

**FOOD-FOR-WORK IN ETHIOPIA:  
CHALLENGING THE SCOPE OF PROJECT  
EVALUATIONS\***

**IDS WORKING PAPER 81**

**Liz Humphrey**

**SUMMARY**

Evaluations of the numerous Food-for-Work (FFW) projects in operation across Ethiopia are designed to assess their effectiveness, and are often defined by the objectives stated in the terms of reference. The paper asserts that the quality and usefulness of evaluations is greatly enhanced when the qualitative impacts of a project on the beneficiaries are included in the assessment since they often have a direct influence on conventional donor concerns such as targeting and the mode of payment. An evaluation framework is proposed which covers the design and delivery, outputs and impacts of a project and this structure is then adopted for a review of FFW evaluation documents. The analysis reveals the heavy emphasis on design and delivery mechanisms in the literature, and suggests the scope of evaluation exercises might be broadened to capture both the intended and unforeseen socio-economic impacts of a project.

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## ACRONYMS

CFF	Cash for food
CFW	Cash-for-work
DPPC	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission
EBSN	Employment-based safety net
EGS	Employment Generation Scheme
ERCS	Ethiopian Red Cross Society
FFW	Food-for-work
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
IHAUDP	Integrated Holistic Approach to Urban Development Project
LLPPA	Local level participatory planning approach
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
NDPPS	National Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PADEP	Peasant Agriculture Development Programme
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Committee
SEART	Sustainable Environmental and Agricultural Rehabilitation in Tigray
SEPAR	Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Administrative Region
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Food-for-Work (FFW) projects function as welfare safety nets for poor communities in food insecure areas, and represent a transition between emergency relief and the achievement of long term development objectives. Rather than distributing free food aid to those in need, the concept of food-for-work prescribes that able-bodied people work for a food wage. Programmes typically revolve around either labour-intensive public works such as road construction or afforestation, or income generating activities like starting a market garden. In this way, the projects hope to address deficits in food supply and at the same time improve the local infrastructure or create a self-sustaining livelihood, both of which will strengthen the capacity of the community to cope with droughts or other shocks in the future.

Ethiopia's chronic food insecurity and weak infrastructure suggest there is enormous potential for food-for-work projects across the country. Food shortages resulting from recurrent droughts, most prominently in 1984-5, have been exacerbated by the political turmoil of recent decades, and as a result, Ethiopia has been reliant on food aid to make up its national deficit. The fall of the military regime<sup>1</sup> in 1991 and establishment of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) brought a policy shift that signalled a move away from food hand-outs: the National Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Strategy of October 1993 states that no able-bodied person should receive gratuitous relief. This led to a guiding principle that 80% of food aid should be distributed through food-for-work.

The official emphasis on food-for-work gave further impetus to both new and existing projects which stemmed from previous famine relief efforts in Ethiopia over the last twenty years. A range of different organisations are involved in the funding and implementation of such schemes, including the UN World Food Programme, various non-governmental organisations and the TGE itself. The experiences of the many food-for-work projects are well documented in a number of reports that assess whether the intended objectives are being achieved. This paper is essentially a review of these evaluations, and is based on a comparison of the practical issues raised by the reports. The findings of the evaluations are considered in relation to the wider socio-economic impacts of the projects, leading to the assertion that the framework adopted to assess the success or failure of a project is often too narrow.

The paper begins with a clarification of the terminology used for food-for-work and related projects in the Ethiopian context. An overview of the major trends and programmes in recent years is then presented, including an outline of the projects whose evaluations are to be discussed. A thematic framework for a review of the literature is then proposed, covering both the design aspects and the impacts of the programme at the beneficiary level. The review itself looks at the arguments behind different policy decisions and summarises the stance of the available evaluation documents on each issue.

Any evaluation sets its own parameters in the terms of reference given before the research begins. Many of the evaluations reviewed in this paper limit their scope to measurable aspects in accordance with the project objectives. The paper argues that this approach is an important **part** of a full evaluation, but can overlook both intended and unintended qualitative impacts of a project that may have a profound influence on the local community.

## 2 DEFINITIONS

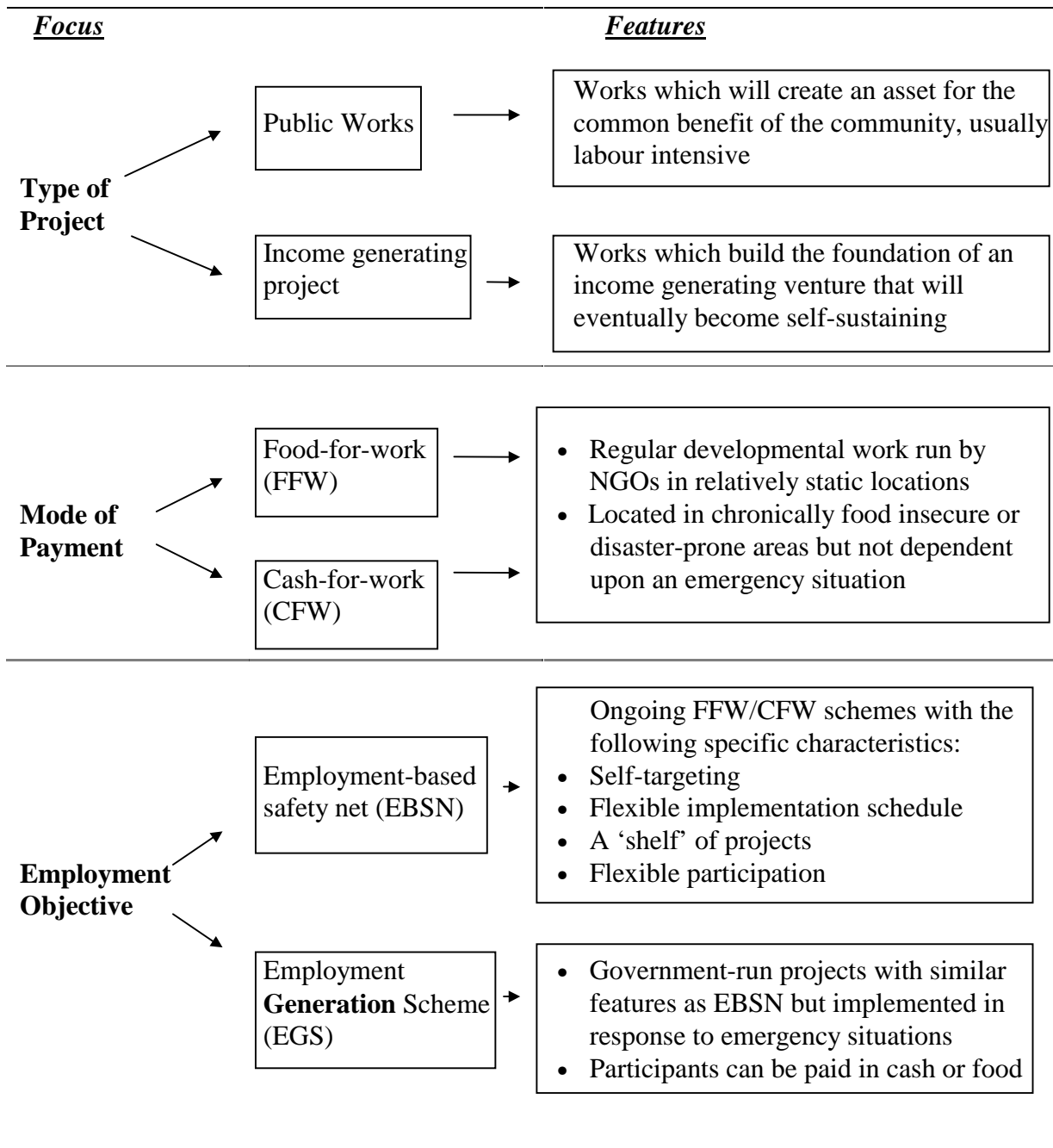
Food-for-work floats in a sea of related terms (and their acronyms) which cause confusion in both practice and theoretical debates, hence this section aims to clarify the terminology used in Ethiopia. Although there are subtle differences in design, all of the projects described share the same main objective in creating immediate welfare benefits for poor households, and secondly to contribute to longer term economic growth by creating sustainable assets.

Food-for-work (FFW) is the idea behind development programmes that use food aid resources to pay for either public works programmes or income generating activities. The main extension of this concept is cash-for-work (CFW) whereby the project participants are paid in money rather than food; much debate surrounds the choice of the most appropriate mode of payment as will be discussed later. Meanwhile, an 'employment based safety net' (EBSN) could be a food- or cash-for-work programme where the focus is on the creation of employment rather than a relief effort.

Government projects run by the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) are known as Employment Generation Schemes, abbreviated to EGS. It should be noted that the prominent employment based safety net scheme in Maharashtra, India also uses the acronym EGS but this stands for Employment **Guarantee** Scheme<sup>2</sup>. The implications of the two are very different; the Ethiopian programme aims to create jobs but does not promise to make work available for everyone.

Figure 1 (overleaf) illustrates some distinctions between these terms on a practical level as used in Ethiopia. On the ground, the terms are often used interchangeably, and the variety of projects and experiences within the country is so varied that it is sometimes difficult to categorise concrete characteristics of each project type (Sharp 1997: 25). A general distinction is that FFW projects secure a basic and steady activity level while EGS provides additional inputs at times of increased need (WFP 1998: 13-14).

**Figure 1: Food-for-Work and related project types in Ethiopia**



### 3 A PROFILE OF FOOD-FOR-WORK PROJECTS IN ETHIOPIA

Food-for-work and similar projects are scattered throughout most provinces of Ethiopia. The following is a brief chronology and overview of some of the main programmes that are and have been in operation over the last ten years. Table 1 gives various examples of different food and cash-for-work projects, while a map of project locations can be found at Appendix 1<sup>3</sup>. The projects described here are specifically centred on FFW principles while FFW is often a component of larger, diverse development projects operating within a particular region, for example Oxfam’s programme in East Hararghe<sup>4</sup>.

**Table 1: Examples of FFW and CFW Projects in Ethiopia<sup>5</sup>**

<i>Project &amp; Location</i>	<i>Years of Operation</i>	<i>Agencies</i>	<i>Description of Works &amp; Other Comments</i>
<b>Project 2488 Expansions 1, 2 and 3</b> Multi-locational	1: '80-'87 2: '87-'94 3: 1995-	WFP and MoA	Rehabilitation of forest, grazing and agricultural lands Biggest FFW in Africa
<b>Cash for Food (CFF)</b> Gonder & Shoa	1984/5 – 1990	UNICEF/ RRC	Digging wells and ponds, vegetable gardening. Cash relief for locally purchased grain
<b>Damot Weyda FFW</b>	1985 -	Concern	Relief FFW project. Size has expanded according to demand
<b>Peasant Agricultural Development Programme, (PADEP), Shoa</b>	1989	EC and MoA	Works mainly involve soil conservation & forestry. Cash-for-work project
<b><u>EBSN Pilot Projects</u></b> Addis Ababa	1991-	WFP/ Concern	Slum upgrading, health and socio-economic development. 80% women participants.
Wobera, E. Hararghe	1992-	WFP/ MoA Oxfam UK	Rehabilitation of agricultural lands/rural infrastructure
Merti-Jeju, Arsi	June 1992 to 1994	WFP/MoA	Road construction. Experiment in self-targeting & implementation of EBSN through local government.
Kilte Awlaelo, Tigray	Jan 1993 -	WFP/GTZ	Construction of roads, dams and terraces. Mainly for families of ex-servicemen
<b>Employment Generation Scheme (EGS)</b>	1993 -	TGE	Various activities.
<b>Tekle Haimanot FFW,</b> Addis Ababa	1992-	WFP/SIDA & IHAUDP	Poorest district of Addis Ababa 'Integrated Urban Development Project'
<b>Koisha CFW,</b> North Omo	1992 -	SOS Sahel	Construction of local road from Koisha to Bele
<b>Microproject Programme</b> FFW, Tigray	1995-2005	REST/ 31 donors	500 micro-dams
<b>Hintalo-Wajirat FFW,</b> Tigray		ERCS/ SEART	Dam building

The largest programme in Ethiopia, which is the biggest food-for-work scheme in Africa, is Project 2488 run by the UN World Food Programme. This was established in 1980 as a culmination of other WFP food-for-work projects that had been running during the late 1970s. The project approach has continually evolved over the last 17 years, and is now in Expansion 3. The main objectives are the rehabilitation of forest, grazing and agricultural lands which involves land terracing, tree plantation and other improvements to farmers' own land. Activities are designed to increase future yields by reducing land degradation, and thereby improve food security. Current operations are ongoing in four chronically food-deficit regions of

the country –Tigray, Oromya, Amhara and the Southern Ethiopia Peoples’ Administrative Region (SEPAR), although other regions have been included in the past.

An early experiment in paying cash for public works projects was set up by the government with the support of UNICEF during the famine of 1984/5. This was known as Cash-for-food because the cash was supplied so that farmers could buy local grain rather than the imported food aid grain. Around the same time, Concern introduced a small scale FFW project in Wollaita, which was integrated with their food aid distribution operation.

Maxwell and Belshaw’s report on Food for Development (1990), undertaken for the World Food Programme (WFP), was very influential in the policy-making arena because of its recommendation to develop employment-based safety net projects. The document prescribed EBSNs as projects that could be taken 'off the shelf' and implemented when and wherever there is a demand (see Figure 1). In response, the WFP established four two-year pilot projects in areas with distinct socio-economic features: Arsi, Tigray, East Hararghe (rural areas) and Addis Ababa (urban). The most extensively documented of these pilot projects is the multi-sectoral employment scheme in Merti and Jeju districts (*Woredas*), Arsi Province. This programme involved pond construction, road building and conservation activities, as well as the development of three tree nurseries.

The establishment of the pilot schemes coincided with the end of the civil war in 1991. The new Government aimed to build on the experiences of EBSNs for the national Employment Generation Scheme. Everyone who is physically able and in need of food aid must now work on EGS; free relief is limited to the aged, disabled, pregnant women and full-time carers. A ‘rule of thumb’ associated with the NDPPS and EGS is to increase the proportion of food aid distributed through food-for-work to 80%, so that only 20% is used as gratuitous relief. There is confusion over this principle in the field as although widely quoted, it does not formally appear in any policies or guidelines (Sharp 1997: 27). Nonetheless, the principle increased the emphasis on food-for-work schemes at a local and national level.

Regular NGO development projects based on food-for-work and cash-for-work are also currently in operation in both urban and rural areas of the country alongside the EGS. One of the projects frequently referred to in this paper is run by SOS Sahel in Koisha, Wellaita. This is a cash-for-work programme based on the construction of a local road. Another prominent example is co-ordinated by the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) which plans to construct 500 micro-dams across the province over a 10 year period.

#### **4 PROJECT EVALUATIONS: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS**

The key function of project evaluations is to provide feedback to the planning process so as to increase the effectiveness of project activities. The large number of food-for-work programmes operating in Ethiopia has generated a vast literature reporting and analysing their achievements and deficiencies. The structure of these evaluations is framed by the research questions laid out in the terms of reference.

Aspects of planning and implementation are common features of many evaluations since they constitute the mechanism by which a programme aims to produce an output and bring about a desired impact. However, if poverty alleviation programmes are to be based on a “subtle understanding of political, coercive, cultural and social forces that dominate the economic in Ethiopia” (Bevan 1997: 1), these factors need to be included in an evaluation exercise. Furthermore, project activities could influence the lives of participants and their communities in ways which were not anticipated at the planning stage, and these might enhance, counteract or be independent of the intended outcome. The argument for a broad evaluation framework stems from the assertion that assessing the anticipated impacts of a project in isolation does not necessarily reflect the overall benefit accrued to individuals or the communities in which they live. In this sense, how, if at all, have the wider impacts of FFW projects been assessed in the past?

### **Approaches to Impact Assessment**

This brief account of evaluation designs sets a benchmark for the later review of project documents. A good starting point to the discussion is the socio-economic survey of Project 2488 (Expansion 1) which was conducted by Yeraswork and Solomon four years after the programme began. They reported the views and attitudes of beneficiaries towards the impact of the programme. The research results were both useful and influential, however, such a broad approach to assessing the programme has not been attempted since.

In 1986, a World Food Programme evaluation mission reviewed the approach to monitoring and evaluation on Project 2488 in the light of the socio-economic survey. The document – sometimes referred to as the Scollin Report after its author – identified some key effects and benefits of the project (see Appendix II.1), and recognised that these could only be measured at the beneficiary level. To capture this information, the study recommended two surveys of both peasant associations and households within three years (Scollin 1986: 2).

A further report by Julius Holt later the same year asserted that a long term case study approach would be needed to assess the effects and benefits outlined in Scollin’s proposals. Holt suggested that the size and importance of Project 2488 called for a major investment in evaluations, and as such, a permanent evaluation unit should be established to monitor impact at the peasant association level (Holt 1986: 16). However, a unit of this type was not set up, and World Food Programme evaluations are conducted by the country level evaluation team.

A report in 1993 presenting a possible evaluation framework for the WFP employment-based safety net pilot projects suggests that the scope of impact assessments had not been expanded. The document (Berhanu 1993) concentrates on the monitoring of design and delivery features of the project, and is summarised in a logframe format (see Appendix II.2). Project impacts are included as an evaluation issue, but the proposal did not provide a mechanism for their assessment.

The arguments made in this paper correlate to those made by Holt over ten years ago; an ongoing impact assessment of food-for-work and similar programmes would make a valuable contribution to the effective achievement of project goals. There are some signs of a move in this direction; a recent



recommendation from an interim evaluation of Project 2488 (WFP 1997a: 11) was to appoint regional supervisors and to develop the system to include assessment of effects and impact. This approach would still fail to provide data at the beneficiary level.

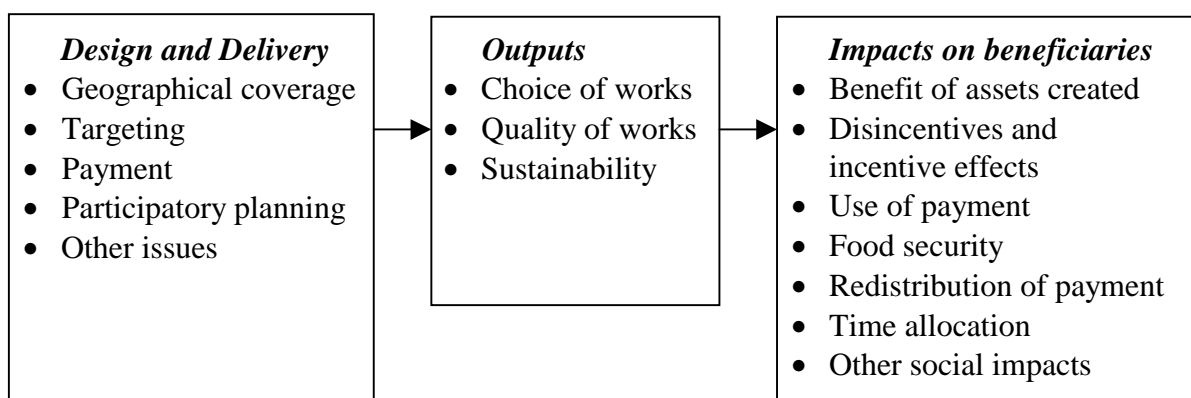
This discussion prompts two key questions: First, why do evaluations of food-for-work schemes usually exclude the wider impacts of the project on the lives of beneficiaries when the suggestion is not new? This point will be revisited in the conclusion. Second, what kind of approach would be required if the scope of evaluations were to be broadened?

The following review of food-for-work project evaluations is based around this second issue, and as such, the next section outlines a thematic framework covering both quantitative and qualitative aspects of a project. While allowing a cursory comparison of the evaluations and to fit the purpose of the paper in examining the literature, the structure might also be considered as an outline for an actual evaluation.

### The Review Framework

The review is structured to correspond with the flow of project activities, beginning with design and delivery, through to outputs and then impacts on the beneficiaries (see figure 2). This is an arbitrary separation since design and delivery have a direct bearing on the outputs and impacts of a project, and causes and effects are often difficult to distinguish. In addition, this categorisation loosely follows the emphasis placed on project aspects by donors (design & delivery/outputs) and participants (wider impacts), and underlines the natural bias of evaluations towards the direct interests of donors.

**Figure 2. A Framework for the Review of FFW Project Evaluation Literature in Ethiopia**



It is recognised that gender issues have not been included as a separate category in this framework. Women are often statistically ‘under-represented’ in work schemes, and the reasons why women eligible for a project choose to join or stay away yields information relating to both design issues and impact. In this respect, gender was felt to cross-cut many of the central issues of the discussion, and is therefore mentioned as a subtext to several themes.

There is one further point for clarification. When assessing the extent to which the objectives have been achieved and the impact the projects have on the lives of beneficiaries, there must be a clear definition of a household. The political and physical boundaries of a household depend on cultural context and this varies in different parts of Ethiopia. As part of their evaluation of the Merti-Jeju pilot project, ITAD/WFP (1994: 18) classified households into three main types, and this can be found in Appendix III. A combination of all the examples they defined were found within the same region. This diversity has implications in the analysis of aspects such as targeting (section 5.1b), redistribution of payment (section 5.3e) and social impact (section 5.3g).

## **5 A REVIEW OF PROJECT EVALUATIONS**

Following the above framework, this literature review introduces the theory of each aspect together with practical evidence from available project evaluations. Some of the references are general reports on EBSN and related schemes, others examine a theme (e.g. targeting) and some are project specific. The analysis refers frequently to a few prominent projects, notably Project 2488, the Merti-Jeju employment support programme and SOS Sahel's cash-for-work programme in Koisha, Wellaita. The discussion highlights the issues that are considered and overlooked by the documents (see Appendix IV for a summary table). A general conclusion is that while most evaluations concentrate on design and delivery mechanisms, much pure references are made to the impacts of projects as perceived and experienced by the beneficiaries.

### **Design and Delivery**

Elements of planning and implementation are the starting point of most project evaluations. They are relatively straight forward to monitor since the donor (or the contracted implementing agency) is in control of the decisions; additionally, the lessons which can be drawn from one project can often be applied elsewhere, so there is a broad scope to put the report recommendations into practice.

Table 2 summarises the main aspects of project design, the key decisions involved and the issues for consideration when identifying a strategy. The table and review that follow are organised under discrete headings, but in practice, design and delivery mechanisms are a set of interrelated aspects. Trade-offs between different themes are inevitable, and the emphasis in any project design depends on donor priorities.

**Table 2: The Implications of Food-for-work Project Design**

<i>Design Aspect</i>	<i>Choices</i>	<i>Issues at Stake</i>
Geographical coverage (selection of project sites)	Selection of priority areas and criteria for this choice	Poor correlation between the location of the most vulnerable population and accessibility of works
Targeting (selection of households within project area)	Self-targeting Administrative targeting Community targeting	Inclusion and/or exclusion rates too high  Dependency/disincentive for regular activities if participants are inappropriate
Payments	Food only Cash only Combination of food/cash Level of payment	Distortions in food and/or labour markets  Too many or too few participants
Participatory Planning	To what extent should planning and implementation be in co-operation with the community?	Sustainability and maintenance problems if the community are not involved from the outset
Cost effectiveness	Trade-off of different aspects according to project priorities	Limitations of the project budget
Replicability and Flexibility	Which design features can be applied elsewhere and which will enable the project to adapt according to demand?	Creating a bank of projects that can be 'pulled off the shelf' and implemented or contracted to meet people's needs.
Integration with other projects	How far does the project co-operate with other development efforts?	Avoid competition for resources and conflict of objectives

Compiled from the available literature

### **(a) Geographical coverage**

The choice of project location is the first level in selecting potential participants. Corresponding to the objectives of employment based safety nets (see section 2), the area of operation should, in theory, be poor and/or food insecure, and in need of infrastructural development or income generating opportunities. In practice, there is a tension between serving more remote areas with a scattered but nonetheless poor population and the accessibility of the project site for both participants and staff. Paradoxically, areas most in need of such projects – that is, with the most severe poverty and food insecurity – are likely to be areas least attractive in terms of project implementation.

A review of Project 2488 Expansion 1 suggested that the project locations did not correlate with the areas in most need. Yeraswork (1988: 12) explains that site selection was often judged by a compromise between the level of environmental degradation in the area and the immediate and long term needs of the local population. Furthermore, there is evidence of a mismatch between project location and the needs of food insecure people. GTZ (1993: 77) note the high concentration of 2488 projects in close proximity to the existing road network, while there seemed to be little relationship between regional food security status and

FFW activities<sup>6</sup>. This critique is also largely true of other projects; Appendix I shows a cluster of projects forming a line along the centre of the map which correlates with the main North-South highway.

Concern's Food-for-work operation in Damot Weyde involved between 23 to 27 sites at the time of the 1993 report, and at seasonal peaks of food shortage was thought to cater for over 80% of food insecure households in the region (O'Sullivan 1993: 5). Specific reasons for choice of site are not given. The same goes for the choice of local sites for the WFP's four employment-based safety net pilot projects although the regions were selected in order to compare their very different geographic and social conditions. However, the evaluation of the Merti-Jeju project (ITAD/WFP 1994) concluded that insufficient attention was given to the selection of Peasant Associations within the region where the project would work, and evaluators were concerned that the distribution of work among the peasant associations was uneven.

### **(b) Targeting**

Donors generally place heavy emphasis on determining whether the intended social group or community work on the project. The process of selecting the most effective targeting strategy has produced an extensive debate in itself<sup>7</sup> since most design and delivery issues have a direct relationship with the effectiveness of the chosen targeting mechanism. As such, targeting is covered almost without exception in the evaluation reports reviewed.

Sharp (1997: 6-10) gives four broad categories of targeting mechanisms, three of which are applicable to food-for-work projects<sup>8</sup>:

- *Administrative targeting* applies a specific set of criteria which qualifies members of a household to participate. Typical criteria might be income-based, according to the size of land holding or nutritional status, and/or gender-based. This approach has the potential to select the most vulnerable households. However, it is both time- and resource-consuming and furthermore, opens the possibility of leakages through corruption.
- *Self-targeting* projects offer a level of payment which is low enough that only the most needy will want to participate. This minimises the costs incurred in selecting beneficiaries, but may ultimately undermine the project objectives of providing adequate welfare to the most vulnerable if the wages are too low to support a family. On the other hand, if the wages are too high, there is likely to be more volunteers than the project can accommodate.
- *Community targeting* allows individuals who feel they should qualify to put themselves forward to participate in the project, while the final selection decision rests with a committee made up of community members. Whereas pure administrative targeting rests on an outside assessment of a household, community targeting assumes that community members already know their neighbours' situation and have an inherent understanding of vulnerability. Using this knowledge avoids expensive and lengthy administrative procedures, but difficulties may arise in determining who is an appropriate community representative for the committee.

In reality, no targeting system can ever be perfect, and the chosen strategy reflects a judgement about trade-offs between **inclusion** and **exclusion** errors (Sharp 1997: 17). These terms refer respectively to the number of better off participants who are included, and the number of poor households who are not. A range of factors influence the rate of inclusion and exclusion, such as the extent of poverty in the area, accessibility to the project site (both part of the coverage decision discussed above), the difficulty of the work involved, time clashes with domestic and agricultural activities, and the degree of corruption in the administration. Yeraswork and Solomon (1985: 39-46) found that for different peasant associations, the 'catchment' of participants in Project 2488 (Exp 1) fell into three main categories:

- Strictly on the basis of membership of the PA
- On the basis of PA membership, with non-members joining in the case of a labour shortage
- No connection with PA membership

The report does not state the reasons for defining the catchment, but implies that the decision is taken locally. Within these boundaries, the main selection criteria were reported to range from poverty and the capacity to work, poverty and the size of the household plot, poverty alone and, in some cases, the whims of co-ordinators and bribery (ibid: 44). A large majority of interviewees reported that the better-off were not excluded from the project. Furthermore, mixed replies were given as to whether recruitment gave priority to the poor but only 27% were prepared to give a definite answer (ibid: 41-2). It was perhaps the absence of a uniform recruitment policy in the past that has led to the high donor interest in targeting which exists now.

The CFW at Koisha opted for administrative targeting. Self-targeting was rejected on the basis of the suspected high demand for employment even at a very low wage, and a lack of information about the going rate for the type of work on offer. Instead, SOS Sahel committees and local extension agents were given the responsibility of recruitment. There were some general guidelines: priority was given to the poor, 25% of participants should be female, and only one member per household was allowed to participate. More detailed eligibility criteria were left to the discretion of the selectors in each PA, but had to be clearly stated (Jenden 1994: 48-49).

There were frequent complaints about the selection procedure in the evaluation survey, although the performance of the committees was not uniform. Committee members were said to generally favour friends and sometimes recruit more than the agreed one person per household. The selectors themselves reported time pressures and the subsequent rejection of the candidates they put forward. Even so, further discussions and planning led to greater community participation and improvements in the system. The evaluation concluded that despite high demands on resources, administrative selection was more appropriate than a self-targeting approach for this project since the wage rate required to minimise participants would be too low to have any significant impact on food security in the area.

The Merti-Jeju project was an experiment in self-targeting which maintained a constant food wage based on nutritional requirements, but introduced more demanding work norms to reduce the number of people who came forward to work. The evaluation states that this strategy appeared to be effective, although

participants repeatedly complained about the heavy work load (ITAD/WFP 1994: viii). A criticism of this targeting method is that the generally harder work disguised a reduction in pay, and reduced the benefits to the weaker members of the community who could not maintain the standard (Masefield 1997).

The evaluators of the Merti-Jeju EBSN also undertook a two-stage vulnerability ranking exercise, organising focus groups at the community level and then exclusively with the vulnerable group themselves. The exercise highlighted the existence of different types of household even within the same region of Ethiopia; the different categories of a household were particularly significant in identifying the boundaries of who belonged to which household and exactly how many households belonged to each peasant association (see Appendix III). Survey results indicated that 11% of households had no members who were able to take part in the physical work on offer. Meanwhile, 60% of participants were from the most vulnerable group and of those ranked as 'eligible', 85% worked on the project (WFP/ITAD 1994: 26).

The WFP pilot project in Tigray was able to take a more administrative approach because the poorer households seemed to have confidence in the local community parliament (*baito*) system, which is different to other parts of Ethiopia. Also, recruitment was focussed on ex-soldiers and returnees from other settlement areas since the war; both criteria are easily verified which reduced the scope for bias (Herbinger 1993: 9).

The selection system at the Damot Weyde FFW project adopted community targeting combined with an element of self-targeting (i.e. a low wage). Concern set the selection criteria, which is applied by an elected committee from within the peasant association. In addition, locally employed nutrition workers and Concern agricultural extension agents assess the nutrition and crop status in the project area. This information is used to determine how many people are likely to need FFW assistance at a particular time so that a participant quota is fixed every 2 months. Project staff consider this method of targeting to be effective (O'Sullivan 1993: 2).

To summarise, targeting strategies are in practice often a combination of the three approaches given earlier. The most appropriate method will depend on the local context, including the economy, infrastructure and culture. Other factors that influence the course of action are the objectives of the programme, the resources available and the cost-effectiveness of different targeting options (Sharp 1997: 17).

### **(c) Payment**

The main issues here are the mode of payment (food or cash), the level of wage paid to participants and the timing of delivery.

The first two are overlapping discussions. A food wage (often referred to as 'payment in kind') is based on nutritional needs, and is usually in line with the WFP/MoA standard of 3kg of wheat and 120g of oil per day. This represents enough food to supply a household of six people with 1,800 calories per day. However, this does not carry a constant value in money terms, while a cash wage – at a standard of 3 Ethiopian Birr a day – may not cover the consumption requirements of the household in the light of fluctuating prices. Also, both the mode and level of payment are part of the targeting debate. There is a

strong case that a food wage is a guarantee of reaching the needy in itself since those eager for extra money would not be attracted to take part (Tengroth 1996: 20). Similarly, depressing the wage level is part of a self-targeting strategy, as described in the previous section.

Table 3 is a brief summary of the arguments in the cash or food payment debate, although like targeting, there is no clear-cut preference for one approach over another in particular circumstances. Cash payments in employment based safety nets were generally not given consideration until fairly recently, and there are still only a few CFW projects operating in Ethiopia. Although this paper is primarily concerned with food-for-work, the use of cash payments is increasingly important since international food aid is generally on the decline. Donors may also argue that the use of cash is more cost-effective, it allows greater flexibility for the participants and supports the development of local markets. It could also be proposed that payment in cash is less patronising than food wages, although others believe that making the scheme resemble regular paid employment takes away the spirit of creating assets for the common benefit of the community (Tengroth 1996: 23).

**Table 3: EBSN – Payment in kind versus payment in cash**

<b>Conditions under which PAYMENT IN CASH might be preferable</b>	<b>Conditions under which PAYMENT IN KIND might be preferable</b>
The project objective is a general income transfer, or where food supplementation is the objective, it can be assumed that cash funds will be transferred to food expenditure	The project objective is an increase in food intake
Targeting within households (e.g. women or children) is possible using cash transfers	Targeting within households is only possible with food
Social traditions can accommodate remuneration in cash or direct distribution of food might cause changes in peoples' food preferences.	Social traditions favour remuneration in kind and food aid will not cause undesirable taste changes
Food is available to buy, and there are not serious distortions in local food markets. Distribution mechanisms (e.g. fair price shops) function or can be expected to adjust or be established in response to increased purchasing power.	Food is unavailable or over-priced (traders making supra-normal profits or not serving remote areas); and government interventions with food aid cannot improve the functioning of the market.
Adequate institutional capacity and accountability exists locally for the deposit, transfer, expenditure or auditing of cash funds.	Local capacity is more suitable to handling food rather than cash. The risk of diversion of food is less than of that of cash.
Monetisation is more cost-effective than distribution in kind. Donors are flexible about substitution of cash for food aid and are prepared to cover associated administrative costs.	The cost-effectiveness of direct distribution (overall administrative logistical costs against the net local value of food transferred) is significantly more favourable than monetisation. Donors only prepared to provide food aid.

Source: Jenden 1994: 56 adapted from Maxwell 1993

A stepping stone between food and cash aid to pay the wages of EBSNs is the practice of monetising food aid, that is by selling food aid imports before distribution to the beneficiaries. This was originally carried out by donors to meet the logistical costs of supplying food aid, and often involves sale of part of the food consignment at the port of entry. There are several reports that explore the possibilities of expanding the scope of monetisation (e.g. Maxwell and Owens 1992, Maxwell 1992, Gragne 1993, Hogg and Galle 1993).

Project 2488 has operated on food payments since it was established. The socio-economic survey undertaken after five years of operation (Yeraswork and Solomon 1985: 85) found that about 90% of beneficiaries prefer to be paid in food. A relatively high proportion of those who thought cash payments would be more appropriate were from areas where food was more readily available on the local market, whereas three quarters of those who stated a preference for a food wage said that food was expensive due to shortages and that 'cash did not buy as much food'. When asked about their attitude towards the concept of receiving food, around 92% of those interviewed responded positively. However, almost half thought the amount of food (3kg of grain, 120g of oil) was low compared to the labour contribution (ibid: 89).

Payment delays in Project 2488 were found to be a major problem by the 1985 evaluation, if not the key shortfall of the project. This was especially serious considering the extensive drought and famine at this time; 76% emphasised this point, and suggestions were made that the payments should be distributed every 15 days or at least monthly. Some beneficiaries suggested that cash payments might reduce delays in distribution (ibid: 85) while 14% thought that that the payment level should be increased (ibid: 91).

Similar objections were raised on the Merti-Jeju project where dissatisfaction among participants about the level of payment attached to the work involved was widespread. Payment delays were also a major problem; the evaluators suggested a minimum standard of payment within one month of work undertaken, but concluded that the project had not been adequately supported with timely food supplies (ITAD/WFP 1994: xi). The project was set up as food-for-work and the possibility of using cash was not considered in the 1993 evaluation.

The FFW at Damot Weyde initially paid 3kg of wheat for a half-day's work but this was reduced to 2kg because the rate was found to be higher than other employment in the area, causing significant casual participation. In this case, food was considered to be more appropriate than cash since much of the FFW cereal payment is consumed within the area. Also, the reduction in wage after the initial phase of the project showed that when targeting of FFW is accurate, sales of the food to local merchants declines, and to some extent this situation reduces the justification for a changeover to CFW (O'Sullivan 1993: 10).

The so-called 'cash-for-food' programme, an early experiment in cash payments, was implemented during the 1984/5 famine, and caused drastic distortions in prices because there was no food surplus at that time and the markets could not function. Some 75% of households reported that prices rose by as much as 100% around the time of distribution. The project was eventually discontinued (Birhanu and Aylieff 1993: 24-5).



The Peasant Agriculture Development Programme (PADEP) paid participants the standard cash rate of 3 Birr, but the market value at the time of evaluation was less than the WFP standard food payments. The comparison with the payment rates of local FFW projects caused recruitment difficulties for PADEP, while it was considered unfeasible to raise the value of the cash wage. Project staff also seemed to prefer FFW because CFW entailed more layers of decision making, and was more susceptible to embezzlement (Aylieff and Birhanu 1993: 26-27).

An example of a project that chose to pay in cash rather than food is the SOS Sahel programme in Koisha. The reasons behind the decision were due to administrative simplicity, transparency and cost effectiveness. However, Jenden's evaluation (1994: 57) found that 77% of labourers preferred food, and concluded that:

“...apart from the farmers' preference, there are no strong arguments to pay in food rather than cash in normal years provided the market supply remains stable” (ibid).

The research findings considered this preference to be based on fear of loss on the conversion to food – nonetheless a very practical and persuasive fear for the beneficiaries. The evaluators also suggested that beneficiaries would have serious difficulties in transporting the grain, but this concern was not voiced by the farmers. Meanwhile, a workshop about the project concluded that cash payments would be appropriate at some times of the year, and food payments at others, a suggestion also made by GTZ in their general report on EU projects (1993: 78). The Koisha project evaluation stated that the management implications of this would be unrealistic (Jenden 1994: 58).

Some comments were also made about the varying level of payment for different tasks at Koisha, while there was a major problem with appropriation of wages by the gang chiefs (Kabos) who lead the work teams. This meant payments were often late and less than people expected (ibid: 50).

A further important issue for consideration is the composition of food payments (e.g. grain, oil or both). There is a direct link with the contents of a food wage and the extent of monetisation at the beneficiary level. These elements will be returned to later in Section 5.3c on Use of Payments.

#### **(d) Participatory planning**

It is now generally accepted that community participation, especially at the planning stage but also in execution and evaluation, is crucial for the sustainability and maintenance of a project and the assets it creates. As such, in 1993, the Ministry of Development and Environmental Protection devised a Local Level Participatory Planning Approach (LLPPA)<sup>9</sup> as a guideline for projects in Ethiopia.

What is less clear is the **capacity** in which the community becomes involved, which can range from manipulative participation – where participation is simply a pretence – to self-mobilisation of the community (see Pretty 1995). The Merti-Jeju project was the only evaluation in this review that attempted to qualify the degree of participation in the planning of activities. The evaluators introduced a spectrum

ranging from compliance (doing what the project wants), co-operation (going along with project ideas), collaboration (working with project staff) through to control, where participants lead the project activities (WFP/ITAD 1993: 38). At the time of the evaluation, the situation was classed as 'co-operation', as illustrated by the top-down national planning targets for conservation methods that the communities who were surveyed had not been told about. The report concluded that the project fell short of LLPPA recommendations (ibid: 39).

Earlier evaluations of Project 2488 (Yeraswork and Solomon 1985, Yeraswork 1984) did not explicitly analyse community participation in planning and implementation. The socio-economic survey (Yeraswork and Solomon 1985: 38) gives information on this aspect through the description of the planning process. A few of the peasant associations were initially active in approaching representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture to set up FFW in their area, but only two of the twenty-four PAs interviewed replied that agreement on the work to be done was in consultation. Further meetings took the form of briefings by extension workers, who then took the main responsibility for the planning of the works. Timing of activities was decided by the MoA officer, and two of the PAs felt that the project had unacceptably bypassed their authority.

Participation has since gained popularity and is now considered part of the 'new orthodoxy' of development theory and practice. As such, the most recent expansion of 2488 addresses participation issues directly, and was modified to incorporate the principles of the LLPPA. A workshop dedicated to participatory planning in Project 2488, expansion III was held in October 1997<sup>10</sup>.

The targeting system in the Kindo Koisha CFW was originally designed by one of the farmer participants at the Bele workshop, and as such was generally well accepted by the community (Jenden 1994: 69). A consensus emerging from the same workshop was that the mode of payment should also be decided through participation from the beginning of the planning stage (SOS Sahel 1994), although the nature of this participation was not qualified.

Finally, the survey and field work by Birhanu and Aylieff (1993: 28) showed that the main activities in which FFW projects involved the community were site selection, recruitment of participants and mobilisation of resources (in descending order). Very few projects used participatory planning methods, while some administrators felt that if workers were to be involved in setting their own work norms, this was tantamount to allowing them to set their own wages.

#### **(e) Other issues**

Other aspects that are commonly discussed in evaluations are cost effectiveness, replicability and flexibility, and integration with other projects.

Budgetary considerations are fundamental to any development project, and are therefore addressed in the majority of evaluations. There are inevitable trade-offs of money spent against benefits accrued; if it is much cheaper to distribute cash, how does this weigh against reduced benefits to women and children compared with a direct food payment (Maxwell 1993)? The dilemmas are more pertinent in an evaluation

which aims to accommodate local perceptions when implementing agencies are accountable to their donors and not to beneficiaries.

Replicability and flexibility are emphasised in employment based safety nets to build a 'shelf' of projects that can be implemented according to seasonal needs or a sudden rise in demand. The survey by Birhanu and Aylieff (1993:14) showed that all but one of the NGOs in their questionnaire thought their projects could be repeated elsewhere, but that the majority did not keep a shelf of projects as required of an EBSN. Meanwhile, the Concern FFW in Damot Weyde was considered not to be replicable because the programme design had developed in a particular local context (O'Sullivan 1993: 10).

Co-ordination with other development projects is needed to ensure that food also reaches those who are unable to take part in food-(or cash-)for-work. A successful example is the Concern scheme at Damot Weyde where feeding programmes and dry ration distributions were implemented alongside food-for-work operations. The level of relief aid depended on the season and the yields from the annual harvest, and would adapt to assist those unable to join the FFW at any particular time (O'Sullivan 1993: 1). Improved integration of Project 2488 was recommended by GTZ (1993: 78), while WFP (1997a: 8) found that Expansion 3 was much better co-ordinated with other agricultural and rural infrastructural development initiatives than previous phases of the project.

In addition, differing conditions of projects operating in close proximity can lead to conflicts of interest and undermine the achievement of objectives. From an implementation perspective, the poaching of government department staff by large NGOs who tend to offer a higher salary than the civil service can hamper overall development efforts (Maxwell and Lirensio 1994). At the beneficiary level, the recruitment difficulties stemming from the difference in payment levels between the PADEP cash-for-work project and nearby FFW activities (section 5.1c) are an illustration of poor co-ordination.

## **Outputs**

The outputs of a project are the tangible assets created through project activities. Donors tend to be especially interested in outputs, since they are a lasting and quantifiable symbol of project achievements. This can be contrasted with the perceptions of beneficiaries, who see projects primarily as a source of employment (GTZ 1993: 78). Decisions concerning outputs must therefore be sensitive to this mismatch of priorities.

### **(a) Choice of works**

Project activities should ideally create a large volume of short term work, require minimal supervision and capital input, and match the priorities of the community. To correlate with project objectives, activities must also maximise the employment potential of the project by utilising the type of labour which poor households have to offer<sup>11</sup>. In general, Birhanu and Aylieff (1993: 12) found that work norms seemed to

vary; some projects adhered to standards used by the World Food Programme, while in other cases, tasks were set by project managers.

The choice of works is connected to some of the design issues covered in the previous section. The discussion on coverage described how Project 2488 weighed up the need for conservation work with the level of poverty, and the consequent need for work opportunities in the area. Targeting of participants is also directly influenced by the type of work in that some of the most vulnerable social groups are not physically able to complete the work on offer (see section 5.1b). In particular, this carries implications for the gender ratio of participants.

The strategy of increasing the difficulty of the work on the Merti-Jeju pilot project is probably connected to the low proportion (35%) of female participants involved in the works (Masefield 1997). Similarly, women on the Micro-project Programme in Tigray spoke of the problems in attaining the work norms (*ibid*). In Project 2488 (expansion 1), it was found that women and men did the same tasks. In one catchment, there were virtually no women participants, but respondents to the survey did not seem to worry because in the local culture, the activities done were thought to be “the work of men” (Yeraswork and Solomon 1985: 54). This latter point illustrates the delicate balance between addressing female participation and the appropriateness of action that aims to alter gendered work patterns that are culturally embedded.

The choice of works is also central for quality and sustainability. In some studies, farmers were reported to have removed soil bunds because they were detrimental to production rather than beneficial (see Krüger 1994). In other words, there is no incentive for high quality work or long term maintenance if the asset created is not appropriate to the local context.

## **(b) Quality of works**

Problems with the quality of works are a typical constraint on FFW projects (GTZ 1993: 78). A basic dilemma weighs up maximum employment generation with the use of appropriate technology that will achieve a technically satisfactory quality standard. One solution might be to increase the material and equipment inputs to the project alongside the high labour intensity. However, Birhanu and Aylieff (1993: 11) found that all but one NGO in their survey stated they would prefer to increase labour than expand the extent of machinery.

The socio-economic survey of Project 2488 asked respondents to evaluate the quality of works in relation to voluntary campaigns; the former was (perhaps not surprisingly considering the wage incentive) notably of a higher standard (Yeraswork and Solomon 1985: 27). Meanwhile, evaluators were generally impressed by the quality of work at Merti-Jeju (ITAD/WFP 1994: x). Other evaluations in this review were more concerned with the sustainability implications of quality rather than the quality considered in isolation.

### **(c) Sustainability**

The long term benefits of a project can be eroded by poor maintenance, and this issue is of prime importance to NGOs, governments, and donors alike. Food-for-work projects have created extensive assets all over Ethiopia, including soil and water conservation structures, roads, forests, ponds, wells and small dams, but maintenance after the termination of the project is problematic. A dilemma arises as to who takes the responsibility for maintenance when there is a wide constituency of beneficiaries. In this sense, involving the community from the planning stage has been proven to have a positive effect on sustainability issues (see section 5.1d), an outcome that is explicitly stated as a lesson learned from the implementation of 2488 (WFP 1997a: 12).

Yeraswork's impact assessment of Project 2488 (1988: 53) revealed that roads which had several purposes in interconnecting residential, administrative and economic centres were usually maintained by local people without pay. Conversely, the community categorically rejected responsibility for the maintenance of roads that led only to the project tree plantation.

There were lengthy discussions on maintenance regarding SOS Sahel's CFW project at Koisha (see Jenden 1994: 60). The farmers who attended the project workshop thought that if assets clearly benefit a particular community, the community concerned should take charge of the maintenance. However, those involved in the management of the project emphasised the difficulty in assigning responsibility for maintenance when the road brings benefits to those outside the community too. The general use of the term 'public works' very often refers to 'community' works, a difference that is easily overlooked by planners.

Field research in 1993 (Birhanu and Aylieff 1993: 30) reported on poor maintenance standards, especially in roads and soil and water conservation structures. For this reason, one NGO in the survey no longer engaged in conservation activities on communal land, while others have set up development committees as a formal mechanism to help run and/or maintain the asset after the project finishes. Follow up by NGOs is also essential to provide technical advice, materials and perhaps financial help if the need arises (ibid: 31).

### **Impacts on Beneficiaries**

The central argument of this paper is for the inclusion in project evaluations of the wider impacts on the lives of beneficiaries since this would yield valuable information which can feed into the design and delivery strategy. The collection of this type of qualitative data requires detailed studies that are time and resource consuming and which require considerable planning. Consequently, few evaluations are allocated the resources to go beyond the immediate design and delivery concerns of donors, and case examples of research under the themes in this section are more disparate. Although conducted in 1984, the socio-economic survey of Project 2488 (Expansion I) sites (Yeraswork and Solomon 1985) addresses the broadest range of topics from the beneficiary perspective out of all the reports covered by this review.

### **(a) Impacts of project output**

The outputs or tangible assets created by a project bring a variety of long term benefits and other effects. There are two aspects to this debate: The identification of the impacts, which are mainly from road construction or conservation work in this review, and the level at which the impact is experienced, that is households, the local community and/or regional population.

Farmers at Koisha stressed the positive impact of the local road constructed through the SOS Sahel CFW project. Direct benefits to the community of improved access to markets and services brought about numerous secondary benefits. The cost of vehicle hire to the nearest town decreased significantly, as did the cost of transporting grain, and requests had been made to start a bus service. Also, the participation of big merchants in the local market was seen to be directly correlated with the quality of the road surface (Jenden 1994: 61). Meanwhile, the evaluation mentioned that the road had been built with a good drainage system that minimised environmental impact (ibid: 70).

An extensive impact assessment of the assets created in the first expansion of Project 2488 was carried out in 1988. Farmers felt that the on-farm activities had a positive impact on production, and tree-planting was beneficial to flood and erosion control (Yeraswork 1988: 51-2). Grass yields were showing signs of decline despite the hillside closure programme, and this was attributed to the lack of integration with tree planting activities (ibid: 53). However, none of the evaluation documents reviewed go beyond counting the number of constructions completed to analyse the actual impacts of conservation measures on, say, crop yields. This brings the discussion back to instances where farmers have been reported to have modified or removed the structures because they were hindering production on their farms (Krüger 1994; see section 5.2a).

Conservation works have various levels of beneficiaries, and conflicts can arise where work at isolated sites is essential to stop land degradation in the area, but implies that the most direct and immediate benefit is limited to one or two farmers (WFP 1997a: 7). This kind of situation has implications to the maintenance of the project outputs as discussed earlier.

Project outputs may also have other impacts that adversely affect the community. This includes more general environmental impacts aside from specific conservation objectives, as well as safety concerns like the possibilities of road accidents. These are not explicitly included in any of the evaluations to hand.

### **(b) Disincentive and incentive effects**

Disincentive effects are often emphasised in theoretical discussion, but arguably have less relevance in practice (Tengroth 1996: 20). There are three types of disincentives mentioned in the literature:

- *Production disincentives* for individual farmers who grow less of their own food because they have the chance to earn food on a local FFW project. A practical reasons for such a trend is linked to time constraints; if the farmer has to work to retain a place on a project, there may not be enough time to farm the household land (see section 5.3f).

- *Price disincentives* are linked to production in that an injection of food-for-work grain into the local market could lower the demand and therefore depress the price of locally produced food. In turn, the farmer gets lower returns for grain produced on his/her own land, and is discouraged from producing a surplus. Traders are also discouraged from bringing in food to the local market.
- *Labour disincentives* could occur as a result of poor targeting. If too many workers are attracted to join the FFW or CFW project, or wages are higher than the average local rates, there will be distortions in the labour market and local wages may be pushed upwards.

Various practitioners have recently reported that there is generally little proof of disincentive effects through prices or labour supply in Ethiopia, although much effort has been put into proving the theory (Tengroth 1996: 20). Food aid can only cause distortions when an economy was in a state of equilibrium before the 'injection' of, say, the grain imports. However, when aid is needed to make up a food deficit as in the case of Ethiopia, food aid has a beneficial impact in making up the shortfall rather than a distorting negative effect.

In the Kinda Koisha project area, food had been available on local markets until around the time of the evaluation, and the grain prices had not been affected by increase in money supply from the cash payments. Avoidance of potential disincentive effects was cited as a reason to continue with cash payments despite the farmers' preference for food (Jenden 1994: 57-8).

However, the Damot Weyde FFW project (O'Sullivan 1993) did report the development of a noticeable disincentive effect, and deduced that this was largely a function of the level of targeting and the leakage rate caused by a level of payment which was too high. As described earlier, payments were subsequently reduced and participation fell dramatically, along with sales of the food payment to local merchants.

Yeraswork and Solomon (1985: 97) found no evidence that suggested that project 2488 activities had reduced farm output. They concluded that farmers saw FFW as an additional rather than alternative source of income. Instead, the survey finds the **incentive** value of the project is people with potential labour who would have remained idle now had the chance to contribute to the family income; 85% of respondents said the main reason for previously not engaging in off-farm work was the lack of employment opportunities (ibid: 83). The labour disincentive cannot function while there is no labour market to distort.

As mentioned in Section 5.2b, the incentive value of food payments for public works is also emphasised when compared with voluntary projects. Many public works projects operate without the incentive of a food payment, and in some cases (particularly in Tigray), the 80:20 guideline is interpreted that all participants work for the good of the community, while some are paid a food wage and others are not<sup>12</sup>. In Expansion 3 of 2488, access to the food incentives was found to be different between men and women, in that female participation was much higher in voluntary campaigns than in food-for-work schemes (WFP 1997a: 7).

### **(c) Use of payments**

The consumption pattern of the income from the project, including the extent of monetisation in the case of a food wage, can reveal information about the needs of beneficiaries at different times of the year. It may also suggest how local markets will be influenced by the operation of the project.

In the socio-economic survey of 2488, monetisation of payments at the beneficiary level showed regional patterns. Overall, the large majority of participants stated that they consume all of the wheat they earned; less than 10% sold more than half of their grain, and most of these were from one particular catchment, Bilate, where the market was more developed. The sale of oil was more common, and in three of the survey areas, a significant percentage of people sold their entire oil receipts. For around 60% of respondents, the proceeds bought other food items such as salt, pepper, sugar and more grain. All sales of food and use of payments had seasonal peaks depending on the needs of the household (Yeraswork and Solomon 1985: 75-77).

In the same report, women were asked how they felt about the composition of the payment. The results displayed a marked preference for more grain at the expense of oil, mainly because oil cannot be consumed unless there is grain to be cooked (ibid: 60)!

### **(d) Food security**

An objective of most food-for-work projects is to enhance the food security of participants' households. However, food security status is in itself difficult to measure because it is a consequence of a combination of factors. Therefore, a number of proxy indicators are often used, such as access to food, food availability and nutritional status. Locally based nutrition workers such as those employed by Concern as part of their targeting strategy (section 5.1b) can provide ongoing monitoring of impact at ground level.

The Merti-Jeju evaluation (ITAD/WFP 1994: 29-36) compiled a detailed set of proxy indicators for their assessment of the project's impact on food security. Data was collected about the household resources that could prove accessibility to food (size of landholding and possession of oxen), and production (in terms of how many months the household harvest would last). This information was compared with the payment records of the peasant association and a calculation of how this might meet the shortfall in food. The report concluded that the average earnings from the project do not completely make up the shortfall of food needs, but households had managed through other coping mechanisms, including gratuitous relief (ibid: xi).

Meanwhile, over half of the respondents in the socio-economic survey of Project 2488 Expansion I (Yeraswork and Solomon 1985: 91) thought that the FFW activities had saved them and their families from starvation.

### **(e) Redistribution of payments**

The extent and pattern of redistribution of the (food or cash) wages earned in the project to other family or community members identifies those who do not participate directly in a project but who nevertheless



receive some benefits through those who do. An impact map could be plotted at either the intra- or inter-household level, and the definition of a household would be significant in any such exercise (see Appendix III). Issues of redistribution also have implications for the targeting strategy of a project in that they help to identify the vulnerable members of a household.

The socio-economic survey of 2488 asked household heads how the women participants in their households distributed the food payment; 63% of replies indicated that women considered the food receipt as the collective property of the household, although a third reported that a small part of the payment was kept back to buy small items for the women themselves or their children. When the same question was asked of women only, the responses were highly regional; in 5 of the survey areas, the payment belonged to the household as a whole, while in 3 other areas most respondents considered the wage to be their own property. This was attributed to the polygamous traditions in the latter catchments where women are expected to be more independent (Yeraswork and Solomon 1985: 58).

Evidence from the survey of Kinda Koisha (Jenden 1994: 57) suggested that income is shared fairly within the household, particularly if the household heads or women are employed. Young unmarried men tended to spend more on their own consumption.

Sharp's study on targeting (1997: 67) reports there are no free hand outs of food alongside the EGS and FFW schemes in East Haranguay because local administrative workers and NGO representatives considered it unnecessary; those who cannot work are supported by able-bodied household members or wider community support networks. The discussions showed that the old and weak were still registered on the projects, but someone else worked in their place, and that beneficiaries voluntarily shared their payment with the vulnerable after distribution. Support jobs which are not physically demanding, such as bringing food and drink to the workers, were also part of the project design so that weaker individuals could also join in the work. In contrast, it was reported from a project site in East Tigray that people are less likely to share food that they have earned on a food-for-work project than they were a food gift. In addition, other members of the community did not expect participants to share a wage in the same way as for gratuitous relief (ibid: 62).

#### **(f) Time allocation**

Time constraints are a problem because participants still have their own land holdings to tend in addition to the time spent working on the project. Furthermore, the most suitable season for construction work or agricultural based incoming-generating activities is also the time when domestic agricultural tasks must be undertaken. Ten out of 24 responses from NGOs in Birhanu and Aylieff's survey (1993) thought that their project activities interfered with beneficiaries' own farm activities.

The gender dimension of time pressures is especially pertinent, since women are socially expected to carry out their traditional domestic and reproductive roles regardless of any other activities. While participation in a FFW type project could bring in additional income, time spent working and collecting the payment may increase the overall burden of work. In Project 2488 Expansion I, no time allowance was

made for women's daily domestic work. However, childcare was not considered to be a problem; half the respondents left their young children under the charge of older children or grandparents while the remainder did not have children who could not take care of themselves. Some women did mention that they sometimes did not have enough time to fetch water and wood (Yeraswork and Solomon 1985: 56).

On the positive side, some projects build assets that are specifically designed to ease time pressures, such as schemes in Tigray to provide water points nearer the home. Also, a recommendation for EGS in Tigray is that women work 5 hours a day and men work the full 8 hours. It has been argued that this in itself reinforces traditional gender roles and that it would be preferable to encourage men to share domestic duties<sup>13</sup> (see also section 5.2a).

### **(g) Other social impacts**

There are numerous dimensions to the social impact of a project on a community, all of which are highly contextual and difficult to quantify. The discussion in this section provides some examples of factors that could be important at a local level and illustrate the complexity surrounding the impact of a given project.

The provision of local employment opportunities limits the necessity to migrate elsewhere in search of work. Sharp (1997: 62) found that there was extensive migration in East Tigray, especially for young single men. The FFW project had provided an option to stay and take care of the farm and family, the benefits of which "could not be measured in money". Furthermore, conservation work on Project 2488 was found to mobilise whole communities to work together for the benefit of all in the catchment area (WFP 1997a: 9).

On a negative side, conflict could arise as a result of project activities, especially in relation to targeting. Participants in the cash-for-food experimental programme in the late 1980s often travelled long distances to buy food, and risked confiscation of their grain at checkpoints on the return journey (Birhanu and Aylieff 1993: 25). A survey of more recent projects found that community members were generally reluctant to exclude the better off, and sometimes feared physical violence from those screened out (ibid: 28).

The occupation of male labour on public works projects can carry negative implications for female head of households. It is not socially acceptable for women to operate a plough in Ethiopia, so households where there are no men able to work on their land must rely on employing a man to complete this task. A large public works program that absorbs this otherwise available labour force can leave women with land in great difficulty when their land needs to be ploughed<sup>14</sup>.

Finally, Yeraswork and Solomon (1985: 98) recorded a general trend among Project 2488 participants towards eating more wheat and oil than was customary. Many people were using oil for the first time, and remarked that it improved the taste of their food. Continuation of oil consumption after the end of the project would depend on whether prices were to fall. However, would any dietary change carry health wider implications for agricultural production, health or other factors?

## 6 CONCLUSION

This discussion began by introducing the different types of safety net programmes that stem from the concept of food-for-work in the Ethiopian context. Using food or cash as payment for the creation of assets that will bring continued benefits to the local community combines emergency and short term relief efforts with longer term development objectives. The generally positive response to this type of programme is reflected in the number of projects that are in operation in various regions of the country, and the different types of implementing agencies involved. The '80:20 rule' – representing the proportion of FFW to gratuitous food aid – is further increasing the number of food-for-work projects in the country through the government run employment generation schemes.

Monitoring and evaluation are recognised as an important part of the project cycle, and provide information that can improve the quality of programmes. The paper argues that evaluations designed to capture information at the beneficiary level will reveal secondary impacts which are of central importance to the project participants, but which may or may not have been anticipated by the implementing agency or donor at the planning stage. These broader considerations can contribute to better informed project design and policy-making.

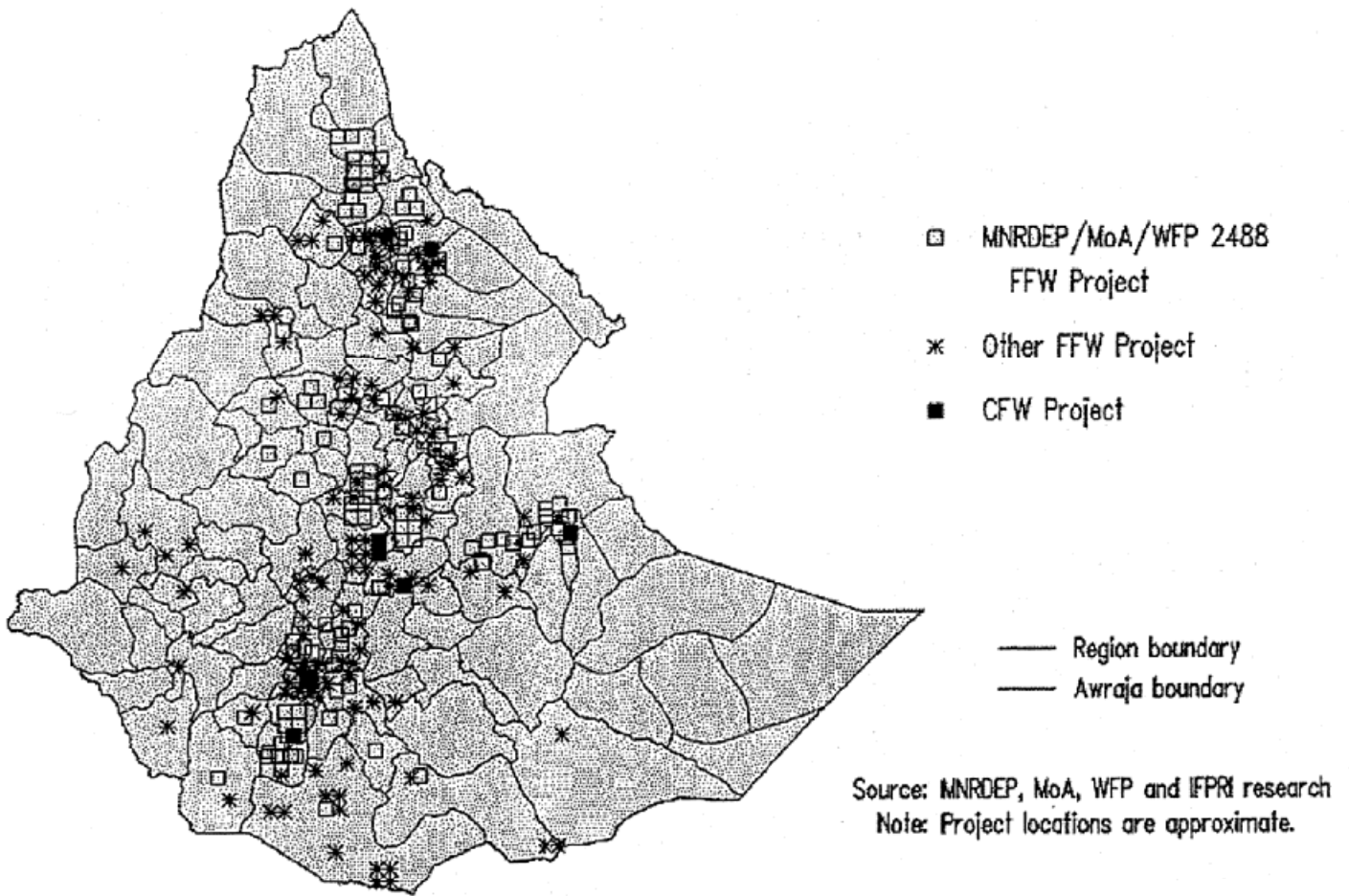
The literature review of project evaluations shows the heavy emphasis on design and delivery mechanisms. Targeting and the mode of payment are of particular concern to donors, and much theoretical debate surrounds these aspects. Sustainability of the assets created by the project is crucial for the achievement of long term benefits, while replicability and flexibility are important for the expansion and contraction according to demand of employment-based safety nets.

However, many of the central issues at a conceptual level may not appear to be as urgent on the ground (Tengroth 1996: 19). Factors such as delays in payment can cause serious disruptions to beneficiaries and undermine the project objectives. Also, disincentive effects are often discussed in the general literature although there is little evidence of long term distortions in farmers' productivity. Meanwhile, a greater understanding of how the work activities affect the lives of participants, how payment is used and redistributed, and an appreciation of other social impacts could have a direct bearing on the design issues on which most evaluations already focus.

The participation of community members in project planning is increasingly seen to have a positive influence on the effectiveness of a project. This concept is now more widely accepted by donors and has also been embraced by the Ethiopian government through their Local Level Participatory Planning Approach, although the extent of involvement by local people remains contentious. Participatory methods of research would be an important element of an evaluation corresponding to the format suggested in this paper, and follows the parallel argument that a participatory assessment exercise would ensure the project was relevant to the needs of beneficiaries. Sensitivity to added time constraints on beneficiaries who take part in an evaluation is essential to this approach. In this sense, an ongoing evaluation unit would be well positioned to minimise disruption to those connected with the project through an accumulation of general interactions over a longer time period.

The central question raised in this discussion asks why most of the documents examined do not include the broad range of issues covered in the review framework, in particular because a similar approach to evaluation was proposed by Holt in 1986 for the WFP's Project 2488, but not implemented. From a donor perspective, the most obvious constraints to any evaluation exercise are costs and time. Certain aspects of the project are prioritised according to pre-conceived definitions of key issues, which as this review illustrates are conventionally those features that are more easily quantified. The benefits of an evaluation that incorporates the impacts on beneficiaries are generally intangible and inherently subjective when weighed against the costs. However, the increasing pressure within the development arena to involve project beneficiaries in planning as well as evaluation emphasises the value of combining qualitative and measurable data. Therefore, if the equation can be resolved at a cost-benefit level, the focus shifts to the political will for implementation. That said, the debate concludes with a further, more provocative question: How much do donors consider they need to know about the complex impacts of a given project?

**Appendix I: Food-for-work and Cash-for-Work sites in Ethiopia and Eritrea**



Source: WFP website

## **Appendix II: Evaluation Frameworks**

### **II.1 Effects and Impacts for the Evaluation of Project 2488**

The 'Scollin Report' that proposed a monitoring and evaluation system for Project 2488 Expansion 1, identified the following effects and impacts which were to be researched. The arguments in this paper agree with those of Holt (1986), in that a long term approach to evaluation is required to collect useful information about a project's impact.

#### **Project Effects and Impacts**

1. An increase in farmer's economic status
2. An increase in household food security
3. An increase in agricultural productivity
4. Arable land is not lost to erosion
5. An increase in the amount of manure ploughed into agricultural land
6. Fuelwood and timber are more readily available
7. An increase in soil fertility
8. An increase in the area of land irrigated
9. A reduction in time spent collecting household wood and water
10. More hygienic water supplies
11. An increase in nutritional levels
12. An improvement in animal productivity
13. A spreading awareness of the benefits of soil conservation

Source: Scollin 1986: 17

## II.2 Logical Framework for the Evaluation of World Food Programme EBSN Projects

	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verification</i>
Outputs	Number of households employed	Number	Register maintained by gang leaders/DA
	Km of road constructed	Km	Records kept by gang leaders/foremen
	Number of ponds dug	Number	Register maintained by gang leaders/DA
	Area of land conserved	Ha	Records kept by gang leaders/DA of km of built terraces, Fanya Juu bunds, check dams, cut of drains, artificial water ways, tied ridges, soil bunds and planted grass/fodder strips and payment vouchers prepared by the SC-T1
	Area of land forested	Ha	Records kept by gang leaders/DA/H-NT of the number of pits dug, number of seedlings raised, the seedlings planted and payment voucher prepared by SC-T2
	Number of fruit trees planted	Number	Records kept by gang leaders/DA/H-NT of the number and type of seedlings raised, number of pits dug, number of seedlings planted and payment voucher prepared by SC-T2
	Area of land irrigated	Ha	Area estimated by SC-T1
	Number of farmers trained	Number	Register kept by trainers
Activity	Identification of food insecure households	Number	Monthly review of climatic data, crop assessment, monthly food crop market price survey, general trend analysis of marketed livestock, fuel wood and charcoal.
	Efficiency of payment and effectiveness	Alpha value for FFW and CFW	Monthly price survey of food commodities, FOB value of food commodities, external transport charges and ITSH; discussion with beneficiaries
	Work norms		
Inputs	Tons of food items	Tons	Store receipt and issue vouchers
	Cash expenditure	Amount	Receipt and disbursement vouchers

Source: Berhanu Debele 1993: 11

### Appendix III: What is a Household?

The different types of household that occur in different cultural contexts across Ethiopia are important in the design of a project. Targeting criteria have to account for the number of household members who are eligible to work on a project, and the size of the household that the individual is supporting. Also, the composition of households is significant when assessing qualitative impacts such as redistribution of payment. For research purposes, it may be useful to map which types of household are prevalent in which areas of the country.

#### The Typology of a Household in Ethiopia

1. A one-housed family unit, headed by one person, which eats from the same pot and shares the same resources.  
*e.g. A household with one house, one wife, one husband and one family or a household headed by a woman.*
2. A unit whose members live in one or more houses but is headed by one man. Resources such as land and oxen are shared, but each house has separate labour and eats from different pots.  
*e.g. A man who has 2 or more wives living in separate houses. These wives live with their own children under one roof, but communally own the basic productive resources, such as land, oxen and farm tools and implements. Only the husband makes the decision on resource use, and he is the one registered as a member of the peasant association, paying tax in his name for all houses under him*
3. A household can be a composition of two or more families headed by one man, where each family uses its own resources and eats from a separate pot. *e.g. As for (2), but each family has their own separate resources, and, usually subject to approval from the head, makes their own decisions regarding the use of those resources*

Adapted from ITAD/WFP 1994: 18



#### **Appendix IV: Summary of FFW, CFW and EBSN Project Evaluations in Ethiopia**

The table overleaf summarises the contents of the main project evaluations that were discussed in Section 5 by indicating which themes are covered in the reports. The difficulty in reducing the evaluations to discrete issues means the matrix can only provide a cursory comparison of the documents. The evaluations often emphasise different aspects of the same theme; for example, food security might be measured against a set of chosen indicators, or a discussion of impact from the views of project participants – alternative approaches to the same topic. In addition, the depth of the discussion in each subject area is not shown. However, what the table does indicate is the heavy bias towards design and delivery mechanisms.

**A Comparison of FFW, CFW and EBSN Project Evaluations in Ethiopia**

	<i>Project Specific Evaluations</i>							<i>General Evaluations</i>	
	<b>2488 Exp 1</b>	<b>2488 Exp 1</b>	<b>2488 Exp 3</b>	<b>Merti-Jeju</b>	<b>Merti-Jeju</b>	<b>Damot Weyde</b>	<b>Koisha CFW</b>	<b>Inventory</b>	<b>EBSN</b>
<i>Evaluation Issues:</i>	Yeraswork/ Solomon 1985	Yeraswork 1988	WFP 1997	Maxwell 1992	WFP/ITAD 1994	O'Sullivan 1993	Jenden 1994	Biranyu & Aylyieff 1993	Herbinger 1993
<i>Design and Delivery</i>									
Geographical coverage			X	X		X			
Targeting	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Payment	X			X	X	X	X	X	X
Participatory planning			X		X	X	X	X	
Cost effectiveness					X		X		
Replicability					X	X			X
Flexibility				X	X	X		X	
Integration			X	X		X		X	X
<i>Outputs</i>									
Choice of works	X	X		X	X		X		X
Quality of works	X		X						
Sustainability		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
<i>Impacts</i>									
Benefits of assets	X	X	X				X		
Disincentives/incentives						X			
Use of Payment	X								
Food security	X			X	X		X	X	
Time allocation	X			X				X	
Redistribution of payment									
Other social impacts	X								

## Appendix V: Local Level Participatory Planning Approach

### The LLPPA Methodology

The LLPPA methodology is implemented in several stages which are given below:

First a *woreda* is selected based on its meeting the classification requirements of the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) of chronic or severe food deficiency. Within the *woreda* villages, peasant associations and communities are identified as project sites or beneficiaries based on the following criteria:

- The sites urgently require soil and water conservation measures to arrest or prevent serious land degradation. This is assessed sometimes using MoA data if available but more frequently it is based on empirical observations made by the MoA field staff
- The sites are physically accessible
- The community possesses sufficient manpower to perform the FFW activities

Once a community has been identified, a Development Committee is formed. The size of the committee varies from six to 12 members, depending on who the community feels should be included. Although ideally the whole community should decide on the membership of the committee, for cultural as well as practical purposes, usually the elders/leaders of the community are consulted. The committee thus comprises the Development Agent (DA), the *Woreda* Expert or the Catchment Technician (CT) and a combination of some of the following community members:

- Local kebele (co-operative) chairman/other position holders (treasurer, accountant, secretary)
- Community leaders
- Priests
- Unemployed high school graduates to help with the writing of the plan
- Farmers
- Demobilised soldiers
- Chairperson of local women's association
- Women farmers

Next, socioeconomic and technical surveys are made of the selected sites by the LLPPA *Woreda* Coordinator, the Catchment Technician and the Development Agent in coordination with the Development Committee. The surveys collect the following data:

- Demographic
- Agricultural production and seasons
- Animal husbandry and sources of fodder
- Water supply
- Fuel supply
- Type and level of land degradation and soil erosion and whether traditional protective measures are being or have been taken
- Community forestry and soil conservation activities through government
- Land use pattern
- Soil quality

The surveys also identify natural resource and water conservation problems such as soil erosion, shortage of fuelwood/construction material, shortage of water and animal fodder. Other problems such as food deficit, lack of access to land and incidence of crop pests are also noted, and attempts are made to rank the severity of the problems. The opinion of female members of the community is sought through discussions with women at the local market place where they participate on a large scale both as buyers and sellers, or at local water collection points. Having identified the most pressing problems, possible solutions are then sought through discussions with the Development Committee.

Recommendations for FFW development activities in forestry and soil and water conservation, are drawn up and discussed with the community at general assembly meetings. In most *woredas*, women do not attend these assemblies. In such cases separate meetings are held with women's groups to discuss the proposed plans. After the discussions, modifications are made if considered necessary, and finally Three-Year work plans are prepared with targets and resource requirements budgeted on an annual basis. These work plans are then submitted through the proper channels to the Regional Agriculture Bureaux for approval.

Source: World Food Programme 1997: 6

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The professed Marxist Government, headed by Mengistu, and also known as 'The Dergue'
- <sup>2</sup> The Maharashtra EGS has been widely discussed in safety net literature. See Ravallion 1990, Acharya 1990, Engkvist, 1995, Dev 1996, Wilkes 1997.
- <sup>3</sup> See also Birhanu and Aylieff 1993 for an inventory of operational and terminated FFW/CFW projects up to the early 1990s.
- <sup>4</sup> See McCann 1987 and Oxfam 1996
- <sup>5</sup> A further list of NGO projects plotted on a map showing food security status can be found at Appendix 1
- <sup>6</sup> The improvement of geographical concentration on the areas with the greatest food deficit is a priority issue for expansion 3 of Project 2488 (WFP 1998 13).
- <sup>7</sup> Kay Sharp's report on Targeting Food Aid in Ethiopia (Sharp 1997) is a comprehensive review of existing literature coupled with the empirical evidence from a field survey
- <sup>8</sup> The fourth approach, market targeting, involves manipulation of the supply, demand or prices of food, and is appropriate for more general food aid rather than specifically FFW.
- <sup>9</sup> An explanation of the LLPPA methodology can be found in Appendix V
- <sup>10</sup> See [http://www.africanews.org/east/ethiopia/stories/19971003\\_feat19.html](http://www.africanews.org/east/ethiopia/stories/19971003_feat19.html) for a brief overview
- <sup>11</sup> A further paradox is that conservation work routinely performed by farmers on their own land aims to minimise the amount of labour input, thus the notion of maximising labour input is the opposite to what people would normally do. This also leads to the moral argument that labour should not be regarded as cheap just because it is available from people in need, but should be used in the most effective manner regardless of circumstances (Pers comm. Julius Holt) .
- <sup>12</sup> Pers comm Julius Holt July 1998
- <sup>13</sup> Notes by Devereux from a DPPC national workshop, Addis Ababa (December 1997)
- <sup>14</sup> Field notes by Carswell from research in Ethiopia for the Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, Institute of Development Studies (1998)

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