement is witnessed in their food security status. This might be a result of increased political interest in PSNP graduation as we go to lower level structures which tend to affect technical Food Security programming and social protection decision making processes.

4.2 PSNP Graduation Target Setting Process

In the previous section the roles of various actors in the designing and implementation of graduation has been discussed. Since the main objective of the paper is to identify the main driving force in the promotion of ambitious graduation plans, this section addresses the target setting process in graduation programming. Graduation target setting is a multi-tier process that incorporates bottom-up and top-down approaches from kebele, woreda, regional to federal levels. It is an integral part of the Annual Safety Net Plan that starts at community level by assessing household asset holdings. Kebele plans are revised and approved at the woreda that is further revised and approved at the regional level. At Federal level regional plans are reviewed as required and compiled as national plan. Although regions set their respective graduation targets, the Federal Food Security Directorate sets a national graduation target for performance monitoring and budget planning purposes. Federal level targets are found in national programme and strategic plan documents which set different rates of graduation.

One of the national plans that sets the graduation target is the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) that indicates the number of PSNP beneficiaries will reduce from 7.1 million in 2009/10 to 1.3 million by the end of 2014 with a key agenda of enabling the country to be free from food aid. This plan indicates that all Public Works beneficiaries that account for 80% of the programme caseload are expected to graduate except the 20% Direct Support beneficiaries. The graduation target is part of the agriculture and rural development strategic plan whereby agriculture continues to be the main source of economic growth. The graduation target assumes that average agricultural growth rate in five years will be 8.6% and expected growth rate of 8.5% for 2011/12 which turned out to be 4.9%. Small holder farming is the key source of rapid agricultural growth. The main strategies for boosting small holder farming are expansion of irrigation, improvement of natural resources, production of high value crops and scaling up of best practices from the best performing (models) to medium performing farmers whereby productivity of best performing farmers is two to three times higher than average performing farmers (MoFED 2010 and 2013).

Starting from its design the GTP is deemed ambitious by policy makers, technocrats, political parties and the public who participated in the consultation process. In his opening speech during the plan approval process in the Parliament, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated that the GTP is very

ambitious and greater than the previous strategic plans. He added that the main concern during the consultation process was its ambitious nature considering the fiscal and implementation capacity constraints in the country but the government believes the plan will be successfully implemented due to the popular consultation process which is believed to build ownership in implementing the GTP (ERTA 2011). Interview results with Federal Food Security personnel indicates that the plan to graduate 80% of the PSNP beneficiaries by 2014 doesn't comply with the Food Security Coordination Directorate plan whereby graduation is not expected in pastoral areas of Afar and Somali that accounts for more than 1.2 million beneficiaries. This indicates that even with 80% graduation in the remaining six regions, by 2014 the number of beneficiaries will become 2.5 million instead of 1.3 million as indicated by the GTP.

Apart from the GTP, there are other graduation targets set at the Federal level. The PSNP Logframe indicators show that at the end of the programme in 2014, 40% PWs households will be food-sufficient in addition to 30% planned to be food-secure both accounting to 70% graduation. Few of the assumptions for the logframe are availability of adequate livelihood opportunities and sustainable support to food insecure people that allows achieving food security and timely operationalization of Social Protection Policy (FSCD 2012). However, small scale rain-fed crop production continues to be the main livelihood opportunity in rural Ethiopia and the National Social Protection Policy is still under the approval process. The financial forecast for PSNP, however assumes 10% yearly graduation for planning and budgeting purposes (Sandler et al. 2010) which shows inconsistency with the above Federal level graduation targets.

By incorporating locally specific strategies regions have designed their GTPs by using the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the national GTP as overarching guides. In Tigray the regional targets are set by using kebele household asset assessments as a basis and with expected flexibility at woreda level. Hence graduation targets of 5% and 7% were set for 2009 and 2010 respectively based on a study made by Adigrat Catholic Diocese Secretariat and Irish Aid. The targets were believed to be appropriate by the regional decision makers considering the drought prone nature of the region (ibid.). However, interview results with regional food security experts show that fear of budget reduction was another reason for planning low graduation rates apart from the vulnerability of the region to weather related shocks.

The Programme Implementation Manual states that PSNP woreda budget includes 15% capital budget and 5% administrative budget of the base programme cost transferred to beneficiaries while the regional management budget is 2% of total woreda base programme costs. To address transitory food insecure households, the programme also has 20% contingency budget out of which 15% is managed by woredas while the remaining 5% is held at regional level to be disbursed based on the extent of emergency requirement (MoARD 2010). Interview with regional expert indicated that when number of beneficiaries reduces due to graduation, woreda implementers face multiple challenges ranging from declining the labour force for Public Works projects to reduction of capital and administrative budget which is an important development resource that is significantly higher than the annual woreda budgets. Therefore, reluctance to plan higher graduation rates was somewhat accounted to fear of budget reduction for woredas.

Since the implementation of graduation in 2009 the region graduated 31% by setting annually incremental targets. In 2013 regional target of cumulative 70% (39% for 2013) was set by using woreda household asset assessment. The study finds that the regional target setting process which is driven by different factors has gone through a number of processes and has varied understanding among regional, woreda and kebele implementers hence affects the way graduation takes place. Based on the interviews made with kebele, woreda, zonal and regional personnel, the study finds that there is a tendency for lower level implementers to consider regional targets as quota that should be adhered to while upper level implementers claim that the targets are indicative plans whereby woredas and kebeles can perform according to their graduation potential.

In the visited kebele, Sasun Betehawariat, 49 households graduated from 2010 to 2012 while in the current year 205 households have graduated from the programme. When explaining the target setting process at kebele level the Development Agent (DA) stated that the number of graduates was set based on the regional and woreda direction to reach a cumulative graduation of 70% as PSNP will not continue after 2014. In order to reach the stated target the kebele was supposed to graduate 220 households and achieved 93% of the target. He added that the targets were realistic considering the vast irrigation potential in the kebele but achieving 100% was not possible as some households do not provide genuine information during asset assessment so that they will not graduate.

Though the graduated households have reached the graduation benchmark, concerns have been raised about graduation of Female Headed Households both in the interview with the Development Agent and FGD with members of the Kebele Food Security Task Force. The concern is resulted from multiple vulnerabilities of FHHs due to lack of alternative employment opportunity and labour shortage which makes maintaining their livelihood without PSNP transfers difficult. Accordingly, the kebele decided to retain the FHHs by making re-assessment of assets to identify other potential graduates who might have hidden their assets during earlier assessment so that the number of graduates reported to the woreda continues to be the same. This indicates that kebele level implementers face contradictions with their responsibility to keep vulnerable groups in the programme and their mandate to implement the woreda and regional directions which are claimed by regional implementers as non-binding. This further indicates that the regional target setting doesn't allow adequate room for flexibility depending on the local context.

Similar understanding of targets is observed at woreda level where regionally claimed indicative plans are considered as targets that should be achieved as much as possible. In Ganta'afeshum woreda graduation started in 2010 with total graduation of 5,398 households or 16,788 individuals so far. The following table shows the yearly graduation in the woreda.

Table 3: Yearly Graduation in Ganta'afeshum Woreda

Year	Graduated Households			Graduated Individuals
	MHHs	**FHHs**	**Total HHs**	
2010	75	5	80	389
2011	582	66	648	2824
2012	477	98	575	2987
2013	2981	1114	4095	10,588
Total	**4,115**	**1,283**	**5,398**	**16,788**

Source: Interview at Ganta'afeshum Woreda Food Security Office

As can be seen from the above table the woreda graduation performance has increased sharply in 2013 with 39.5% graduation rate out of 10, 373 Public Works beneficiary households. Though the regional target was to reach 70% cumulative graduation, the woreda was able to achieve 54% graduation. The sharp increment is attributed to the government's increased commitment to achieve the target. Interview with woreda PSNP expert indicated that the targets are set by the region using woreda asset assessment as input but planning similar targets for all woredas is unrealistic as all the woredas have varied potential for graduation. He noted that the regional food security set the annual target with the objective of achieving 100% graduation of Public Works beneficiaries by 2014 which is driven by the national and regional GTPs. Interview with the woreda administrator and PSNP expert indicated that the target to graduate all Public works beneficiaries by 2014 doesn't consider the woreda's reality whereby rain-fed crop production is the mainstay with low productivity due to land scarcity and recurrent droughts. The expert added that since the target is set by regions to be implemented in all woredas, the kebeles were instructed to achieve targets accordingly yet most of them were unable to achieve it.

Interviewed Zonal PSNP experts stated that though the target was set at regional level, all woredas in Eastern zone did not plan to graduate 70%. The woredas, according to the respondents, have planned their respective targets based on their capacity which relies upon previously created infrastructure, water availability and community assets created that contributes to achieve graduation. Despite their claim, the regional plan disaggregated by woreda indicates that all five woredas in Eastern zone have planned 70% cumulative graduation but performed differently with a minimum achievement of 6% graduation of the 2013 target in Erob and maximum of 99% achievement in Hawzien woreda with a zonal average of 68%. The zonal cumulative graduation has reached 55% which is considered as a great success by zonal administration officials and PSNP experts considering the drought prone nature of the zone. They added that the current improvement in graduation is due to high attention from implementers resulted from government's commitment to achieve the GTP and tackle dependency on food aid. When asked if the target is realistic or not, they noted that it is realistic for woredas with alternative water resource for animal feed and irrigation but unrealistic for the highly drought affected woredas such as Erob where there is very low potential for agriculture and graduation can only be achieved through creation of alternative off-farm employment opportunities that receive limited attention.

Interview results with regional PSNP experts and people at the leadership position also indicated that current graduation targets are set at regional level and the main driving force is achieving the GTP with the exception of one interviewee who noted that the targets should be called 'indicative plans'. He also said that the GTP did not shape the graduation plans and if it was the basis, the plans would have been imposed quotas. According to him, graduation plans were developed based on past performance as PSNP has been operating for eight years and beneficiaries have accumulated adequate assets to enable them to graduate from the programme. His response contradicts with the findings of the impact assessment made by Berhane et al. (2011) which shows that participation in PSNP has no impact on livestock holdings of beneficiaries which are the main components of household assets to select graduates.

According to the discussion with PSNP personnel at the leadership position, the graduation target was set by considering households that have reached 100% of the regional benchmark and those between 75% and 99% with the assumption that they can reach the benchmark with the provision of credit, alternative off-farm employment opportunities and technical assistance from HABP. However, the assumption for those households who reached 75% or more to cross the benchmark within few months between the planning and actual graduation seems less likely to be achieved and it shows there is high interest to achieve graduation despite the prevailing conditions. He also noted that since the region and the country have planned to be self-sufficient by the end of 2014, graduating the PWs beneficiaries is a realistic target that can be achieved. Yet the regional graduation report (FSCB 2013) indicates that out of 31 PSNP woredas only 17 of them were able to achieve more than 90% of their current graduation targets with a minimum achievement of 6% in Erob and a maximum of 183% in Asgede Tsimbla woreda that graduated all PWs beneficiaries.

Regional graduation report (FSCB 2013) and interview results with regional experts indicate that in 2013 the region was able to graduate 90,215 households or 401, 733 individuals which accounts for 38% of the total 1,045,279 PWs beneficiaries which shows a significant rise when compared to 31% graduation between 2009 and 2012. The following table shows the yearly graduation rate in Tigray region.

Table 4: Tigray region yearly graduation (2009-2013)

Year	Graduated Households			Graduated Individuals		
	MHHs	FHHs	Total	M	F	Total
2009	6,207	932	7,159	6,207	932	7,159
2010	12,384	4,092	16,476	33,412	33,224	66,636
2011	24,412	9,332	33,744	68,717	72,518	141,235
2012	30,630	11,382	41,982	87,294	93,468	180,762
2013	57,837	32,378	90,215	192,535	209,198	401,733
Total	131,470	58,116	189,576	388,165	409,340	797,505

Source: Interview results and regional food security unpublished documents

As can be seen from the above table, the graduation rate has increased dramatically in 2013. Interview with regional PSNP expert indicated that until recently graduation was considered as Food Security Office's responsibility

with little involvement from the government. Since 2012 the government committed itself to achieve graduation as it was viewed in terms of achieving the GTP. Therefore, during the 2013 planning process an agreement was reached among regional PSNP stakeholders to achieve 39% graduation for 2013 and cumulative rate of 70% that was believed to enable the region to graduate the remaining beneficiaries by 2014. The woredas were given targets based on their previous graduation with the intention of achieving 70% by 2013.

The 2013 target setting process has gone through a number of stages both at regional and woreda levels. According to the interview with regional expert, woredas initially sent recorded household assets for all PWs beneficiaries and regional Food Security Office set a target to graduate 89, 203 households based on the woreda findings. When the target was presented for approval, the Regional Council increased the target to 94,050 (45%) households claiming that the GTP cannot be achieved by taking 'baby steps'. He added that in the regional council meeting woreda representatives were mobilized to aim for a more ambitious graduation plan in order to honour the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's legacy as he was the main engineer during development of the GTP.

As a result, woreda representatives were highly motivated and some woredas later increased the target with a regional total of 121,174 (48.6%) households. In the same meeting it was also decided that instead of focusing on household graduation 10% kebeles should graduate. Though the target was later revised by woredas, the one approved by the regional cabinet is considered as the regional target both at region and federal levels as the revised target was challenged as impractical at the Federal level. Accordingly, the region was able to achieve 85% of the target including graduation of 54 kebeles out of the total 622 PSNP kebeles. Out of the 54 kebeles 43 are found in 13 woredas and the remaining 11 are in Asgede Tsimbla woreda where graduation took place on woreda basis.

When asked about the justification for kebele and woreda graduations, one of the interviewed regional food security personnel at the leadership position responded that the whole PWs beneficiaries in the kebeles graduated based on their demand. He added that after many years of getting food aid people have declared their food sufficiency as the kebeles have alternative water source through irrigation in which most of the PSNP beneficiaries have access to. On the other hand, discussion with PSNP expert indicated that the decision was made to graduate the woreda to correct inclusion error. According to him, Asgede Tsimbla woreda shouldn't have been in PSNP as there are alternative employment opportunities mainly gold mining in which most of its population is involved in. Another expert stated that although kebeles with irrigation potential were selected to graduate, not all farmers have access to irrigate their lands and there are also landless people with limited employment opportunities. Hence, through kebele graduation those people who didn't cross the benchmark will be unable to maintain their livelihood without PSNP transfers. This indicates that the target setting process is pursued mainly due to political interest to achieve the GTP that aims at tackling food aid dependency rather than actual improvement of PSNP beneficiaries' food security status.

The implication of the regional target setting has diverging views among the interviewed experts from Food Security Office and Relief Society of Tigray

(REST). Food Security experts stated that although the regionally set targets are not binding, some woredas have faced pressure as they consider it as a direction that should applied which might lead to graduating households who didn't reach the benchmark. One of the interviewees noted that even if the beneficiaries have crossed the benchmark it doesn't guarantee their food sufficiency. This is because the regional benchmark of owning productive assets worth 5,600 birr per capita (USD 300) is too low and no revision has been made since 2007 despite high price surge since then. The concern with low benchmark setting was also raised by one of the regional Food Security personnel at the leadership position. He stated that the benchmark is too low and revision will be made in the future to address the high inflation rate. Though the region has a mandate to revise the benchmark, no attempt has been made to raise the benchmark despite recognizing the problem. This might be resulted from a concern of reducing the number of graduates if benchmarks are higher which will affect the regional target.

When PSNP expert at Relief Society of Tigray (REST) was asked about the implication of the regional target setting he noted that the targets are not binding and woredas have been implementing based on their graduation potential. Since he is member of the Regional Food Security Task Force, he stressed that the region instructs the woredas to implement based on their reality not by the region's targets. This is because graduation follows the Graduation Guidance Note (GGN) which states that there shouldn't be graduation if households did not reach the benchmark. He also explained that although the targets are not binding, setting targets at the regional level enables low performing woredas to give attention to graduation as some woredas are reluctant to graduate due to fear of labour reduction for their environmental rehabilitation activities which is crucial for rural development. Although regional personnel claim that the targets are not binding to woredas, practically the political interest and mobilization to promote graduation pressures the woreda implementers to consider the regional targets as mandatory.

The political nature of the decision making in the target setting process is shared at federal level both by the government and donor personnel. During the individual interviews at the Federal Food Security Coordination Directorate one of the PSNP experts revealed that the current target is given to experts as a political direction to graduate the PWs beneficiaries by 2014. Since the decision cannot be altered, the main responsibility of the Food Security Experts at Federal level is monitoring the graduation process so that people do not graduate without reaching the regional benchmarks, ensuring timely transfers, strengthening Household Asset Building Programme support to beneficiaries and providing other assistance as required by regions. He indicated that the federal level plan for 2013 was to graduate 101, 400 households in 2013 in six PSNP regions except Afar and Somali but regions have set their own targets considering their past graduation rates. The national level graduation for 2013 is 205, 727 households out of which 44% is in Tigray region.

The targets in Tigray region are justified by the federal level as a measure to compensate for low graduation achievement in the previous years and the region's commitment to achieve the target set in the GTP. Interview results with Tigray focal person at the federal level showed that the current graduation level in Tigray is not surprising as credit provision and extension services are strong compared to other regions hence the woreda variation in achieving the

target shows the achievement was genuine with low possibility for pre-mature graduation. He added that achieving full food-sufficiency at the end of the programme is too ambitious due to limited capacity to implement Household Asset Building Programme at scale in terms of technical support, credit ceiling and continuous monitoring of beneficiaries. Similar responses have been obtained from interviews with the Donor's Coordination Team (DCT) members noting that the Development Partners (DPs) believe the target to graduate all PWs beneficiaries by 2014 is too ambitious and there might be unnecessary pressure to achieve the targets. One of the interviewees added that since the national target was impractical to achieve, there is still high PSNP caseload and agreement has reached with the government to extend the programme for another phase.

Through interviews with various level stakeholders the study finds that graduation from PSNP is promoted by the government with the aim of enabling the country to be free from food aid dependency which is indicated as one of the key agendas of transformation in the GTP. The current graduation target setting process indicates that it is inherently political which is defended by people at the leadership position as realistic target while concerns have been raised with technical personnel both at government and donor levels. This shows that political considerations outweigh technical consideration in the graduation planning process. Although the region has the mandate to set its own targets the initial direction stems from the country's five years' strategic plan that aimed at ensuring food self-sufficiency in 2014. The regional GTP states similar target to achieve independence from food aid by 2014. Hence, the 2013 graduation target was set in order to enable the region to graduate its PWs beneficiaries by 2014. Although the regional targets are considered as 'indicative plans' to be used as a starting point, lower level implementers at woreda and kebele levels consider them as direction that should be strictly followed as much as possible. This might lead to pre-mature graduation of households whose livelihood will be highly affected in the absence predictable transfers due to their susceptibility to various shocks.

4.3 Synthesis

Social protection as a key policy response to poverty and vulnerability has gained recent attention from international agencies and governments. Most of the social protection initiatives are social transfers in cash and in kind which has gone to scale rapidly with the objective of protecting and promoting livelihoods. These initiatives are termed as 'Revolution from the South' by social protection scholars. One of the well celebrated schemes is the Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Programme initiated in 2005 in order to address recurrent food insecurity and poverty in rural areas. It is considered as a 'flagship' to African social protection due to its protective and productive nature, reaching the poorest and most vulnerable part of the society through its rapid scale up, its strong national ownership and transforming the earlier emergency food aid system that has been the key response to food insecurity for a long time.

However, PSNP and other social protection initiatives in the developing countries are subject to debates that has been rooted in social protection and social policy provisioning that are targeted at a certain category of the population either through means-testing, geographical or community targeting mech-

anisms. The targeted social protection provisions are prone to inclusion and exclusion errors whereby the possibility of non-poor to be included and for the poor to be excluded increases mainly in developing counties with low administration capacity. PSNP faces high exclusion error due to budget limitations and the high proportion of chronically food insecure people in rural Ethiopia. Depending on the type of targeting the initiatives employ, targeting involves economic cost. Moreover, targeted interventions have political and social cost by creating segregation among the poor and non-poor which might lead to resentment of those receiving benefits. Political costs are also related to lack of support from people with better voice, non-poor, to interventions that only target the poor. Targeted service provisions that specifically address the poor also tend to be lower in quality due to the poor's lack of power to influence the provision which compromises the intended objective. Although targeted initiatives are highly debated with the above and other related inherent challenges, they are justified as effective to reach the poorest considering fiscal constraints that are inherent mainly in poor countries.

Since social protection involves re/distribution of resources, politics plays a great role its design, implementation and sustainability of the initiatives. With the objective of identifying the driving force behind ambitious PSNP graduation programming in Ethiopia, the study has assessed the role of various actors graduation process by focusing on the annual target setting process. Accordingly, the study found that the government is the main actor in promoting ambitious graduation plans through its governmental agencies and institutions with limited involvement from donors. As in many African countries, the initiation of PSNP was mainly donor-driven as the government was interested in promoting large scale resettlement programmes to solve the recurrent food insecurity in the country. The proposal was refused by the development partners and they opted for social protection provisioning through PSNP which is shaped by international trends towards targeted social protection provisioning and earlier experience with Food for Work projects in Ethiopia. Although PSNP was initially donor-driven, strong negotiations led to the government's maintenance of ownership and the programme became a national agenda as opposed to many African social protection initiatives that are implemented on short term pilot basis highly influenced by donor's agenda.

The idea of graduation faced opposition from some donors during its initial planning period but the government showed strong position and commitment towards achieving its graduation objectives. The government's interest to achieve large scale graduation is witnessed in the Growth and Transformation Plan that aims to graduate all Public Works beneficiaries by 2014. The regional graduation target setting process in Tigray also shows high political interest to achieve graduation. This was indicated by the Regional Council's decision to increase the targets set by Regional Food Security to a more ambitious plan and the mobilization made in the name of honouring the legacy of the Late Prime Minister. Although regional targets are considered as 'indicative plans at regional level, the understanding of the targets at woreda and kebele levels differ from the region's claim. Moreover, community level mobilization to reach and convince beneficiaries that are ruling party members indicates that as we go to the lower level structures, PSNP becomes more of a political project. Although graduation targets and achievements are justified technically through

crossing regional benchmarks, the study found that political considerations outweigh technical decision making.

The high political commitment to promote graduation originates from an interest to contribute to achieving the GTP which is considered to be a turning point for Ethiopia through its ambitious plans in agriculture and large scale infrastructure development which will lead to gradual transformation to industrialization. One of the main aims of the plan is to transform Ethiopia from being an international food aid recipient to self-sufficient country. Hence enabling PSNP beneficiaries to graduate is one of the indicators that Ethiopia is going in the right direction towards its objective of self-sufficiency and eliminating food aid dependency. Since Ethiopia has been dependent on food aid for many decades, its unchanged international image as famine stricken country is a disgrace both to the government and its people. As a result, achieving food security is one of the top priorities of the government as part of its poverty reduction and development aspirations. This was noted by the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's response to a question asked on the national television about his legacy during his early days in power (early 1990s) when he clearly stated that he would like his legacy enabling Ethiopians to eat three meals a day.

As a result, the government highly promotes graduation with an initial plan to end PSNP by 2014 which is currently agreed to be extended to another phase due to high case load of beneficiaries at national level. The plan to end PSNP might arise from the government's interest to relieve funds to more developmental oriented sectors. Terminating PSNP might also be considered as a way of presenting to the public that the country is not dependent on external finances to feed its population. Although Ethiopia receives international aid, grant and loan to undertake its various secoral interventions, PSNP's external funding might be more evident in showing poverty and food insecurity is still highly widespread despite the rapid economic growth the country has been registering for more than a decade. Hence, ending PSNP through graduation might be considered by the government as one of the options to show its citizens the country is self-sufficient which pronounces the success of the government's policies and strategies that could enhance legitimacy of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front (EPRDF), the ruling party that aspires to enable Ethiopia to be one of the of the middle income countries by 2025 through its Democratic Developmentalism ideology.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The study started with the objective of identifying the main actors and motives for promotion of graduation from PSNP in Ethiopia despite the challenges of achieving sustainable graduation. Its implication for institutionalization of social protection in Ethiopia is also another objective which has been addressed by the research. The study also tried to shade light on how our understanding of the politicised process of social protection graduation in Ethiopia informs a more general understanding of claims that such programmes represent a 'revolution from the South' and as basis for broadening and strengthening of social protection.

The study found that the government is the main driving force behind ambitious graduation planning with low involvement from Development Partners. The major factor stems from achieving the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) that aims at ensuring Ethiopia's food self-sufficiency through integrated Rural and Agricultural Development initiatives and other initiatives which will enable to free the country from international food aid. This has increased the political commitment to graduate all PSNP Public Works beneficiaries by 2014 with an increased political commitment to build the country's image and pronounce the government's success in poverty reduction.

Though PSNP graduation process is technically justified through house hold asset assessment, the study found that political considerations outweigh technical decision making in the target setting process which might affect the well-being of the chronically food insecure households. This increases the possibility of graduating households slide back to chronic or transitory food insecurity as a result of their multiple deprivations and the vulnerable nature of rural livelihoods due to of natural shocks. This in turn might undermine the sustainability of the positive livelihood improvements witnessed through PSNP. Therefore, the current graduation system prevents institutionalization of sustainable social protection which might lead to proliferation of short term targeted interventions or emergency relief systems that do not address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability of the rural poor.

The implication of politicisation of the graduation process on people's livelihoods raises a question about our understanding on considering PSNP and other similar social protection schemes as 'revolution from the South' and the expectation that these social protections will lead to a wider and sustainable social protection provisioning. Studies have shown that PSNP has improved livelihoods by providing predictable transfers to its poorest and vulnerable group of population. While sustainably implementing such a complicated programme in a varied and complex rural environment shows the government's commitment to address food insecurity; the political interest for ambitious graduation is a great concern for development practitioners like the researcher. Hence, the politicised nature of graduation makes the claims of PSNP's revolutionary nature and the belief that the programme serves as a basis for broadening social protection in Ethiopia highly debatable. The way forward for PSNP and its possible impact on institutionalization of social protection might be clearer when and if the new National Social Protection Policy, currently under approval process, is operationalized.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Map of PSNP Woredas
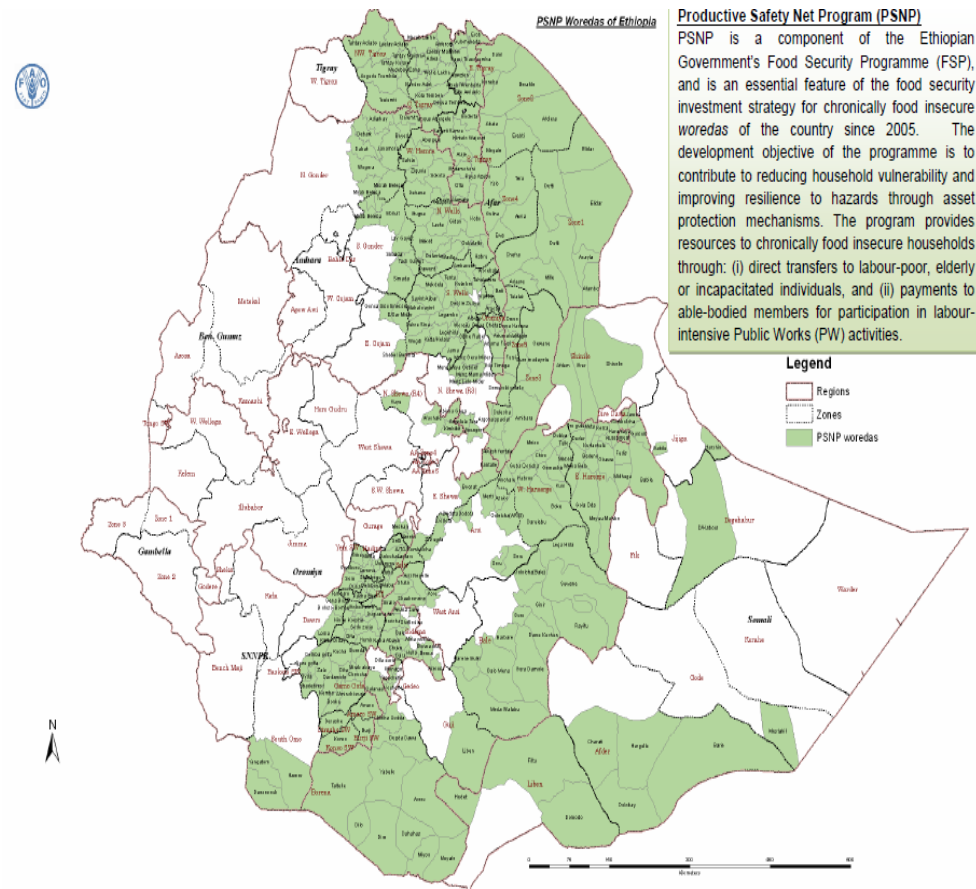
Source: East and Central Africa disaster Risk Reduction