

Impacts of social protection programmes in Ethiopia on child work and education



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Summary

Social protection measures are becoming an increasingly important policy tool for African governments. These measures have important potential for reducing poverty and positive impacts on child well-being. However, Young Lives research has found that different social protection programmes in Ethiopia have had unexpected impacts on girls' and boys' participation in school, and in paid and unpaid work. In order to create a win-win situation where both national economic development and children's rights are realised, it is crucial to have a deeper understanding of the relationship between social protection programmes and children's time use.

Introduction

Social protection measures are becoming an increasingly important policy tool for African governments, for addressing chronic poverty and coping with repeated shocks. Government and donor concern is often focused on mitigating poverty at the household level, but it is also important to examine intra-household effects. As social protection measures become more widespread, it is necessary to understand their impacts – both positive and negative – on children.

In Africa and elsewhere, social protection measures have been shown to be greatly beneficial for children. Programmes have demonstrated positive impacts on nutrition, access to health and education, and in reducing child labour. These are not only immediate benefits, but last over a child's lifetime. Better nourished, healthier and better educated children have better life chances, which may break intergenerational cycles of poverty.

Within Africa, Ethiopia's social protection programme is the largest on the continent outside of South Africa. The current Productive Safety Nets Programme has been in place since 2005, but built upon a number of prior programmes, including the Employment Generation Scheme (EGS). These programmes are aimed at addressing household poverty and vulnerability, and also have the potential to benefit children specifically.

Young Lives has investigated the impact of these programmes on children's time use, paying particular attention to time devoted to school and work. By comparing similar households – some which were participating in social protection programmes and others which were not – we were able to determine whether these programmes had positive or negative consequences for child labour and education. The findings have interesting implications for ongoing social

A DEFINITION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection has many definitions. For the purpose of this paper, we are using the following definition from Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004):

Social protection is the set of all initiatives, both formal and informal that provide: social assistance to extremely poor individuals and households; social services to groups who need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services; social insurance to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood shocks; and social equity to protect people against social risks such as discrimination or abuse.

protection measures in Ethiopia, as well as the development of social protection strategies across the continent:

- In households that were participating in the Employment Generation Scheme, children were more likely to be spending time on paid work and to be spending less time in school than children in similar households not participating.
- This contrasts with households involved in agricultural extension programmes, which show positive impacts on decreasing time children's time spent on work.
- Both programmes exhibited different impacts for girls and boys, indicating that gender issues need to be considered more seriously in design of social protection programmes.
- There are a number of possible reasons for these effects, and further investigation is required to ensure that child well-being is ensured in the development and implementation of social protection measures.

The policy context

Addressing chronic poverty in Ethiopia is a serious challenge. Average annual real per capita consumption expenditure is equivalent to US\$195. Particularly concerning is that while rural poverty declined from 1995/96 to 2004/05, it does not decline much as expected (Woldehanna, Hoddinott, Ellis and Dercon 2008). In 2004/05, real per capita food expenditure declined by 5% against that of 1995/96, witnessed mainly in rural areas. This is in part due to higher food-inflation, which is computed to be 34% from 1999/00 to 2004/05.

Part of the Ethiopian government's response has been to intensify the use of public works, credit and agricultural extension support programmes in rural Ethiopia and micro- and small-scale enterprises in urban areas. The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), introduced in 2005, is of particular importance nationally and has received considerable international attention. The PSNP has two components, food/cash for work and direct support, both of which build upon previous programmes.

Food and/or cash for work programmes have existed in Ethiopia since 1980. In 1997, the Employment Generation Scheme started as a temporary relief-based employment scheme designed to combine relief efforts with development activities. EGS was considered as a direct contribution to the rebuilding of household assets and to reducing Ethiopia's chronic food insecurity. Participants in EGS worked on development activities such as soil and water conservation, rural road building and other efforts to build community assets. Those who are able to work were given 2.5kg of grain per working day or the cash equivalent, but labour requirements were not applied to those unable to work. Geographical and household level targeting was used to select beneficiaries of the EGS. First geographical areas that are drought prone (sites) were selected. Then from each site, households were selected using vulnerability ranking criteria such as household asset and level of poverty. EGS continued to run until the launching of Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in 2005, and the design of the PSNP is essentially a continuation of EGS.

In addition to EGS, the government has supported a series of agricultural support programmes which combined technical advice, marketing information, and credit. Following a series of reforms, the Participatory Demonstration and Training Extension System (PADETES) started in 1995/96 with the objectives of increasing agricultural productivity and income. The

main three elements of PADETES are providing improved technologies, distribution of agricultural inputs on credit, and increasing participation of beneficiaries in the extension system. All farmers are eligible and there are no participation criteria set by the programme.

Child work in Ethiopia

Public works and agricultural extension support programmes which promote labour intensive activities are likely to have positive effects on overall economic development and poverty reduction, but also have the potential for unintended detrimental consequences to child well-being. While increasing household income may decrease the need for children to work, increasing the demand for labour from households has the potential to increase the amount of children's time spent working. This does not necessarily mean that children are involved in work provided by the scheme itself, but that children are doing more work outside the home as parents' transfer their time to take on new work under the programme. This in turn can impact on the amount of time children are able to spend in school and studying. In order to create a win-win situation where both national economic development and children's rights are realised, it is crucial to have a deep understanding of the relationship between support programmes and children's time use.

These issues are of particular concern in Ethiopia which has one of the highest rates of child labour in the world. Half of all 5 to 14 year-olds, more than 7.5 million children in absolute terms, were involved in some kind of economic activity in the 2001. Rural children and male children face the greatest risk of involvement in child work. The economic activity rate of boys exceeds that of girls by 20 percentage points, although this difference does not take into account household chores such as water and fuel wood collection, typically the domain of girls. Positively, the time spent on work (strictly defined as paid activities) by children in Young Lives sites has decreased from 9% in 2000/2001 to 5% in 2005/2006, and a decline has been seen within poorer as well as better-off families. This decrease has been greater for girls than for boys.

Even in the face of high rates of child work, Ethiopia has made impressive gains in primary education, with the gross enrolment ratio increasing from 37.4% in 1996 to 61.1% in 2000 and 74.2% in year 2004 (CSA: WMS, 2004). Young Lives data confirm this trend, particularly for poor children, with a 60% increase in enrolment for very poor children in our sample. However, the overall enrolment rate of 80.4% for boys and 67.6% for girls

suggests a gender bias, which is also more pronounced in rural areas. And secondary level enrolment is very low, with at least 85.3% of secondary age children not going to school in rural areas.

The impact on child work and schooling

In order to investigate the relationship between social protection programmes and children's time use, Young Lives examined the impact of the EGS and PADETES on whether children spent more or less time on different types of work, school and studying. By comparing similar households – some which were participating in each programme and others which were not – we were able to determine whether these programmes had positive or negative consequences for child labour and education.

The findings suggest that participation of households in EGS actually increased the amount of time children spent on work and decreased their time for school and studying. Particularly paid work outside the home increased among children whose families were EGS participants – on average by almost 15 minutes per day, and slightly more for girls. While EGS was not found to have a significant effect on children completing the school grade, it did have negative effects on the time spent in school and on studying. This implies that while children were able to manage both school and work, the quality of their education was likely compromised. These negative impacts were more pronounced for girls, with girls in participating households spending three-quarters of an hour per day less on schooling as opposed to about 15 minutes less for boys.

These results contrast with effects found for participants in the agricultural extension programme. Household participation in PADETES was found to have a positive effect in reducing time children spent on both paid work and on household chores and childcare, with average reductions of 15 minutes for boys and 20 minutes for girls per day. Interestingly, effects on unpaid work outside the home – such as farm work and cattle herding – were not statistically significant, suggesting that children, especially boys, may continue to be required to fulfil these traditional responsibilities. This is supported by the fact that the reductions in work time are greater for girls, and that positive effects for time spent on schooling are also only significant for girls.

Young Lives research also tells us how families perceived the benefits of participation in the two programmes. Table 1 shows that the majority of households in both programmes identified more food as the primary benefit. Particularly interesting is the fact

that many households in EGS considered the programme to have positive benefits for children's time use – particularly more resources for education, but also slightly more time for studying and less time on chores. However, the results in Table 1 suggest that while families in EGS view the programme as beneficial for children's education, this potential is not being realised.

Table 1. Primary benefit identified by families (percentage of families)

	Agricultural extension	Cash and food for work
Better quality food	27.21	10.99
More food	55.78	57.23
More advice on caring practices	8.16	8.30
More resources for educational purposes	4.76	19.67
More health care treatment	0.68	2.59
More time to study	0.00	0.45
Less time on work activities	2.72	2.29
Less time on household chores	0.00	1.38
Other	0.68	5.10

Policy implications

The findings above make clear that social protection programmes in Ethiopia are having unexpected impacts on children's time allocation between work and school activities. In order to ensure children's immediate well-being as well as to prevent potential long-term negative effects on lifetime chances and earnings, a more in-depth investigation is needed into why these impacts resulted in households' participation in the EGS and PADETES. Given the similarities between these programmes and major components of the PSNP, this is a live and pressing question.

While current analysis does not definitively tell us why these impacts occurred, there are a number of possible reasons suggested by the research. The first is that the profiles of the families participating in the two programmes are slightly different. Although average households are very similar in a number of ways, including demographic profile and productive assets, participants in agricultural extension programmes were wealthier at the beginning of the period for which we have measured changes. Households who participated in EGS, and now PSNP, may need greater support in order for children to spend less time on work and more on school.

Second, it is also likely that the labour requirements of the EGS and PADETES have gendered impacts – resulting in different time demands for women and men,

and for girls and boys. This may therefore require re-examining the design of the PSNP labour requirements to guarantee positive impacts for girls and boys.

Third, the level of support given through EGS wages may simply not have been enough in a context of stagnant poverty reduction and food price inflation. Delivery of food or cash wages (or a combination of both) depended on availability due to fluctuations in aid, and wages were purposefully set low to promote self-selection into the programme. As mentioned above, the majority of families felt that having more food was a key benefit of the programme – the question is how much was left over to meet other basic needs and ensure children's rights? While the issue of aid fluctuations is less likely to be an immediate issue in the PSNP given considerable external commitment over the next several years, the issues of price inflation and setting the wage rate remain.

Recommendations

- Impacts on children need to be taken into consideration in the design of the PSNP. Programme design needs to ensure that the amount of time children spend working is not increased as a consequence of their families' participation in the programme. Further exploration with children, families, and programme managers is needed on exactly why public works programmes are having negative impacts on children's time use, in order to inform the design.

- Gender impacts of labour requirements also need further attention in order to ensure that programmes have positive impacts for women/men and girls/boys.
- A system needs to be put in place in order to ensure that children are not working in public works programmes. Building on the existing PSNP system, households that are not able to provide adult labour (without affecting the time use of their children) should receive direct support.

Depending on the outcomes of more in-depth findings, the following additional policy options may also warrant consideration:

- Increasing the wage rate that households receive for participating in cash/food for work programmes.
- Indexing the wage rate to better cope with impacts of inflation.
- Exploring alternative types of labour requirements for the PSNP, to address the issue of direct and indirect impacts on women's and men's time.

FURTHER READING

Central Statistical Agency (2002) *Ethiopia Child Labour Survey 2001*, Statistical Bulletin 262, Addis Ababa: CSA

Stephen Devereux and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler (2004) *Transformative Social Protection*, IDS Working Paper 232, Brighton: IDS

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This Policy Brief has been written by Jennifer Yablonski and Tassew Woldehanna based on the forthcoming Young Lives working paper: Employment Generation Schemes and Children's Time Use between Work and Schooling. Jennifer Yablonski is Poverty Policy Adviser at Save the Children UK and leads SC-UK's work on social protection. Tassew Woldehanna is Principal Investigator for Young Lives in Ethiopia and a Research Fellow at the Ethiopian Development Research Institute.

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