

Country Focus: Ethiopia



What is Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC) Research?

BASIC Research is a Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) funded programme examining why, how and when to use social protection approaches in protracted crises, to more effectively support vulnerable populations in coping with acute shocks as well as strengthening their livelihoods in the longer-term. Ultimately, BASIC Research aims to generate evidence and fresh perspectives on how to improve the provision of social assistance in the most difficult protracted crisis settings and for the populations that are the hardest to reach.

What work is BASIC Research doing in Ethiopia?

While BASIC Research is working across over 11 countries, work in Ethiopia focusses on two projects. The first assesses how Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) delivery systems relate to wider responses to conflict, displacement and return. The second project examines the role of social assistance in supporting livelihoods and climate resilience. The research is carried out by a team from Dadimos Consultants, Laterite, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (the University of Sussex), and other Ethiopian researchers.

1. Assessing social protection responses to conflict, displacement and return in Ethiopia

Conflicts in Ethiopia disproportionately affect poor agrarian and agro-pastoral areas with historically large chronically food insecure populations, who already have a low asset-base, are often distant from markets, and have few options to move outside of farming or livestock economies. The impacts of conflict-related processes on livelihoods and food security mean that social protection has a major role to play in longer-term recovery.

While adaptive social protection and Shock-Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) approaches have focused on opportunities for horizontal and vertical expansions to respond to climate-associated shocks, far less is known about situations where conflict and displacement also prevail, which present additional challenges to livelihoods and food security as well as constraints on programme operations.

This research project focuses on the responsiveness of PSNP systems to conflict and displacement situations. While phase 5 of the PSNP incorporates measures to strengthen shock responsiveness through expanding coverage, improving early warning, and incorporating contingent early responses, less is known about how these measures might be pursued in response to conflict and displacement. Further, there is little understanding of the sorts of delivery and design features that might support the resilience of social protection provision during conflict. Thus, the research asks:

- How has the PSNP responded to situations of conflict, displacement and return?
- How have programme structures for delivery and implementation flexed to address the needs of displaced/returnee populations?
- What features enable the effective delivery of the PSNP during conflict and in response to displacement? What features mitigate against this?

2. Livelihoods and Climate Resilience

This research examines the potential for social assistance programmes (PSNP but also complementary cash plus support and humanitarian cash assistance) to enhance the resilience of livelihood pathways in protracted crisis settings. Specifically, the research aims to understand how social and humanitarian assistance moderate compounding conflict, displacement and climate-related shocks

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and stressors. In addition, it looks at whether, how, and for whom social assistance supports resilience capacities. The research incorporates a longitudinal perspective, examining vulnerability patterns over time for different groups as well as longer livelihood trajectories, for recipients of social assistance.

The research questions for this project are:

- Does the receipt and duration of social assistance provision mitigate the impacts of conflict and climate related shocks and, if so, in what ways? In terms of resilience capacities, is there any difference between households who receive only transfers and those who receive additional livelihood support?
- To what extent have social assistance programmes addressed historical and recent drivers of vulnerability, including factors of social difference?
- How can social assistance reduce vulnerability and increase resilience capacities that are necessary for building and maintaining secure livelihoods in settings of compounding climate and conflict shocks?

The project uses mixed methods, incorporating surveys, community-based participatory action research, key informant interviews with PSNP and humanitarian implementers at multiple levels, analysis of climate trend data, as well as critical review of policy and programming documentation. Work has started on household and community surveys in areas of Amhara and Oromiya where a consortium of government agencies and development partners have implemented the Strengthen PSNP Institutions and Resilience (SPIR) programme – a programme modelled on cash plus approaches that has provided additional grants, assets and services to PSNP recipients. Areas covered in Amhara include those affected by conflict in 2021-2022, and in Oromiya areas were affected by widespread displacement in 2018-2019. Deeper qualitative and participatory research as well as analysis of climate data is planned from early 2023 to

complement ongoing survey work. Workshops will be planned later in 2023 with stakeholders to share and reflect on preliminary findings. Working papers and research briefs will be prepared incorporating feedback from these stakeholder engagements.

Where can you find out more?

To keep up to date with the latest BASIC Research activities, follow our [webpage on LinkedIn](#). There are already a variety of BASIC Research outputs examining social protection and humanitarian responses in Ethiopia, which can be found on the IDS website, including:

- Sabates-Wheeler, R.; Lind, J.; Harvey, P. and Slater, R. (2022) [Strengthening Responses at the Nexus of Social Protection, Humanitarian Aid and Climate Shocks in Protracted Crises: BASIC Research Framing Paper, BASIC Research Working Paper 1](#), Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, DOI: 10.19088/BASIC.2022.001
- Naess, L.O.; Selby, J. and Daoust, G. (2022) [Climate Resilience and Social Assistance in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings, BASIC Research Working Paper 2](#), Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, DOI: 10.19088/BASIC.2022.002
- Sabates-Wheeler, R.; Hirvonen, K.; Lind, J. and Hoddinott, J. (2022) [Expanding Social Protection Coverage with Humanitarian Aid: Lessons on Targeting and Transfer Values from Ethiopia](#), The Journal of Development Studies, 58:10, 1981-2000, DOI: [10.1080/00220388.2022.2096443](#)
- Sabates-Wheeler, R. and Lind, J. (2021) Social protection during conflict: reflections on Tigray, Institute of Development Studies blog. Available: <https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/social-protection-during-conflict-reflections-on-tigray/>