

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

Development Communication in Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP): The Case of Ganta Afeshum, Tigray

By

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Journalism and Communication in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Art in Journalism and Communication

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ADLI	Agricultural Development Led industrialization
BoARD	Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development
BoFED	Bureau of Finance and economic Development
CFSTF	Community Food Security Task Force
DA	Development Agent
DS	Direct Support
EGS	Employment Generation Scheme
FGI	Focus Group Interview
EFFORT	Endowment Fund For Rehabilitation of Tigray
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front
FFSCB	Federal Food Security Coordination Bureau
FFW	Food-For-Work
FSP	Food Security Program
KFSTF	Kushet's Food Security Task Force
MoARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
OFSP	Other Food Security Programs
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Program
PW	Public Work
RFSCO	Regional Food Security Coordination office
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
SNP	Safety Net Program
TDA	Tigray Development Association
TFSTF	Tabia Food Security Task Force
TPLF	Tigray Peoples Liberation Front
WFSD	Woreda Food Security Desks
WoFED	Woreda Office of Finance and Economic Development
CBHW	Community Based Health Workers

Abstract

This paper studies the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP)—one of the Food Security Strategies in Ethiopia that provides food and cash transfer to chronically food insecure woredas of the country through direct support and public works—in terms of the dependent attitude it develops in participants of two communities of Ganta Afeshum Woreda at Eastern zone of Tigray. It also examines the communication model and strategies employed to avert this effect. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the places, and purposive sampling technique to select the informants. With regard to data collection, qualitative observation, and focus group and individual in-depth interviews were employed to see how participatory communication model, and multiple and appropriate communication strategies are functioning in the Public Works. The communication model and strategies are taken as the concerns of this paper because they help participants to feel the ownership of the projects, identify problems and act on them. However, the Productive Safety Net Program is not fully exploiting these communication approaches and strategies in its Public Works program. In terms of participation, encouraging moves are seen in the study area though the society's culture and local authorities' motives make fully harvesting its fruits hard. In terms of communication strategy, however, the program lacks clearly defined and appropriate communication strategies with which to tackle problems. Consequently, dependency of participants on the income from the Public Works program is found to be the prevailing problem in the area. Thus, the overall result of the study shows that lack of appropriate communication strategies and limited participatory level of the society in the Public Works programs as causing the people not to be committed to the work and not to be able to withdraw from dependent attitude.

Chapter one: Introduction

1. Background of the study

Achievements on the Ethiopian agriculture seem not to be reflected on the lives of the majority of the rural population. The current government of Ethiopia has the Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) as its development strategy. The strategy considers improving the productivity of individual farm land and transforming it from subsistence to commercial production as its priorities. To this effect, the government has been providing farmers with improved seeds, fertilizers, etc. that help them boost their farm productivity. It has also been establishing financial institutions close to rural areas to enhance the access of small-scale farmers to credit facilities, which helps them to purchase the agricultural inputs they need. As a result, millionaire farmers have started to appear, albeit few.

Despite such achievements, however, a large portion of the Ethiopian population continues to suffer from chronic food insecurity (Gilligan et al. 2008). This has required the government and donors to continue providing people with aid in the form of Food-For-Work (FFW) and other Employment Generation Schemes (EGS). Nevertheless, while these programs are praised for saving the lives of chronic food insecure people, they are also criticized for failing to bring the intended change compared to the time they took (Fassil 2005:162).

It has been decades since development interventions aimed at enhancing the environment implemented in Ethiopia. However, there are instances where such development projects fail to address the issue, "as a result of which the environment was returned to its degraded state" (FDRE 2006). Many factors can be cited as contributing for the failure. However, the role that communication models and strategies play for the success or failure of the projects cannot be undermined. To date, the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) and Other Food Security Programs (OFSP) are still functioning and need to be studied whether there are gaps created because of lack of appropriate communication models and strategies.

In Ethiopia, Employment Generation Schemes (EGS), such as the Food-For-Work started to appear in 1960s. Ethiopia's dependence on handouts of donors to meet its food requirements began in the early 1960s (Bezu and Holden 2008).

The earliest form of project food aid is the Food-For-Work (FFW). The program started in Tigray in 1971 with a fund supplied by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Griffin n.d.) The main task accomplished by the program was reforestation around Mekelle town (ibid). Then, the World Food Program (WFP)-funded FFW projects came into effect in 1972 in Eritrea, Tigray, Wello and Harer between July 1972 and August 1975 following the drought in these areas (Bezu and Holden 2008:543).

Nevertheless, the ad hoc nature of the emergency and the project food aids did not allow them to banish the threat of further famine though they were successful in averting mass starvation (Gilligan et al. 2008). Even the FFW was not able to prevent asset depletion because it was not integrated into ongoing economic development activities (Subbarao and Smith 2003 cited in Gilligan et al. 2008).

Besides the FFW projects, there were also other employment generation schemes that function on an annual emergency basis. But starting from 2005, the government of Ethiopia together with other consortium of donors implemented the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in drought-prone *woredas* (district) of the country. The program is "a component of the government's food security program (FSP), and as such, is an integral feature of a coherent food security investment strategy for chronically food insecure *woredas* of the country" (FDRE 2006). The program has two components, the public work (PW), which benefits 85% of the targets, and direct support (DS) that helps the rest 15%. Public works, under the PSNP, are "labor intensive community-based activities which are designed to provide employment for chronically food insecure people who have 'able-bodied' labor" (FDRE 2006).

The PSNP program differs from the FFW program and other EGS because it is integrated with OFSP such as resettlement program, agricultural packages and access to credit. It functions, until beneficiaries become self-capable and graduate from the program.

What is common for both the PSNP and FFW is that both focus on rehabilitating the natural resources of the drought-prone *woredas* of the country. Most of the public works of the PSNP, for example, are "aimed directly at enhancing the environment and increasing the productive capacity of the natural resource base" (ibid). This is because the chronic food insecurity that affects millions in drought-prone areas is mainly caused by recurrent droughts and land degradation (Samuel 2005:211)

Especially drought is getting so frequent that for the last three or so decades there has never been a year in which some portion of the society was not affected (Birhanu 2005:169; Markos 2006:25). The main reason for the drought is the climatic change, which in turn is caused by deforestation and pollution.

The food insecurity is exacerbated by unseasoned rain, flood, population growth, military conflicts, declining soil fertility and lack of technological innovation (Fassil 2005:98; Kinfe 2001:294; and Samuel 2005:199, 201, and 211). Thus public works are designed to serve as instruments for rehabilitating the environment and protecting the natural resources (FDRE 2006). But they can be effective if the projects of public works are participatory and community based. Such approaches enable society to assume great responsibility in safeguarding natural resources (FDRE 2002) and already done projects. But the effort to help people assume great responsibility should be backed up by appropriate communication strategies. The appropriateness should be evaluated based on the culture of the society's communication and the role that mass media can play in the society. Hence, this paper is to studies how dependent attitude hinders people from working for sustainable development and the role that communication approaches play in averting the problem of dependency.

2. **Statement of the Problem**

I grew up in the area selected for this study. In this place, it is common to hear people saying it does not matter if the rain fails here as long as it does not in Canada (referring to one of the sources of the relief grains they received). When the people say this, it may not mean they do not bother about the failure of the rain. They know how lack of rain affects their lives in many

ways, including lack of food for animals and ground water. But they use this saying to express their hopelessness with the recurrent rain shortages of the country. The agreed implication of the saying is that "I am tired of such thoughts and I do not want to worry my self with this issue any longer as long as the Canadian government provides me with the food I need for survival." Nevertheless, it can be said that people hold this opinion because they took food aid for granted or because they relied on the food aid rather than seeking other solutions for the problem. Even after Food-For-Work (FFW) program was started, some people want to get the food without work. They always try to persuade elected *tabia* (smaller administrative unit in Tigray) committee, known as cabinet, members to grant them the Direct Support (DS) that is paid to the old, sick or disable pretending as if their health or age does not allow them to get involved in such activities. Consequently, there were instances where participants who were able to persuade cabinet members to grant them the DS when they should be participating in the Public Works failed to exert maximum effort even in their own farm lands in the presence of other people around them. If they are seen, for example, carrying heavy load or involving in hard work, other people, may demand the direct support claiming people stronger than them got it.

Even those who participate in the activity want to spend time doing nothing. Consequently, supervisors tried to solve the problem by evaluating participants not on the basis of the amount of time they spend, but on the basis of the work they do. Nevertheless, the quality of the work is labeled as poor.

This implies that the programs are unable to make people withdraw from the addiction of dependence on aid (Fassil 2005:162), which leads them to consider the projects as meant for obtaining the food they urgently need and not as projects whose ultimate purpose is to make food aid unnecessary. This, in turn, makes them not do effective work and safeguard the works they do. This dependence, according to Samuel (2005), is "one of the major hindrances for effective implementation of local development programs" (p.169).

Of course, a study made by Bezu and Holden (2008), on FFW suggests public works as having no disincentive effect. According to them public works do not reduce production, which in turn means they do not make people develop dependence. Their evidence is people consider the income they get from PW as additional source of income rather than an alternative because it covers on average only 20% of the deficit of the participating in the program, and hence very far from satisfying their need for food.

But my argument is though public works may not reduce production, they can still make people depend even on the income that satisfies only 20% of their needs for food instead of finding ways to boost their production.

The main reason for people's dependence on the program, according to Fassil (2005), is farmers have not been adequately involved in planning and implementation programs. The project of PSNP, which is governed by the strategy of food security, is labeled as participatory approach. According to Kinfe (2001: 202-203) the extension system and other food security strategies are designed to ensure farmers' participation at all stages of activities, from planning

to evaluation. However, I felt it should be studied in order to see whether the communication is genuine participatory or what White (1994) calls *pseudo-participation*.

According to White, genuine participation can only be achieved when the development bureaucracy, the local elite, and the people are working cooperatively throughout the decision making process and when the people are empowered to control the action to be taken (White 1994). When I say participatory approaches should be genuine, I do not mean they should not be integrated with the top-down approach. The top-down and participatory approaches can go together without having to make the participatory approach pseudo-participation.

White termed the other type of participatory as pseudo-participatory. In this approach, the project and decision-making power rests with planners, administrators and the community's elite. This limits the role of the people to listen to what is definitely planned for them and what would be done unto them (ibid). The limited role of project beneficiaries in turn hinders sustainable development. According to Mefalopulos (2005):

> Achieving sustainability in rural development depends largely on the way stakeholders perceive the proposed change and the way they are involved in assessing and deciding about how that change should be achieved. Thus, one of communication's main roles has become to facilitate people's participation, and this is acquiring a rapidly increasing relevance in sustainable development (p. 248).

Contrary to the strategy of the PSNP program, which expects the number of participants to get lower, as they are supposed to be self-sufficient (with the help of the income it provides) and graduate from it, more participants are adding to the number. This happens even at the end of the five-year term of the PSNP. That means participants do not see the income they get from the program as a means of accumulating wealth and becoming self-reliant. Instead, they consider it as their constant source of income for their survival, which in turn hinders them from being committed to the work. The rise in number of participants also indicates that, among others, participants are not being alerted to act in accordance with the goal of the program. Therefore, this paper studies the dependency that the PSNP causes on its participants and the communication models and strategies it employs to avert this dependency because the role that participatory communication models and strategies play in behavior change is so immense.

1.3 Objectives of the study

This study aims at assessing the appropriateness and application of development communication strategies employed in PSNP projects in two *tabias* (communities) of Ganta Afeshum *woreda*. It attempts to explore the availability of communication strategies in the PSNP and their appropriateness to the context. I also aim to evaluate the differences in attitude and orientation between development agents and the society. Besides, I intend to identify the possible cultural hindrances that make people not fully be involved in the projects and do effective work. The study has also the purpose of studying factors that cause the society develop dependent attitude. Specifically, this study attempts to answer the following major and minor **research questions**:

1.3.1 Major research questions

- What are the models and strategies (if any) of communication employed in the Public Works of the PSNP?
- How appropriate are they in helping people feel involved and develop sense of the ownership of the projects?
- How helpful are the models and strategies in withdrawing people from a dependency syndrome and enable them work for sustainable development?

1.3.2 Minor research questions

- Is the PSNP causing dependence on the participants?
- What is Ganta Afeshum's understanding of dependency?
- How do community norms affect participatory ideals?

1.4 Significance of the study

The importance of having appropriate development communication strategies in accomplishing Public Works is not well understood in our country. Thus, this paper introduces researchers, development agents, policy makers, safety net coordinators, etc., the role that communication strategies can play in helping succeed the goals of PWs so that they can make them part of the food security process.

In participatory approach, there is a difference between pseudo-participation and genuine participation. But the difference does not seem to have clearly understood by people engaging in the PWs program. Understanding the difference between the two, however, is extremely crucial because pseudo-participation is not less than the top-down approach. Hence, the study has the significance of helping stakeholders understand the difference and work towards achieving the genuine participatory approach. This enables people feel a sense of ownership of the program, which in turn makes them exert maximum effort on the works and safeguard the already done projects. Besides, the study may serve as a springboard for people who want to conduct related researches.

1.5 Scope and limitation of the study

The study was carried out in Ganta Afeshum *woreda* focusing on assessment of the availability and appropriateness of communication strategies, and communities' level of participation in the Productive Safety Net Program. The study focuses on two *tabias*, namely Smiret and the semi-urban Bizet. Both *tabias* are more than 35 Kilo meters away from Adigrat, a town serving as the seat of the *woreda* as well as the zonal administration. Unlike Adigrat, the study area is unable to access the Ethiopian Television (ETV) without the help of Satellite dish. Hence, had it not been for the financial and time constraint, including *tabias*

from the suburbs of Adigrat would have served to show the difference in understanding of the goal of PW programs between communities that have relatively better access to mass media and those that do not have.

1.6 Organization of the paper

This paper contains six chapters (including this chapter) that treat background of the study, the problem statement, research questions, objectives, significance, scope and limitation of the study. The second chapter reviews literatures that are pertinent to the subject. This chapter covers theories of development communication, such as modernization theory, dependence theory "Another" development theory, and theories and approaches of diffusion and participatory. It also treats development communication strategies, such as social mobilization and "tool kit" strategies.

Chapter three discusses the social context of the study area. This describes the study area in terms of the location of the region, *woreda* and the *tabias*, their demography, topography, climate, the status of the vegetation cover and soil fertility including the public works by the PSNP. The fourth chapter is about the methodology, which consists of data collection and data analysis. The results of the discussions part of the thesis are found in chapter five. In this chapter, the way the community communicates among themselves, with development agents and administrators are described and analyzed. The people's access to mass media, their level of participation in the PSNP and in the messages produced by mass media; and the appropriateness of the communication strategies are also discussed. Finally, chapter six concludes the major findings and the major remarks. Besides, references and annexes are found following the remark section.

Chapter two: Review of related literature

2.1 Definitional issues

Terms such as communication, development, and development communication, though they mean differently to different people, are crucial concepts that this study focuses on. Defining them ahead within the context of this paper, therefore, contributes for the clarity of the ideas that follow. To treat them one by one, communication comes first. The term is difficult to define for a number of reasons. First, it means differently to people working in different fields. For example, communication for some means community empowerment and social mobilization, for others, the work of media information technologies; and still for others public relations and publications (Waisbord 2005:86).

Second, communication is a slippery concept, which makes it hard to arrive at a precise definition that is agreeable to most of those who consider themselves communication scholars. It is also deeply rooted in human behaviors and the structures of society that it is difficult to think of social or behavioral events from which communication is absent. Hence, defining communication, according to Frey et al. (1991:27), "is like trying to define the purpose of life itself- there are an enormous number of interpretations and points of view." Or as Schramm

(1964) put it, “Communication is deeply integrated into society. It has little life of its own. It is something people do- the fundamental social process” (P.5).

We may turn to etymology for clues: “communication” from the Latin “communicare” literally means “to put in common,” “to share” (Pearson et al. 2003:10). While the term was originally meant in a very material sense, applying to tangible things, it has since evolved to apply primarily to knowledge and information. Hence, etymologically, communication means to share information and knowledge. But for purposes of this work, taking Waisbord’s definition would be appropriate: “an instrument helping development projects to achieve specific goals, mainly through the dissemination of information” (2005:86).

Thus, the role of communication in, for example, mobilizing people to take over ownership of their lives, will be involving methodologies and tools for spreading information and changing behavior in order to achieve the development results (ibid: 87).

Similarly, the concept of development is broad and all inclusive that often comprises non-material aspects of human need (Servaes 1999:38; Melkote and Steeves 2001:44). However, for this paper, we take Servaes and Malikhao’s definition, “lifting up the spirits of the local people to take pride in its own culture, intellect and environment” (2005:98). This definition discredits the idea of early understandings of development as replicating the Western model of development.

When development and communication are combined together, they refer to “the application of communication strategies and principles in the developing world” (Waisbord 2000). Waisbord defined communication strategies also as “diagnoses of problems translated into strategies that are specific course of action for programmatic interventions that use a variety of techniques” (ibid). The definitions of the terms seem to indicate the close relationship of development and communications.

2.2 Review of local studies

When I was searching for studies done on issues related to my topic, I came across many publications in the libraries of Addis Ababa University. But when I looked into their contents, I found out that they missed the most important variable, communication, which I think is responsible for the failure or success of programs, such as, the public works**.** This might result from the lack of interaction among fields of studies. Nevertheless, the interdependent nature of the problems of public work programs makes studying the causes from one perspective difficult. So, important variables, such as communication and communication strategies should not have been neglected by studies done on such programs.

Studies that focus on problems of projects from the perspective of communication strategies and approaches are confined to the library of the Graduate School of Journalism and Communication. The one related to my topic is Matebu Tadesse (2006) study that focuses on whether the development communication approach used for sharing and/or exchanging messages, is top-down, participatory, or the integration of both. Hence, he found out that interpersonal and group communication methods are found to be participatory. The flow of

information, in these methods, is also multi-directional. On the other hand, Matebu mentioned that mass media of communications are not participatory. Similarly, he found out that farmers accept interpersonal and group communication methods more than they accept the mass media methods of communication for extension messages.

Other studies, such as Temesgen's (2007) communication strategies in child feeding; Hiwote's (2007) family planning communication; Fikirte's (2006) communication and girls' education; Filseta's (2006) health communication, found interpersonal and group communication methods to be more effective than the mass communication methods. The favored places to exchange information were also found to be churches, markets, wedding ceremonies, mourning ceremonies, *idir* (communal association), *mahber* (religious association), and other social gatherings. The role of opinion leaders (elderly, religious leaders, etc.) is also emphasized in the studies done in different parts of Ethiopia.

The little importance given to mass communication by the subjects of the studies emanated from the lack of access to mass media channels. Lack of compatibility between radio programs and the context of the people was also raised as another hindrance (Hiwote 2007). The approach of mass communication is also observed as top-down because "programs or texts are shaped by journalists with little involvement of farmers and agricultural experts" (Matebu 2006).

2.3 Sustainable development and the role of communication

The various definitions proposed by scholars engaged in different fields of studies show the multiplicity of roles that communication has to play. For example, Communication serves as a key component for many overseas aid programs, especially those working to improve the living conditions of the world's poor through social service and infrastructure development (Morris 2005:123). Its role even becomes more vital when it comes to community based activities, such as, the PSNP-supported Public Works. Communication in such activities can serve as a means to maintain mutual understanding between field agents and the community. It can also play a pivotal role in community empowerment[1] by facilitating dialogue among the society. Here, communication's function is not limited to transmitting information but rather to building community (Waisbord 2005:87). Enabling community to talk and listen to others, identify problems, determine goals, decide on courses of actions and assign responsibilities can be achieved by enhancing communication among members of communities. This being the fact, however, "lack of access to communication and information is one of the most tangible problems in the developing world" (Waisbord 2005:87).

Communication is also important in preventing problems before they occur. According to Mefalopulos (2005:257), chances are that most problems would be dealt with before they ever occurred had communication been properly applied at the beginning. Communication can also serve as a cure for already occurred problems. For example, it can be used as a tool to relieve people from a dependency syndrome that participants of the PSNP-supported PWs would develop in the program.

In short, Mefalopulos (2005:252) lists three major functions of communication: exchanging information and building consensus around specific issues; supporting the achievement of projects' objectives; and assisting in identifying and defining projects' objectives. These functions of communication enable stakeholders of the public works and other development projects perceive the proposed change and the way they are involved in assessing and deciding how that change should be achieved.

The Roundtable Report prepared by FAO, summarizes the role that communication has to play to development as follows: "If development can be seen as fabric woven out of the activities of millions of people, communication represents the essential thread that binds them together" (FAO 2004). The report goes on to explain communication's role in development saying: a development strategy using communication approaches can reveal people's underlying attitudes and traditional wisdom, help people to adapt their views and acquire new knowledge and skills, and spread new social messages to a large audience. Intensified exchange of ideas among all sectors of society can lead to the greater involvement of people in a common cause. This is a fundamental requirement for appropriate and sustainable development (ibid).

2.4 Theories of development communication

The history of development communication[2] dates back to post world war II period, specifically during the 1950s (Waisbord 2000). During this time, the US launched the European Recovery Program, also known as the Marshall Plan to rehabilitate the war-ravaged Europe (Melkote and Steeves 2001:50-51). Inspired by the success of the Marshall Plan, the UN launched similar projects in Third World countries starting in the 1950s and on into the 1960s (ibid: 51). The international aid programs were meant to solve problems of countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa that were straggling with poverty, illiteracy, poor health and a lack of economic, political and social infrastructures (Waisbord 2000). Theories of media and development have several variants, but most 1950s and 1960s scholars "assume that the superiority of modern (that is, secular, materialist Western, individualist, etc.) ways of individual motivations the key to change" (McQuail 2000: 84), which made Modernization Theory to be dominant of the time.

2.4.1 From modernization, through dependency to multiplicity

Modernization was an old theory that dominated the early generation of development communication studies (Waisbord 2000). It was also considered to be the most influential form of development communication theory, especially until the mid-1960s. But much of the assumptions advocated by the theory have "now been set aside or re-evaluated, in the light of very limited success in terms of the original goals and increasing doubts about the underlying purpose" (McQuail 2000: 84). Despite the theory's discredit as from 1970s, however, some of the beliefs on which it is built still continued to influence development programs. According to Servaes (1999:7),

> economic growth centralized planning, and the explanation for the state of underdevelopment as sought in chiefly internal causes that can be solved by external (technological) "aid"- are still shared by many governments, development agencies

> associated with the United Nations, the World Bank, and so on, and, of course, transnational companies.

In the 1950s and 1960s, even developing countries, "were attracted by the new technology transfer and the model of centralized state … as the most effective strategies to catch up with those industrialized countries" (Servaes and Malikhao 2005:92).

Modernization theory suggested that cultural and information deficit lied underneath development problems and, therefore, could not be resolved only through economic assistance. Instead, the difficulties in Third World countries were at least partially related to the existence of a traditional culture that inhibited development. According to the theory, in order for underdeveloped countries to 'develop' (bring about economic growth), they have to cast away their long held culture, which is thought to be a 'bottleneck' that prevents the adoption of modern attitudes and behavior. Replacing Third World countries' indigenous culture with Westerners' values and information was hoped to be achieved through the transfer of media technology and the adoption of innovations and culture originated in the developed world.

Modernization theory focuses on a psychic change of people living in countries whose culture is traditional into urbanization, literacy, mass media exposure, and economic and political participation (Melkote and Steeves 2001:114).

Hence, communication was assigned the role of disseminating modernity to facilitate cultural change (Waisbord 2005:83). As the modernization tradition concluded, lack of information and traditional norms prevented the development of Third World countries (ibid). Especially, the mass media of communication was intended to be used as a tool to discard indigenous culture of developing countries by way of changing the psychic of people living in those countries towards Western ideas, knowledge and skills. This spread of modernity's messages (by mass media) to help transfer the institutions and practices of democratic politics and market economics to economically backward and socially traditional nations of the world was, especially, aimed at "those outside the control of the communist sphere of influence" (McQuail 2000: 84).

These days, however, the notion that communication equals information or that development problems are reduced to citizens' lack of information have been discredited. Some critics pointed out that its simplistic model of information-transmission was inadequate for understanding the complexities of communication (Waisbord 2005:83).

The theory was developed from the assumption that "the problem of underdevelopment or 'backwardness' could be solved by more-or-less mechanical application of the economic and political system in the West to countries in the Third World" (Servaes 1999:5). This was because communication researchers assumed that the backwardness of developing countries was similar to that of traditional Europe. This led them to conclude that applying universal path to development would solve the problem of Third World countries. They also hoped the introduction of media and certain types of educational, political and economic information

into a social system could transform individuals and societies from traditional to modern (Servaes and Malikao 2005: 92).

In terms of social evolution, modernization theory can be seen as ethnocentric. According to this theory, a nation was considered to be modern and developed when it closely resembled Western industrial nations in terms of political and economic behavior and institutions, attitudes towards technology and innovation, and social and psychic mobility (Melkote and Steeves 2001:79).

The model also advocates ethnocentrism. Even the name of the process to 'develop' Third World countries was termed as Westernization. According to Lerner (1958), the term was changed to modernization because Third World leaders denounced the word "West" for political reasons. Had it not been for their denouncement, however, the process would have remained to be known as Westernization (Lerner 1958 in Melkote and Steeves 2001:114).

Modernization, in terms of economic growth, was considered to have brought about mixed results. In the one hand, it enabled most developing nations to register high rate of GDP and per capita incomes until the 1960s. On the other hand, however, unemployment, poverty, and income inequalities were increasing as well. This made the poor to benefit very little from the economic growth in their countries (Melkote and Steeves 2001: 61-62). In other words, the main beneficiaries of the program were the better-off sections of the society (Kumer 1994:83). According to Kumer, there were little evidences of "the hoped for 'trickle-down' effect." Mass Media networks were used for political propaganda and for mindless entertainment of the urban middle-class rather than for development purposes (ibid).

Modernization Theory's impact on the Ethiopian peasants in the 1950s and 1960s[3] was described by Dessalegn (2008) as having created ideological bias on the then decision makers. According to Dessalegn, decision makers "considered small-holder agriculture as backward and which held Western-style, technology-driven, and large scale agriculture to be the only alternative" (p. 28).

In short, Servaes (1996c:83), outlines the distinctive characteristic of the modernization theory as follows:

- Development is a spontaneous, unilinear and irreversible process inherent in every single society.
- Development implies structural differentiation and functional specialization.
- The process of development can be divided into distinct stages showing the level of development achieved by each society.
- Development can be stimulated by external, endogenous factors and by internal measures that support modern sectors and modernize traditional sectors.

Later on, dependency was developed as an antithesis of modernization theory (Servaes 1999:45; Waisbord 2000).The main argument of *dependistas*, advocates of the Dependency Theory, as writers such as Servaes (1999: 32) used to refer, was that the problems of

underdevelopment were not internal to Third World countries but were determined by external factors and the way Westerners were integrated into the world economy (Waisbord 2000).

Hence, *dependistas* oppose the idea that lack of information and traditional culture as causing underdevelopment. Neither did they consider shortages of capital or management as the most hindrances to development (Servaes 1999:34). They also do not see casting aside the indigenous culture of developing countries and replacing it with new attitudes and behaviors as the solution for the problem. They rather blame the West, particularly the U.S. for their concentrated economic power and political decisions, which made Third World countries to be politically and culturally dependent on them. For *dependistas*, what kept Third World countries underdeveloped were social and economic factors, namely the dominant position that the west had in the global order and the adverse effect that it had on the Third World (ibid).

Dependistas also argue against the assumption (by modernization theorists) that Third World nations resembled earlier stages of the history of West European nations. They say:

> underdevelopment in the Third World does not signify an earlier stage of European developmental history but instead is in large part the historical product of the past and continuing economic and other relations between the Satellite underdeveloped and the now developing metropolitan countries (ibid:71).

Dependistas sought political solution for the problem. Specifically, they required "social change in order to transform the general distribution of power and resources" (ibid). Change in media structures that were dominated by commercial principles and foreign interests was also the concern of *dependistas*. For them, policies for media structure "needed to promote national and public goals that could put the media in the service of the people rather than as pipelines for capitalist ideologies" (ibid).They also recommended the dissociation of each peripheral country from the world market and opt for a self-reliant development strategy so that external obstacles can be removed (Servaes 1999:34). As we shall see in the multiplicity paradigm, the idea of isolation by *dependistas* was criticized by subsequent scholars. But this theory is remembered for its role in the movement for a New World Information and Communication Order from the late 1960s to the early 1980s (Servaes 1999:31).

Generally, though the two paradigms differ in their framework of reference (international level of analysis for *dependistas* and the nation state for modernization theorists), they have things to share, especially in their use of media and communication, which is elitist, linear and top-down process for both of them.

As a summery, Servaes (1996c) put in an outline the distinctive characteristic of the dependency theory as follows:

- The process of development is analyzed in terms of relations between regions, central and peripheral.
- The most important obstacles to development are external to the underdeveloped nation.

- Due to the fact that the periphery is deprived of its surplus, development in the centre implies underdevelopment in the periphery.
- It is necessary for a peripheral country to dissociate itself from the world market and strive for self reliance. (p: 83)

In a relatively recent time, a new paradigm, which is described by (Servaes 1999: 5) as "Another and multidimensional development, or, in short multiplicity paradigm" emerged as a criticism to the two dominant paradigms. In the late 1970s, the former United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold urged that "development should be seen as more than industrial development, because it is a process involving the whole person, the self, the spirit, and the society, referring to it as *Another development* (Jacobson 1994:65).

Another development espouses an approach with a strong empowerment strain focused on securing basic needs and rights for the Third World people. It promotes indigenous problem perception, problem solving, and self-reliance upon ones own strengths and resources. It proposes decentralizing structural transformation, transferring decision making from the urban centers to the rural villages (Ascroft and Masilela 1994: 269).

The main concern of this theory is that the growing interdependency of regions, nations and communities in our globalized world makes supporting dependency perspective to be difficult (Servaes and Malikhao 2005: 93). Development, according to this theory, emphasizes cultural identity and multidimensionality. Multiplicity paradigm differs from both modernization and dependence in its interpretation of development and the way towards reaching it. Servaes (1999: 6) has the following to add:

> Contrary to the more economics and political oriented views of the modernization and dependency theories, the central idea in the multiplicity paradigm is that there is no universal path to development, that development must be conceived as an integral, multidimensional, and dialectic process that can differ from one country to another. In other words, every society must define development for it self and find its own strategy.

This is because there is no country that is developed in all aspects; or development that does not go in harmony with the environment is not real development. Another development favors a multiplicity of approaches based on the context and the basic, felt needs, and the empowerment of the most oppressed sectors of various societies at divergent levels. It holds that "change must be structural and occur at multiple levels in order to achieve these ends" (Servaes and Malikhao 2005: 93) as its main thesis. Another development questions whether "developed" nations are in fact developed and whether this genre of progress is sustainable or desirable.

Servaes (1999:78) lists three foundations for *another* development:

- Another development is geared to the satisfaction of needs, beginning with the eradication of poverty;
- Another development is indigenous and self-reliant;

- Another development is in harmony with the environment. Another development applies to all levels of all societies, not just the poor of the non-aligned world. It grew from dissatisfaction with the "consumer society" with what is sometimes termed "overdevelopment" or even "mal development" as well as the growing disillusion with the modernization theory.

In short, Servaes (1996c: 83), outlines the distinctive characteristic of the multiplicity theory as follows:

- All nations are, in one way or the other, dependent upon one another. Consequently internal as well as external factors may influence the development process.
- Development has to be studied in a global context, in which both the centre and the periphery, as well as their interrelated sub-divisions, have to be taken into consideration.
- More attention should be paid to the content of development which implies a more normative approach.
- There is no universal model for development. Each society must delineate its own development strategy.

As to the application of the theory, (Ascroft and Masilela 1994: 269) say, 'another development' lives mainly in scholarly language than to enter the arena of applied development theory in the Third World. The reason for them is "lack of Third World capacity and resolve for wholly indigenized development thinking and strategization. Third World institutions of learning and tracing remain dominated by neocolonial traditions decades after the acquisition of independence" (ibid).

The problem with the dependency theory is its call for Third World countries to isolate themselves from the world economy and operate on their own. This seems unattainable (as countries are interdependent in one way or another) and undesirable especially in this period of globalization. The other problem is it tends to ignore internal factors of underdevelopment while it focuses on international causes. This may prevent concerned bodies from delineating effective development strategy. For this reason, multiplicity theory seems more preferable than the previous theories.

2.4 Communication models

2.4.1 Diffusion versus participatory

The field of development communication is dominated by two conceptual models: diffusion and participation (Morris 2005:123). These models have distinct intellectual roots and differing emphasis in terms of program designs and goals.

Diffusion model was introduced by the American scholar Everett Rogers in the context of development (Servaes 1999:24). Its basic notion is that "innovations, noble ideas, autonomously diffuse among members of a relatively homogeneous population after their

introduction from outside, either through a change agent, through people who straddle the local and external worlds, or through other media (FAO 2004).

Diffusion of innovation focuses on knowledge transfer leading to behavior change. In the second edition of his work, Rogers distinguishes four crucial steps in the process of diffusion and adoption: the knowledge of the innovation itself (information), the communication of the innovation (persuasion), the decision to adopt or reject the innovation (adoption or rejection), and the confirmation of the innovation by the individual (Servaes 1999: 24). The role of mass media is concentrated in the first stage of the process. That means, media were playing the role of promoting the diffusion and adoption of many technical and social innovations that are essential to modernization (McQuail 2000: 84).On the other hand, the crucial task (influencing individuals to develop an attitude favorable to modernity) was left to interpersonal communication.

Participatory communication has its basis on two approaches, the dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and the one that focuses on the ideas of access, participation and self-management articulated in the UNESCO debates of the 1970s (Servaes 1999:24).

Morris (2005:123) compares and contrasts diffusion and participation from different perspectives, but from communication perspective, he says, they have different priorities. Interventions based on any variety of the diffusion model centre on mass media, and the role of media in all Third World countries, according to Servaes and Milkhao (2005: 94), is similar: informing the population about the projects, illustrating the advantages of these projects, and recommending that they be supported. The countries only differ in their development strategies (ibid).

Participatory campaigns, on the other hand, concern interpersonal channels. Almost exclusively, advocates of participatory model focus on group meetings, workshops, and sometimes localized small media such as community theatre or interactive posters.

According to Morris (2005:123), diffusion and participation models also have different definitions for the concepts of communication and development communication strategies. For advocate of diffusion, communication is information transfer--vertical; and development communication is information dissemination via mass media. Participatory model's definition for communication is information exchange/dialogue--horizontal and grassroots participation via group interaction for development communication (ibid).

There is also a difference between the two (diffusion and participatory) in attributing the root-causes for the problems of underdevelopment, and hence their solutions for the problems of Third world countries. The problem of underdevelopment for the diffusion theorists is lack of information, which led them to consider information transfer: knowledge, attitudes and practice as the solution and outcome-oriented behavioral change as their goal. But the problem for the participatory is structural inequalities (ignored local knowledge). The solution, therefore, is information exchange/participation, and the goal is process-oriented: empowerment, equity and community (ibid).

The main advantage of programs which encouraged true participation is well stated by the Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere when he says:

> People cannot be developed; they can develop themselves. For while it is possible for an outsider to build a man's home, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in him self as a human being. These things a man has to create in himself by his own actions. He develops himself by what he does; he develops himself by making his own decisions, by increasing his understanding of what he is doing, and why; by increasing his own knowledge and ability, and by his own full participation-as an equal- in the life of the community he lives in. (Nyerere 1973:60)

The participatory model goes in line with the concepts of multiplicity/another development. It stresses the importance of the cultural identity of local communities and of democratization and participation at all levels-international, national, local, and individual (Servaes 1999:88).

The focus of communication in the participatory model moves from a "communicator" to a more "receiver-centric." The role of experts and development workers is to respond rather than to dictate. The emphasis is also on information exchange rather than on persuasion as in the diffusion model (Servaes 1999:89).

Paulo Freire (1983:76 quoted in Servaes 1999:88), says, "This is not the privilege of some few men, but the right of every man. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone –nor can he say it for another, in a perspective act which robs others of their words." According to Servaes (1999:89), in order to share information, knowledge, trust, commitment and a right attitude in development projects, participation is very important in any decision making process for development. Servaes sees the golden rule which says, "treat people the way you yourself would like to be treated" as helpful to learn to work as a team, which in turn helps bring about rural commitment and motivation.

Agricultural innovations in Ethiopia were used to be introduced through the top-down approach of diffusion of innovations. Consequently, problems (such as chemical fertilizers worsening the situation in areas that have insufficient rain) were created because some of the innovations did not consider the situation in the ground. Nowadays, the approach seems participatory. However, there are still individual major actors that hinder the participation of community members. Therefore, empowering community members and giving them the responsibility seems to have been effective in implementing development interventions.

2.5 Development communication strategies

2.5.1 Social marketing

Since the 1970s, social marketing served as the most influential strategy in the field of development communication (Waisbord 2000: 6). The strategy grew out of the discipline of advertising and marketing in the United States with the idea that the same marketing principles that were being used to sell products to consumers could be used to "sell" ideas, attitudes and behaviors. The idea emerged because profit organizations found the central premise of these

disciplines to be useful in behavior change (ibid). Specifically, the concept of social marketing was first introduced in 1971 and was defined as "the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product, planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research" (Kotler and Zaltman 1971:5 quoted in Melkote and Steeves 2001:127).

Recently, the definition of social marketing has broadened and is described as "the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society" (Andreason 1995:7). The Roundtable sees social marketing as "the application of commercial marketing techniques to solve social problems" (FAO 2004).

Social marketing techniques have especially been used among at-risk populations globally to promote the distribution, sales, and use of condoms. The four Ps of social marketing-**p**roduct, **p**rice, **p**lace, and **p**romotion- have been researched in relation to characteristics of specific populations (Melkote and Steeves 2001:137).

Social marketing's goal is to position a product such as condoms by giving information that could help fulfill, rather than create, uncovered demand. It intends to "reduce the psychological, social, economic and practical distance between the consumer and the behavior" (ibid).

It has also a goal of making products, ideas (such as condom use), etc., affordable, available and attractive depending on the issue at stake. According to Waisbord (2000), if couples of reproductive age do not want more children, but do not use any contraceptive, the task of social marketing will be to find out why and what information needs to be provided so they can make an informed choices. Accomplishing such tasks, according to Waisbord, requires sorting out cultural beliefs that account for such behavior or for why people are unwilling to engage in certain health practices even when they are informed about their positive results. This knowledge is the baseline that allows a successful positioning of a product. A product needs to be positioned in the context of the community's beliefs (ibid). Generally, Social marketing seeks to influence social behaviors not to benefit the marketer, but to benefit the target audience and the general society.

2.5.2 Social mobilization

Social mobilization is "the process of bringing together all feasible and practical inter-sectors and social allies to raise people's awareness of and demand for a particular development program, to assist in the delivery of resources and services and to strengthen community participation for sustainability and self reliance" (Cadiz 2005:154). The characteristics of social mobilization can be described as engaging a large number of people in joint action for achieving societal goals through self-reliant efforts (Cohen 1996:233). Its immediate expected outcomes are the mobilization of all possible resources and the sustained adoption through the modification of attitudes and behavior of various societal actors (ibid).

The phrase is used by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to describe all-inclusive planning approach (political mobilization, government mobilization, community mobilization, corporate mobilization, and beneficiary mobilization) that emphasizes political coalition building and community action (Waisbord 2000; Cadiz 2005:154). In other words, UNICEF characterizes it as self-sustaining process, a multilevel approach that is both bottom-up and top-down; based on in-depth and comprehensive understanding of a country's socio-cultural and politico-economic contexts; carefully planned and feasible so as to ensure that demand created in the mobilizing process is met (Cadiz 2005:154).

The term "mobilization" refers to a process through which community members become aware of a problem, identify the problem as a high priority for community action (FAO 2004). It starts with a problem assessment and analysis at the community level and moves to action on chosen courses, involving many strategic allies at all levels in a wide range of support activities (ibid). Social mobilization differs from traditional social marketing approaches that are largely based on appeals to individuals.

The idea related to social mobilization is community mobilization. Community mobilization can be defined as "the process of creating awareness and organizing for action" (ibid) in a community. A community can be one stratum among those that social mobilization drums ups in the determination of basic needs, the definition of common goals, the design of realistic options and the implementation and interventions on multi-sectors (Cohen 1996:233). Hence, the limed scope of mobilization is what differentiates community mobilization from that of social mobilization. It can also be seen as a stage of community participation and empowerment.

According to Cohen (1996:234), two factors (push and pull) can facilitate community mobilization. The push factor occurs when a response to a threat or a felt need acts as a unifying factor. Groups may readily organize themselves against the incursion of others (e.g. invasion). This may create the strength needed to pressure authorities to supply basic service or to organize locally to provide support through self-help or to affect legislation.

The pull factor that Cohen talks about is seeing new opportunities. This is the area where external groups may help create a vision of what are the new options in living conditions such as health, sanitation, food security and environment. But since communities cannot bring a significant change alone, Cohen recommends the involvement of governments and donors in creating the conditions for full-scale social change. According to Cohen, a community's role is to support a project that it initiated locally and/or with the support of external resources (ibid: 234).

2.5.4 A "tool-kit" conception of strategies

All strategies have their own limitations, which makes relying on only one "best" strategy difficult. This calls for practitioners to close the gap of one strategy by another strategy. In other words, "different techniques in different contexts might be necessary to deal with specific problems and priorities" (Waisbord 2005: 83). According to Waisbord, conventional

educational and media interventions might be recommended in critical situations such as epidemics, when a large number of people needed to be reached in a short period of time. While social marketing has proven useful in raising immunization rates, social mobilization offers a way to deal with the multiple dimensions of certain issues such as education. Such interventions are proven effective from the experiences of countries such as Tanzania and Egypt (ibid).

It is also possible to achieve a successful result by integrating personal (social marketing) and contextual/environmental (social mobilization) approaches together. According to Waisbord (2005:81), "changes in behavior and social conditions cannot be addressed only by targeting personal or contextual factors but, rather, need to be sensitive to both in order to understand problems and design solutions."

After a pendulum swung from government led to community based approaches in the development community in the 1970s and '80s, there has been a growing realization that top-down and bottom-up communication strategies are necessary to tackle a host of problems successfully (Waisbord 2005:79).The reason is, though it is important to focus on community empowerment, and community driven development, commitment from central and local governments to specific development issues has proven to be tremendously important in achieving results, particularly for scaling-up successful projects at the national level (ibid). Whether a government decides a given issue is a priority that affects the prospects of development work, a point vehemently demonstrated in recent programs on infectious diseases. This makes Waisbord (2005:79) to recommend the need to help improve governments' contributions.

By the same token, much of the current thinking is that successful interventions combine media channels and interpersonal communication (Waisbord 2005:81). Against arguments of powerful media effects that dominated development communication in the past, recent conclusions suggest that blending media and interpersonal channels is fundamental for effective interventions. Such conclusions were reached after the mass media were found to have minimalist effect (Vivian 2005) on making people decide on certain issues. Very recently the media were said to cause cumulative effects on people overtime. The cumulative effect is caused by the redundantly home driven media messages whose effects were increased in proportion to the degree in which selective perception is made difficult (ibid). Of course, such theories were developed based on the researches about media effect on the public in the US were conducted where the people's access to media very high. The media in countries such as Ethiopia may not have similar effects as they are characterized by lack of variety, which makes selective exposure and selective perception difficult and because the majority of the people of such countries have no access to them.

But generally, the media are extremely important in raising awareness and knowledge about a given problem (Waisbord 2005: 81). They are able to expose large amounts of people to messages and generate conversation among audiences and others who were not exposed. Nevertheless, they may not directly influence people's decision. Thus, it would be wrong to assume that development can be achieved mainly or only through media channels. That might be the reason why communication scholars now come to understand that social learning and

decision-making processes involve listening and exchanging opinions with a number of different sources. Hence, since it is proven to be successful from a number of interventions, media channels and interpersonal communications should be integrated (ibid). Nevertheless, since people in Ethiopia have limited access to mass media outlets, considering religious and communal associations may also be important in carrying out development interventions.

In the Ethiopian culture, communal life dominates people's way of living. Community members are linked with one another through religious association, communal association, because they share the same confessor, and so on. Hence, they can be easily mobilized using the leaders of such establishments. These characteristics of the society make focusing on social and communal mobilization important while trying to succeed development interventions. This does not mean, however, that these strategies effectively work for all projects. Some projects may require individual focused approach. For example, though social marketing is criticized for its top-down approach, its emphasis on individual is still desirable in, for example, HIV/AIDS prevention. The approach is especially important in cultures, such as Ethiopia's, where open discussion about sex is not common. It is, thus, with this approach that individual's attitudes and doubts can be explored. Therefore, the approach should not be discarded but need to be used in combination with the bottom-up approach. Integrating social structure with individual approaches helps to fill the constraints strategies.

Chapter three: Social context of the study area

3.1 Historical context of the area

The Tigray people have long been at the centre of socio-political life in Ethiopia starting from the Axumite period in the middle of the second century B.C. (Bahru 1998: 46). In recent history, the Tigray people were the unwilling buffer between the colonial interests of the Italians during their occupation of Eritrea, and the centralizing state of Emperor Menelik followed by Haile-selassie from 1880s until the revolution in 1974, which caused the feudal system to be abolished.

At the battle of Adwa in 1896, Menelik's 80,000 army "was sent to the north without provisions, and was forced to live of the land; it has never been forgotten that more Tigreans died defending their houses against Menelik's army than did Italians in the battle" (Peberdy 1985). Forty years later, when the Italians invaded the country, the main battlefields were once more in Tigray. In 1943, after Mussolini's defeat and Haile-Selassie's return, the Tigrean peasants attempted a revolt against the central government, but this was quickly put down with the help of Aden-based British planes which bombed the then provincial capital at Mekelle and the surrounding villages (ibid). According to Peberdy (1985), following the rebellion of the peasant, Haile-Sellasie's government introduced a policy of material and cultural poverty to ensure that Tigray would never again cause trouble. The repression continued by the military government, known as Derg, which came to power following the downfall of the feudal system. Consequently, the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) emerged in 1975, and another bloody civil war fought for 17 years mainly in the region.

Hence, the region, being the battle ground for many of the wars that the country entered into, had to endure severe social and economic consequences, which make the people of the region to suffer from chronic food insecurity even to this day. The wars drained the human resource of the region mobilizing peasants in multitude to take up arms and fight. Hence, peasants would virtually abandon their farm activities and join the campaigns. The destruction that the Ethiopian army brought to the region's people was also well stated by Pankhurst (1968:563) as follows:

> the traditional warriors were not only allowed to be quartered in the dwellings of the rural people but could also engage in looting the meager resources of peaceful rural communities in order to meet their supply requirements. Worse yet, they would often leave death and destruction in such communities as they advanced in their bloody mission.

With regard to agricultural economy, peasants had been losing half the crop to landlord, a quarter in tax to the central government and ten percent to the church during the feudal system (Peberdy 1985). The development policies of the imperial period gave least investment to agricultural sector in comparison with the other major sectors (Dessalegn 2008: 50). In the First and Second Development Plans, the focus was on infrastructures. It was only during the Third Five-Year Development Plan (1968–1973) that the important role of agriculture in development was finally recognized. But even then the small holder agriculture was ignored. It was the private modern commercial farms that were seen as the engine of development in the country (Dessalegn 2008: 50-52).

A fundamental change took place in the relation of farmers and land after the 1974 revolution. Farmers elected their own committees and allocated land to the community members[4]. As from 1977, the military government, the Derg, imposed a political framework with previous cadres, and the *tabia* committees changed to be dominated by the political system. The development of co-operative agriculture and state farms got the highest attention of policy makers, while policy discriminated against peasant agriculture. State farms and co-operatives took the lion's share of the limited resources (government budget, skilled labor, input supply, credit service, output pricing, etc), while small holder agriculture received little. Small farmers suffered greatly as a result of low controlled prices, required delivery of production quotas to the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC), limitations on private grain trade and the policy of promoting collective agriculture by giving preferential prices to state farms and co-operatives. This policy environment exacerbated the pressure on degraded land resources, by deepening rural poverty and limiting farmers' incentive and ability to invest in agriculture generally or in land improvement specifically.

Besides to other opposition movements, the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) began its struggle in 1975 from Tigray. Consequently, starting from 1978, the military government launched series of offensives against Tigray, which made hundreds of young Tigreans flee to the countryside to escape conscription or to join the struggle. The TPLF formed coalitions with like-minded movements in Amhara, Oromia and Southern Ethiopia, and became EPRDF (the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front), which pushed out the military government and took control of the country from 1991 onwards.

In 1983/84, there was a devastating drought and the indigenous NGO, the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), worked with the TPLF to bring relief aid to the farmers of Tigray through the Sudan. The Tigray Development Association (TDA) was also formed to collect and channel funds to support the development of Tigray. Both REST and TDA were administered from outside of the country during the military rule but quickly established themselves back in Mekelle, the capital of Tigray, after 1991. Most international NGOs interested in supporting the people of Tigray now work with REST, while aid from foreign governments is channeled through the local government. Most of the food aids were used to be transferred through the Food-For-Work program and other Employment Generation schemes. The intention was to get people rehabilitate their degraded land and use the food aid as payment. But the projects of these programs were not integrated into ongoing development activities. Starting from 2005, the First Five Year Productive Safety Net Program was started in almost all the *Woredas* of the region including in the study area to fill the food gap of the chronically food insecure people by employing them in Public Works intended to build community assets.

3.2 Physical characteristics and climate of Tigray

Tigray is the northern-most region of Ethiopia and has a common boundary with Eritrea in the North and Sudan in the West. It stretched 12 degree and 15 degree North latitude, and 30 degree and 30 degree East longitude, which makes it share the Sudano-Sahlian dry land zones (Aster 2007).The topography of the region is predominantly mountainous and the elevation ranges from 500 meters above sea level in the eastern part of the region (Erob) to 3900 meters in the southern zone.

The region can be categorized, into three major agro ecological zones that include: lowland (kola), mid latitude (Weina-degua), highland (degua). The lowland (kola) is below 1500 meters above sea level (m.a.s.l). Such areas are found mainly in northern, western and eastern parts of the region. Population density in such areas is 21 persons per square kilo meters (Aster 2007). Mid latitude (Weina-degua) is the most common one in the region. It has got an altitude that ranges from 1500-2200 m.a.s.l. This altitude has the most clement weather and population density. Highland (degua) is above 2300 m.a.s.l. It experiences a cool temperature though it is getting warmer nowadays. Arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas cover most parts of the region. The problem of desertification is threatening the agro-ecosystem of the region. The average minimum temperature is five degree siliceous and maximum 40 degree siliceous. The peak agricultural season of the region is from June to August while the slack period is from December to April. Most of the area is arid or semi-arid with annual precipitation of 450 to 980 mm (ibid). This is lower than the country's average and higher in variability (Bezu and Holden 2008: 543).

The study areas, the rural Simret and the town Bizet, are the constituting *tabias* of Ganta Afeshum *woreda (*the lowest level of official government administration). They are located 35 kilo meters west of Adigrat, the seat of Woreda Ganta Afeshum's administration and the city of Eastern zone of Tigray. Bizet is situated on the roadside stretched from Mekelle (the regional capital of Tigray) through Adigrat to Adwa (a town in the central zone of Tigray).

3.3 Administration and institutional arrangements of the region

Mekelle, the capital city of the region, serves as the region's political and administrative centre. It hosts both the regional parliament and all the regional bureaus- including the Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development (BoARD). Although the sector's organization follows that of the federal government, the region is autonomous in its development and implementation of policies. For example, in the case of the Productive Safety Net Program, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD) is responsible for the oversight and coordination of the program through the Federal Food Security Coordination Bureau (FSCB). The Federal Food Security Co-ordination Bureau (FFSCB) reports directly to the MoARD. The FFSCB is responsible, among others, for allocating PSNP resources to regions, ensuring that funds reach implementing *woredas*, and that they are properly utilized.

Nevertheless, the regional council/cabinet is the highest decision-making organ at the regional level in reviewing and approving plans and reports. The Regional Food Security Steering Committee (RFSSC) provides advice to ensure the proper implementation of food security strategies and programs at the regional level, among others. The Regional Food Security Coordination Office (RFSCO) reports to the Regional Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development (BoARD).

On the other hand, the *Woreda* council is the highest decision-making body at *Woreda* level and is responsible for the allocation of Safety Net resources to *tabias* in line with the size of vulnerable population and based on the recommendations of the *Woreda* Food Security Task Force (WFSTF). The Head of *woreda* rural development office acts as chair of the WFSTF.

The *Woreda* is the key level of government that determines needs, and undertakes planning and implementation of Safety Net activities. Each of the 36 *woredas* in Tigray has an administrator, administrative assistants and sector's experts, appointed by the regional government, all of whom are salaried.

The Woreda Food Security Desks (WFSD) are responsible for coordination of Safety Net activities and are technically accountable to the RFSCOs. On the other hand, the Woreda Sector's Offices (Line Offices) include Woreda Offices and Desks of Agriculture, Rural Roads, Natural Resource Management, Education, Health, Cooperation Promotion and Women's Affairs. The responsibilities of the offices are listed in the Program Implementation Manual as follows:

- Incorporate PSNP activities in their yearly programs/action-plans based upon the specific opportunities PSNP resources represent in terms of labour-based activities, capacity building and availability of supplementary non-wage costs;
- Provide technical assistance and training to technical personnel and kebelle tabia staff in planning and implementation of Safety Net activities;
- Consolidate and compile the proposals of the kebelle Food Security Task Force to incorporate into the woreda Safety Net plan; etc. (FEDRE 2006)

The other organ at the *woreda* level is the *Woreda* Office of Finance and Economic Development (WoFED), which is responsible for ensuring that the budget for the Safety Net Program is received in a timely manner at the *woreda* level to guarantee smooth implementation of approved plan and activities.

Local government is carried out by the *tabia*, somewhat equivalent of a parish of 1000-1300 households. Each *tabia* is headed by an elected chairperson, who is paid. He or she is assisted by elected members of the community, often referred to as a *tabia* council (cabinet), who are not paid. This body is the highest political decision-making body in the *tabia*. It is responsible for approving beneficiary households, preparing the employment scheme, managing the program and distributing resources. All the planning and implementation of Safety Net activities at *tabia* level are overseen by the *Tabia* Food Security Task Force (TFSTF). The TFSTF is also responsible for community mobilization to identify and prioritize community needs. Members of the TFSTF include the *tabia* administration, Development Agents (DAs), Community Based Health Workers (CBHW), teachers, Youth associations, etc. The day-to-day implementation of agricultural activities is carried out by Development Agents who have been trained to the diploma level.

At the *kushet* (village) level, there is the *Kushet*'s Food Security Task Force (KFSTF). Its primary responsibility is identification of beneficiaries of the SNP. It also functions in mobilizing the village's people for participatory planning exercises. The KFSTF is composed of representatives from the *tabia* FSTF, a development agent (if any), two or three representatives of women's associations, two or three representatives of farmer's associations; and elder's representatives (elected).

3.4 Economic aspects of the region

The region is primarily agricultural and the majority of the population is mainly dependent on subsistence rain fed farming. Agriculture in Tigray serves as the basis for the livelihood of the majority of the people and the main stay of the region's economy. Nevertheless, it is dependent on a very low and erratic rainfall making the people of the area vulnerable to recurrent famine. The average rainfall for the 53.2% of the region is about 600 mm (Aster 2007), while the rest gets lower rain. Hence, what is produced even during normal production years cannot satisfy the food demand of the people of the region (ibid).

The agricultural sector has been highly constrained by severe degradation problems in the form of high levels of soil erosion and nutrient depletion (Bezu and Holden's (2008). Furthermore, the high population pressure in the region is resulted in small size of farm land holding. In average it is about one hectare, which varies from 0.5 hectare to 0.9 hectare in the densely populated highlands and nearly 2 hectares in the low lands (Aster 2007). Land redistribution was made to stop in the region in order to avoid further fragmentation which left many youngsters landless.

The repeated crop failure and scarcity of food have forced inhabitants to depend on famine relief in the form of employment generation schemes (Woldeab 2005: 245). As study by Bezu and Holden (2008) shows, more than 85% of the region's households were unable to meet

their food requirements from own production. Hence, nowadays, one of Tigray's main challenges is chronic food insecurity that is exacerbated by frequent droughts. From the relatively recent recurrent drought and famines, the worst took place in 1984/5, which claimed thousands of lives in the region. Moreover, the area was affected by the warfare carried out against external enemies and the civil war among war lords (during the feudal era) and the one fought between TPLF and Derg that lasted 17 years.

Agriculture in the study area consists of rain fed cereals and oil crops, and animal husbandry. Only farmers with oxen to hire out can cultivate extra land and harvest enough food grains for household needs for more months than the average farmers whose food gap is found to be seven months by the *tabia* FSTF. That is why starting from 2008/09, the people of the area who used to work for only six months in the preceding years are made to involve in the PSNP-supported public works for seven months.

The situation is even worse when it comes to the farmers who does not own ox, particularly women headed households, who produce enough food for only few months because they have to share their harvest to share-croppers. This was caused by the tradition of only men ploughing the fields, a woman with rights to own land has to either enter a share-cropping arrangement with a male farmer who has oxen, or wait until a male relative or neighbor has prepared his land before he will come and plough her fields. If she has to wait, she loses the critical first week to 10 days or more of the rainy season before she can sow her crops, and this is usually resulted in lower harvested yield. Under a share-cropping arrangement, the farmer who did the ploughing will take half of the harvest in payment for the ploughing. Both systems result in women headed households getting a reduced amount to feed their families. However, this constraint does not affect women who have sons old enough to handle the oxen. Few women also have broken the traditional taboo and taught themselves to plough, though this has resulted in some sort of social stigmatization.

But the most severely poverty affected groups are mainly the landless youngsters, especially women who have nothing to produce. Recently, these people seem to have been solving their problems by the resettlement program. But some women preferred to migrate to the semi-urban, Bizet, and earn their living by selling *siwa* (local beer). However, the increase in food price is posing the most serious impact on rural poverty where the affected population spends a higher proportion of its expenditure on food.

3.5 Land degradation in the region

The ecological system of the region has been severely degrading by decades of neglect and over exploitation. Indigenous forests were destroyed because of increased need for fire wood, while the free range grazing prevented natural regeneration and destroyed terraces resulting in increased rates of erosion. Gullies have appeared dissecting hills and flowing into agricultural land with catastrophic loss of top soil during the rainy season. Rainfall has become more erratic in total annual amount as well as in the spacing and intensity of showers. Overall water has become scarce for the rural population.

Degradation of natural resources coupled with variability in the distribution and amount of rainfall and other climatic factors has affected the availability of water resources for human beings and livestock in the region. The available water is also poorly utilized. As a result, most of the homesteads spend two hours and above to fetch drinking water. Sources of water in Tigray are rivers, streams, and springs. Most of them are seasonal, which have large flows during the rainy season but are almost dry during the dry months.

"Soil erosion involves the loss of fine particles, nutrients and organic matter, and contributes to the loss of structural stability of the soil, surface compacting and sealing, reduced water infiltration and increased surface runoff. Soil erosion can take two forms: erosion by water—splash, sheet, rill and gully—and wind erosion"[5] .

Following the indiscriminate cutting of trees during war times and the increased consumption of trees and forage plants with the population growth, however, the hillside vegetation was cleared. This caused the increase of runoff floods that flushed away nutritious surface soils from farmlands making the land fruitless.

According to Aster (2007), the steep and dissected terrain with extensive areas of slops, coupled with the high intensity of rainfall, have led to accelerated soil erosion reaching up to 400 tons/hectare/annum. The estimate in Aster's study shows that out of the 54 million hectares in the highlands, serious degradation has occurred in 14 million and moderate degradation in 13 million hectares, while in 2 million hectares, the soil has been made so shallow that crop cultivation is no longer possible (ibid). Land cultivation on steep slope is a common farm practice in the region. Sheet erosion that steadily reduces the soil depth and exposes stones and rocks, gully erosion that destroys fertile valleys are the main types of soil erosion, causing a lowering of the water table in the region.

3.6 Efforts to rehabilitate the area

Reforestation efforts have been made since the early 1970s. Their effects, however, are unsatisfactory due to among others, absence of proper forest management and absence of forest research support offered to the program (Aster 2007). Ineffective replacement effort to the indiscriminately cut trees left the region devoid of vegetation cover. Hence, the existing vegetation cover of the region is estimated to be less than 1%, and highly threatened by human destructions (ibid).

Though efforts to rehabilitate the environment have long been started, they do not seem to have been seriously handled. After 1991, however, a program for rehabilitating catchments was started with special emphasis to restore soil fertility, increase water retention and so improve food security. The World food program was the main fund provider and the Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development (BoARD) the executing agency. The program was formed as containing many valuable elements but as the same time it was criticized for being ad hoc. The fact that calling itself participatory and using food aid as payment for works to build small earth dams and terraces is also considered to be contradictory in nature. Building terraces have been carried out but some terraces whose part was destroyed by animals or fire wood collects are considered as aggravating the gully erosion (Woldeab 2005: 245).

Tabia dwellers used to provide free communal labor for 20 days per year per household. But as from 2008/09, the number of days on which community members are expected to provide communal labor per household per year is made to increase to 40 days. Payment in the form of aid grain or cash was made by the PSNP for any days over and above the household quota.

The maximum number of days a household can work per month in the PSNP-supported Public Works is based on the size of the household. Thus, eligible household members can together work up to 5 person days per month for each member of the household (FDRE 2006). That means, a household with one person can provide up to 5 days of labor per month. But if the household is with two members, it can provide up to 10 days of labor per month; or if it is with three members, it can provide up to 15 days of labor a month. If the full quota is used, this will provide 40 birr or 12 kilos of grains per beneficiary per month. Sometimes, the payment may be given as part grain and part pulses and oil.

Households are paid according to the number of days of labor they actually contribute. However, if the number of household members exceeds the available household labor supply, all household members will be covered. The maximum number of days a household with one able bodied person needs to work per month to meet its household entitlement is 20. For example, a household with 6 members but only one able bodied person is able to receive its full entitlement working a maximum of 20 days (for 4 household members). The remaining two household members benefit from direct support or cancelled[6]. Most of the public works in Tigray are offered in the slack season in order to avoid labor competition with agricultural activities. But the rise of the number of months from six into seven in the study area makes PW to extend beyond the agricultural slack season.

The high population growth and its livestock pressurize the natural resources and straining on the overall development. To solve the problem, the regional government resettled landless youngsters to Western zone of Tigray though the resettles are causing alarmingly accelerating forest destruction in their resettlement area. They cut irreplaceable and indigenous forests in order to prepare farm land. But most of them are not permanently resettled. Men stay in their resettlement area during the rainy season until they harvest their crops leaving their livestock and family behind. They then spend the dry season at their birth place together with their family eating what they brought from their resettlement area in order to avoid the hot weather in the area. Hence, their livestock contribute to over grazing and land degradation.

In the study area, seedlings are planted in communal forest areas to rehabilitate the land. But the chance of survival rate of planted seedlings is extremely low. Many people see the state owned forest areas as no man's land. Therefore, destructing them is not perceived as a crime.

One of the strategies carried out to rehabilitate the area is the establishment of area closure, whose aim is to protect degraded land resources for certain period of time from animal interference. This strategy is meant to protect the environment and conservation effort that the community itself is operating. The area closure is found to be useful in improving the ground vegetation cover and bring back the natural habitat. The strategy is seen as a sort of feedback and highly appreciated by the community members. Interviews with agricultural experts and

elderly members of the community of the study area for example reveal that most of the new vegetation covers are the same as they used to be.

In Tigray, shortage of water is a serious problem limiting crop production. In 2003, the regional experts started promoting the digging of simple water harvesting structures, called *horeye*, to catch water in the rainy season and encouraged farmers to hand dig shallow wells if there was a possibility of the water table being within a few meters of the surface. The aim of the *horeye* was to catch sufficient water for a farming family to water their crops if there was prolonged gap between showers, and/or the rain stopped early. Many farmers in the region construct and wells to water crops and support backyard production of multipurpose trees, vegetables, and fruits for their own use and to generate an extra income. But most of the *horeyes* in the study area are observed to have been holding no water in them. Some farmers in the study area construct *horeyes* for the sake of getting more than ten quintals of cements from the safety net program. From the cement, farmers use small amount for the construction of the *horeye*, but most of it to be used for walls of their houses and some part for sale.

3.7 Demographic characteristics

According to the 2000 E.C. housing and population census of Ethiopia, the population of Tigray is more than four million, of which 81% are rural dwellers and 95.6% are followers of the Orthodox Church. The growth rate is estimated to be 3% per annum (Bezu and Holden 2008; Aster 2007). The total area is about 80, 000 square kilo meters of which an estimated 15,000 square kilo meters of land can be cultivated.

According to this census, the population of Ganta Afeshum Woreda is 88, 616, of which 84,981 live in rural areas. The total population of *tabia* Simret is 8651 of which, 1325 are family heads. From these family heads, 579 females and 379 males are beneficiaries of the Productive Safety Net Program. Specifically, 903 females and 578 males participate in the public work. In this area, 1481 able bodied individuals (903 females and 578 males) go to work for themselves and for the rest 2735, who are physically unfit to the work. All in all, 4216 individuals in the *tabia* (2147 females and 2069 males) benefit either from the PWs or from the DS. Thus, from the total population of the *tabia*, only 364 individuals are left as ineligible for the program.

The semi-urban, Bizet, also has a total population of 2202. From this, 1247 (56.6%) are females. Out of the 1922 individuals or 506 family heads who participate in the public works program females constitute 1092 (56.8). From the 150 individuals who get direct support, still women constitute the majority 71 (55%). The reason for the gap in number between male and female in this place is that divorced or widowed rural women migrate to the town to earn their living from the sale of *siwa*. The second reason is most of the women participants are wives of policemen, teachers, or those who work in road construction. Such women participate in Public Works because their husbands' salaries are unable to support their whole family.

Chapter four: Research methodology

4.1 Research design and procedure

4.1.1 Qualitative research: Philosophical underpinnings

My research focuses on investigating PW program's impact on the lives of communities of two *tabias* of Ganta Afeshum *woreda*. Studying such issues makes sense when the social structure and context is described thoroughly. The method that helps achieve this objective is qualitative. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research does not see the subjects and their social world as passive, but as contributing meaning to events and their environment (Bryman 2004:279). By the same token, unlike the positivists' claim to apply the same basic procedures to investigating both the social the natural world (Deacon et al., 1999:4), qualitative researchers concern to studying people differently from that of objects of the natural sciences. As a result, many of the qualitative researchers express a commitment to viewing events and the social world through the eyes of the people they study (Bryman 2004: 279).

Early researches on media effects were conducted with the use of social survey as an instrument to draw generalizations about the effects that media had on people's attitudes (Deacon 1999: 249). Qualitative researchers, however, argue that such surveys do not get to grips with the complexity of such attitudes, a stand that made them turn to qualitative methods (ibid). Servaes, for example, strongly opposes the idea of positivists. He says: "The subjects of research are just that, subjects. We are not objects and cannot be objectified without losing the very humanity that is the focus of inquiry" (1999:104). In short, I chose to use the qualitative design as a method because after analyzing the founding philosophical assumptions of qualitative and quantitative methods, I found the earlier as fitting to the research I carry out.

This paper, using qualitative method, seeks to interpret the messages of the stakeholders from their perspectives as the basic task of qualitative researcher is to study the message interpretations of the society "so that we may better understand the meanings that people use to guide their activities" (Christians and Carey 1989:359).

The other reason why I have chosen qualitative design over quantitative is that because the earlier emphasizes "holistic description--that is on describing in detail all of what goes on in particular activity or situation rather than on comparing the effects of a particular treatment" (Fraenkel and Wallen 1993: 380). This feature of qualitative research enabled me to "obtain a more complete picture" of what goes on in the study area (ibid: 379). I believe trying to study the nature of communication, the participatory level of my subjects using quantitative research distorts the issue. Or as Griffin put it, trying to answer qualitative research questions using statistics "lops off important differences between people" (Griffin 2006:15).

The underling differences between quantitative and qualitative researches rests on, among others, their philosophical assumptions (their understanding of reality), subjectivity versus objectivity, naturalism versus artificiality, method versus content, and statistics versus description. With regard to the philosophical assumptions, interpretive underpinning assumptions serve as the basis for qualitative researchers while positivists' assumptions serve for the quantitative researchers. The two paradigms differ in their understanding of realty

(realities). For interpretive researchers, 'realities' are plural, simultaneous and local phenomena (Bryman 2004: 266). They are also socially constructed by and between human beings in their expressive and interpretive practices (ibid). This understanding of 'realities' served me as a tool to describe the social contexts and interpret things from the subjects' perspectives.

On the other hand, positivists see social 'reality' as existing 'out there' consisting of cause and effect relations independent of researchers or the people they study might do or say (Deacon et al. 1999: 7). Besides, they consider that all knowledge is based on an observable reality (Servaes 1999:95). Nevertheless, this assumption does not enable human sciences researchers understand the complexities of social phenomena and society's interpretation of events and the world. Servaes (1999) has to add the following:

> As the world is constructed inter-subjectively, through processes of interpretation, the premise is that reality does not write itself on the human consciousness, but rather, that human consciousness approaches reality with certain embedded interpretations and those interpretations, in turn, constitute reality (p.103-104).

The quantitative researcher's trying to identify network of forces, demonstrate how they work, and robust predictions that can be used as the basis for rational interventions was totally rejected by interpretive researchers (Deacon et al. 1999:7). Interpretive researchers argue that organizing structures of social and cultural life are continually reproduced and modified through the myriad activities of everyday life (ibid). They claim no social world can live independent of the social meanings that its members use to account it and, hence, constitute it (ibid). For its supporters the core task of the research in an interpretive one is: to make sense of the worlds by continually guessing at meanings assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses (Deacon et al. 1999: 7).

In another perspective, the very nature of communication as a continuous flow of information rather than as a segmented exchange of messages (Lindlof and Taylor 2002: 44) can also be another reason for choosing qualitative design as a method for conducting researches such as mine. In studying the communication of a particular society, the social actors cannot be viewed as using one-way communication, but rather as simultaneously using multiple channels (e.g. verbal and non verbal) and codes (e.g. rules that inform cultural members how to use and interpret particular categories of signs such as fashion and food) to create meaningful interaction (ibid).

In terms of the question of objectivity versus subjectivity, what the qualitative researchers hold was found to be appropriate for this study. That is, as the qualitative method encourages, the interdependence between me and subjects serve me as a useful instrument in depicting the social context and looking at things from the perspective of the subjects. My presence in the research area and my interaction with the subjects was an important input to the data. Using researcher's interaction with subjects as one method of data collection is encouraged in qualitative research. Flick (2002: 6) had to add on this:

> unlike quantitative research, qualitative methods take the researcher's communication with the field and its members as an explicit part of the research process. Researchers' reflections on their actions in the field, their impressions, irritations, feelings, and so on, became data in their own right, forming part of the interpretation, and are documented in research diaries or context protocols.

Qualitative researchers reached at this conclusion because they see "objectivity" as "seeing what an experience is for another person, not what causes it, not why it exists, not how it can be defined and classified" (Moustakas 1974:107 cited in Servaes 1999:103). They also reject the idea by quantitative researchers that it is possible to objectively perceive, understand, predict and control reality (Servaes 1999:95). For them, objectivity is nothing more than subjectivity that a given aggregate of individuals agree on (Servaes 1999: 99). The assumption by the human and social researchers that they are independent of how they see of those subjects or the phenomena they are examining is criticized by qualitative researchers as causing the problem of studying subjects objectively (ibid:). Thus, qualitative researchers suggest studying the world through the eyes of the people who are studied (Bryman 2004: 441). Servaes (1999: 96) seems to believe that nowadays, qualitative and quantitative researchers are increasingly recognizing the weakness of a purely objectivist position. Servaes considers objectivity in the study of social science as morally unacceptable and had this to say:

> The detachment, the reluctance to "contaminate" one's research design in the dynamic, holistic and human social context while claiming to be working for the ultimate benefit of those studied, should be challenged, if not on a methodological, then certainly on a moral basis (1999: 97).

With regard to the issue of naturalism versus artificiality, qualitative research with its instruments (such as participant observation, semi- and unstructured interviewing and focus groups) tends to depict the social world more naturally than that of quantitative research. Particularly ethnographic research is often viewed as more naturalistic because the participant observer, though he or she can be a source of interference that renders the research situation less natural, studies people in their normal social worlds and contexts (as they go about normal activities). From the different types of interviewing, focus group is often described as more natural than individual interviewing because it emulates the way people discuss issues in real life. Natural groupings are often used to emphasize this element (Bryman 2004:445). In contrast, research instruments (such as questionnaires, structured interview schedules, structured observation schedules, and so on) that quantitative researchers employ to study people are often assumed to provide an artificial account of how the social world operates (ibid).

In relation to method versus content, qualitative researchers have good reason to criticize the quantitative research's overemphasis on method of investigation rather than the content. According to Servaes (1999:102), such focus is considered as displacing value from the ends to the means. Servaes particularly criticizes the sociologist or psychologist who is obsessed with frameworks, jargon, and techniques and likens him or her to a carpenter who becomes so worried about keeping his or her tools clean that he or she has no time to cut the wood

(1999:102). The other concern is the rigid methodology of quantitative methods limits rather than expands humanistic understanding to the detriment of both the researcher and researched (ibid: 97).The central concern of the interpretive tradition "is not with establishing relations of cause and effect but with exploring the ways that people make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings through language, sound imagery, personal style and social rituals" (Deacon et al. 1999: 6).

Qualitative researchers' focus on content makes them to use flexible structures and oppose the imposition of predetermined formats on the social world, because of their preference to see through the eyes of the people being studied (Bryman 2004: 282). For this reason, Bryman defines qualitative research as a strategy that tries not to delimit areas of inquiry too much and to ask fairly general rather than specific research questions (Bryman 2004: 282).

Unlike quantitative inquiry, qualitative research does not, as a rule, seek broad generalizabilty (Servaes 1999: 108). According to Servaes, qualitative research does not have a grand theory of social action, as theory is contextually bound. Nor does it strive for reliability in its tools of analysis. Instead, for qualitative researchers the closer the analytic effort is to the life world, the more direct its observation; the more it uses the concepts and languages of this life world, the greater the validity (ibid).

The methods are designed so open that they do justice to the complexity of the object under study. Here, the object understudy is the determining factor for choosing a method and not the other way round. Objects are not reduced to single variables but they are studied in their complexity and entirety in their everyday context (Flick 2002: 5). In order to do justice to the diversity of the every day life, methods are characterized by an openness towards their objects, which is guaranteed in different ways. The goal of research is less to test the theories (e.g. already formulated in advance) than to discover the new and develop empirically grounded theories.

Advocates of interpretive research place particular emphasis on the ethnographic practices developed by anthropologists, where the researcher immerses him/her self in a particular social setting, get to know the people intimately, observe how they organize their everyday lives and talk to them at length about how they see the world and themselves" (Deacon et al. 1999: 6). But there is a concern in conducting ethnographic research because "researchers may be denied access to the setting they want to investigate; they may only be allowed in for a limited time; or they may lack the time and resource to spend a sustained period 'in the field'." In these situations researchers may borrow the basic techniques of observation, open ended interviews and group discussions, and use them either singly or in combination in a more concentrated way (Deacon et al. 1999: 8). In my case, I used the combination of these three methods to understand the people's complexity and entirety.

Unlike the quantitative design, which uses figures and statistics as a method of data analysis, qualitative researchers use words and description. They, generally reject the use of statistics to study human behavior because they say "boiling people's thoughts and activities into numbers ignores exactly the complexity and creativity of and cultural life which research should be illuminating" (Deacon et al. 1999: 8). That does not mean, however, that interpretive

researchers never use figures. According to (Bryman 2004: 445), interpretive researchers, like positivists, may use figures, (especially 'quasi-quantification' through the use of terms like many, often, and some), but unlike them, interpretive researchers do not use statistics to answer research questions. They rather see statistics as springboards for further investigation and analysis since they see 'facts' as never speaking for themselves and statistical relationships devoid of meaning until they are interpreted (ibid).

When reporting the findings, qualitative researchers provide a great deal of descriptive detail more than the quantitative researchers do. The details are important because they provide an account of the context within which people's behavior takes place (Bryman 2004: 281). In my research, I was guided by this principle (providing descriptive detail) because I want to show the behavior, values, communication, or whatever of members of a social group in terms of the specific environment in which they operate. But in doing so, I did not forget to take every care not to make the amount of detail overwhelm or inhibit the analysis of data.

Qualitative researchers' view of social life in terms of process (ibid) was also found to be useful to this study because events and patterns may unfold over time. Hence, I, with the use of ethnographic and semi- and unstructured interviewing (by asking individuals to reflect on the process leading up to or following from an event), was able to inject a sense of process into the understanding of social life.

After deciding to choose the qualitative design because of the aforementioned reasons, I faced many approaches from which to choose. The literatures I have read (for example, Flick 2002, Creswell et al. 2007) provided me with different approaches of qualitative research. The difference in approaches seems to be emanated from the difference in the disciplines. For example, research designs such as, ethnography, cultural studies and discourse analysis, are mentioned as important in social study (Flick 2002). However, they are not among the lists of qualitative design by the counseling psychologists Creswell et al. (2007).

In my case, however, *case study* seems to be more appropriate since my purpose is to study the case of a particular society which I selected to provide insight into the issue of dependency and communication approaches. Case study is more preferable for researches such as mine because in this design, "the analytic approach involves a detailed description of the case, the setting of the case within contextual conditions, and presentation that may or may not be chronological" (Creswell et al. 2007:236).

4.2 Research procedure and sampling

Participant observation, focus group and individual in-depth interviews are used in triangulation to dispel doubts about the reality of a finding (Lindolf and Taylor 2002: 241) by "seeking convergence of meaning from more than one direction" (ibid: 240).

Such triangulation is known as between-method triangulation (Flick 2002: 226) and refers to the combination of different methods, such as observation with a semi-structured interview to further enrich and complete knowledge, and to transgress "the (always limited)

epistemological potentials of the individual method" (ibid: 227). The three techniques are treated one by one as follows.

4.2.1 Participant observation

Participant observation's role in qualitative research is so immense that writers testify as more commonly used in the method (Flick 2002: 139). The term is defined by (Deacon et al. 1999: 251), as "observation in which little participation takes place." That means, while observing, the participant observer involves him or herself in the natural setting in order to obtain, to the extent possible, an inside view of the social context (Servaes 1999: 105). The researcher immerses her or himself in the context (not to verify hypothesis, but as a source for understanding meaning), observes from a member's perspective but also influences what is observed owing to his or her participation (Flick 2002: 139; Servaes 1999: 105). This task of participant observer is also implied in Berger's definition of the term as "a qualitative research technique that provides the opportunity to study people in real-life situations" (2000:161). In participant observation, quite the contrary of neutrality and detachment by quantitative researchers, the most important tool of inquiry becomes the researcher's attitude (Servaes 1999: 105).

As a participant observer, I stayed with the subjects participating in some of the activities of the public works of the PSNP. I grew up in one village of the study area, known as *Sibta*, where my parents still live and to whom I occasionally visit. I also lived in Bizet for some time, which enabled me to be introduced with some residents and administrators. Hence, gaining access to the field and persons was not a problem for me. I deliberately went to the area for data collection in a season when most of the social gatherings take place. Therefore, I had the privilege to attend to most of the social gatherings (such as marriage ceremonies, memorial feasts, etc.) because of my relationship with the local people

In this place, as is the case to other rural Ethiopia, most of the information about different issues including those related to the public works of the PSNP is exchanged among friends. I, therefore, positioned myself to a situation where peoples' attitudes, beliefs, their access to information, etc., which are vital to depict social realities, are naturally reflected. Nevertheless, I did this while focusing on issues related to my topic in order to make my observation "move through a process of becoming increasingly concrete and concentrated on the aspects that are essential for the research questions (Flick 2002: 140).

My earlier familiarity with the study area provided me with an orientation to the field understudy and helped me to "grasp the complexity of the field and to develop concrete research questions and lines of vision" (Flick 2002: 140). Thus, during the field observation, I was focusing on observing the processes and problems which are most essential for the research questions and finding further evidence and examples for the earlier observed practices and processes.

While observing, I worked as an overt observer (where the observed know that they are observed) partly because I know that my presence there as an observer does not make any difference. That is, the people know me as a teacher or student, and hence they understand that

nothing new is going to happen in relation to their life and the PSNP because of my observation. Besides, I made clear to the people about my motives and interests in observing and interviewing them. Therefore, these made me to believe that my presence cannot affect the way the people normally do and communicate.

I had also another reason to assume the position of overt observer: being ethical. I did not want the people feel cheated. Moreover, I know that working as a covert observer (where the observed do not know that they are observed) is making things difficult for myself since taking notes is difficult while observing unless you tell people about your interest in them.

Earlier in this chapter, participant observation in qualitative research is stated to have an immense role**.** It helps researchers see things that were not apparent or evident; and determine which questions to ask informants (Berger 2000: 167). Thus, as a researcher interested in qualitative method, I decided to use this technique because I wanted to benefit from the opportunities that this technique would provide with. I also found this technique as appropriate when I think of making use of my earlier experience with the study area.

4.2.2 Focus group interviews (FGI)

A focus group interview, according to Poindexter and McCombs (2000), is " a qualitative research method that uses open-ended, follow-up, and probing questions to scratch below the surface of a small group of participants' attitudes, opinions, and behaviors to understand motivations, feelings, and reactions" (p. 240). This method enables qualitative researchers to look at real life situations, a quality that differentiates qualitative research from quantitative and to "develop an understanding about why people feel the way they do" (Bryman 2004: 347). Such advantages made the method's popularity within communication and cultural studies to increase (Deacon et al. 1999: 55)

In focus group interview, the researcher need to have small group of people exchanging ideas concentrated around a clear issue or object (Deacon et al. 1999: 65). Group members, who were known to have had a certain experience, "could be interviewed in a relatively unstructured way about that experience" (Bryman 2004: 347).

The focus group approach is expressed as useful in many ways. For example, it offers the opportunity of allowing people to probe each others for holding a certain view (Bryman 2004: 347). Participants also tend to provide checks and balances on each other that weed out false or extreme views (Flick 2002: 113). The other quality that Flick saw in this technique is the low cost, rich data and insights (produced by group interaction), which would be less accessible without the interactions (ibid).

The reason that makes focus group more preferable than individual interview is that individuals arguing with each other and challenge each other's views enables the researcher to "stand a chance of ending up with more realistic accounts of what people think, because they are forced to think about and possibly revise their views" (Bryman 2004: 348). It also "offers the researcher the opportunity to study the way in which individuals collectively make sense of a phenomena and construct meanings around it" (ibid).

In selecting participants for the focus group interview, I had to deal with issues such as which persons to interview (case sampling) and from which groups these should come (sampling groups of cases). With regard to the first question, I had to select individuals who provide labor in the Public Works program as my study is on the PW program of the PSNP. Hence these individuals were from able bodied youngsters and adults from both sexes. Former *tabia* cabinet members and chairmen were also considered to take part in the interview. The current *tabia* cabinet administrators were also meant to take part in the second and third interviews though they later agreed only for individual interview.

To this effect, I, with the use of the non-probability (purposive) sampling method, deliberately approached three individuals whom I know are well articulate and known for their honesty. These people are beneficiaries of the PWs program and one of whom served as *tabia* cabinet member. I used the snowball sampling technique to contact more people, especially those who served as *tabia* cabinet members and DAs and those who still serve.

I had three groups equal to the maximum number suggested as sufficient to explore a research topic by Poindexter and McCombs (2000: 244). Besides to the time and resource constraint I had, the reason given by Poindexter and McCombs (2000) as "little new information is learned after three focus groups" (P. 246) was proved to be true in my case. I found the answers given at the interview with the third group were almost repetitions of the first and the second group discussions, which caused me to refrain from conducting further FGIs.

As far as the number of group members is concerned, Patton (1990: 335) suggests six to eight people as enough while Bryman (2004: 351) suggests six to ten. Both have common minimum and I took the minimum and made my groups have six members in my interview. I deliberately took the minimum because I wanted to have active interaction among participants and make the number convenient for tape recording. I was well aware that larger size could cause participants to lose interest because it takes longer for participants to share their opinions.

I had not organized my groups separately in terms of stratifying criteria, such as age, gender; etc because there is no need to do so in my case. The issues that participants were talking about were not gender specific. The questions in the interview guide focus on the PSNP's impact on the participants' lives. Hence, I rather saw having different sexes and age groups in one group as a factor that helps participants see things from different angles and have hot discussion. Thus, each group had three men and three women participating. Some groups had priests participating with them. These also were hoped to contribute by looking at things from different angles.

The group interviews were held in a venue selected in terms of its convenience to the participants and its calmness for tape recording. The venue was located at my sister's house in Bizet. The time for the interviews was also made to be on Saturdays for on this day many people regularly come there for market. Most of the interviewees came from villages but nothing new (to the villagers) that can destruct the discussion was left inside the house.

As a moderator, I started the interview by introducing my self. Then, I briefed them about my aim in conducting those interviews. In my effort to get at their perspectives, I also expressed my pleasure if they freely forward their ideas. I came to understand from their contact in the house that they know each other before, which made them to avoid uncertainties in forwarding their ideas. As suggested by Bryman (2004: 352), I started guiding the focus group discussion by forwarding a fairly small number of general questions from the interview guide. I did this while responding to specific points that were of potential interest to the research questions but that were not picked up by other participants. The interview guide had thematic questions that revolve around the research questions outlined in the first chapter. I occasionally used to intervene to refocus participants' attention when the discussion goes off at a total tangent. I did this with care not to lose the chance of getting access to what individuals see as important or interesting. I also tried to prevent single participation or partial groups from dominating the interview by encouraging reserved members to become involved in the interview and give their views so that answers are obtained from the whole group. But I did so by trying to be flexible and a good listener.

In short, my role as a moderator was to allow the discussion to flow freely on one hand and intervene to bring out especially salient issues, particularly when group participants do not do so on the other. All the group interviews were made in Tigrigna, a language that every one in the group spoke and all the discussions made were tape-recorded to use them later as the narrative data to be made sense of.

4.2.3 Individual in-depth interviews

Researchers consider individual in-depth interview as important technique because, among others, it fills the constraints of other methods such as observation and focus-group interview. In observation, a problem termed by Berger (2000: 167) as "mind reading" (where the observer assumes he or she can read people's minds and figure out why people are doing something) may arise. Hence, this problem can be solved by supplementing observation with interviews. The interview here helps researchers to see whether there is a connection between what people say and what they do by asking them why they did something or said something. It also enables researchers to obtain information that they cannot gain by observation alone.

Therefore, an interview, according to Berger (2000: 111) is "a conversation between a researcher (someone who wishes to gain information about a subject) and informant[7] (someone who presumably has information of interest on the subject). But despite its resemblance in some ways (since it promotes an active and open-ended dialogue), conversation between researcher and subjects is not the same as natural conversation. For example, in an interview, the interviewer controls the discussion by referring to an interview guide that sets out the issues to be covered during the exchange; whereas in natural conversation this normally would fluctuate between participants (Deacon et al. 1999: 65). However, as described by Deacon et al., the conversation between researcher and informant can be expressed as "conversation with purpose**"** (ibid).

Interviews can be categorized based on their structures (structured, semi-structured or unstructured). In qualitative research, however, semi-structured interviews have attracted

interest and are widely used (Flick 2002: 74). Here, more or less open questions are brought to the interview situation in the form of interview guide with the hope that these questions will be answered freely by the interview (ibid: 91).This interest in qualitative research is linked to the expectation that the interviewed subjects' view-points are more likely to be expressed in a relatively openly designed interview situation than in a standardized interview or questionnaire (ibid: 74). Qualitative researchers like to employ semi-structured interview in their data collection as it "tends to be flexible, responding to the direction in which interviewees take the interview and perhaps adjusting the emphasis in the research as a result of significant issues that emerge in the course of interviews" (Bryman 2004: 320). The starting point of the method is the assumption that standardized interviews or questionnaires obscure rather than illuminate the subject's view point (Flick 2002: 92).

In my effort to go through the ways that qualitative researchers follow, I let interviewees had a great deal of leeway on how to reply. To this effect, I did not follow the questions on exactly the same way outlined in the interview guide. The interview guide used in the focus groups was modified when used for the individual interview to fit the profession of a particular interviewee. I also used to ask follow-up questions picking up things said by the interviewees. My emphasis in the interview was on how the interviewees frame and understand issues and events.

In terms of drawing sample, I purposely selected candidates for the in-depth individual interviews from the three focus groups I conducted early on. The selection was based on the individuals' reactions to my questions in the group discussion and their previous position as *tabia* chairman cabinet member. I also purposely conducted semi-structured interviews with the current *tabia* chairman in order to verify facts. I also conducted individual interview with *Tabia* agricultural expert, environmental specialist, to get professional explanations for the issues raised by farmers. Food Security Program producer in Radio Voice of Revolutionary Tigray, Vice Editor-in-Chief of *Weyin* newspaper, Public Works and Environmental Specialist of the region, and Safety Net and Household Asset Building Case Team Monitoring and Evaluation Expert at federal level were also interviewed because of their roles in the program. I contacted the individuals based on the managers' recommendation. All the individual interviews, except the last one (which was in Amharic) were made in Tigrigna.

4.3 Data analysis procedure

As noted earlier in this section, all the individual and focus group interviews were tape-recorded. Then, I transcribed and translated the data from Tigrigna and Amharic into English. I used the sense-for-sense type of translation to translate the materials into English because this method of translation helps cultural concepts in the source language to make sense in the target language.

In this study, thematic coding method of analysis was used. According to Bryman, thematic coding is useful because it enables us to "see much more the kinds of issues with which the interviewee is concerned" (2004: 410). I categorized the extracts from the texts which I thought were relevant to the research questions put forward in the introductory chapter, supplement them with the information from my observation and made them ready for report.

The presentation of the data was then structured in a narrative form triangulating the ideas gathered using the three methods (observation, focus group and individual interviews) and using pertinent quotations to illustrate and serve as supporting evidence for the major findings of the study.

Chapter five: Presentation and interpretation of findings

5.1 Dependency and the Public Works program

Much has been said about dependency effect of earlier forms of Public Works (such as the Food-For-Work and other employment generation schemes) on participants in Ethiopia. As noted in the first chapter, some researchers provide evidences (participants' planting seedlings upside down and dismantling terraces so that their services would continue) to conclude that the FFW program was causing dependency. Others, especially Bezu and Holden (2008), who conducted survey study in Tigray, argue the FFW program cannot cause dependency among its participants since it satisfies only 20 percent of their food requirements. It was also raised in the problem statement of this paper that the statement "it does not matter whether the rain fails here as long as it does not in Canada" was a common joke, but raised for its implications in the area.

The issue remains controversial in the PSNP-supported Public Works too. Hence, participants' views of dependence in the study area were required in the focus group and individual interviews. Participants from Focus Group Interview one and two had the following answers:

Rigbe (Schooled up to grade six, age 28, policeman's wife, Bizet):

> I think the program is crippling us. Had it not been for this program, my life, for example, would have been improved. I always think to abandon the program, borrow

> some money and involve in selling some goods, but I do not have the courage to leave the program and involve in an activity that may cause loss as well. Had the program been terminated, however, I, for example, would have been a risk taker and changed my life for better, I hope. I may face difficulties when I leave the program for some time, but it is the problem that makes people inventive. But now, I leave my plan to quit the program and involve in other activities because I say to myself "why should I worry, after all, I have the income from the public work program to cover my expenses."

The above statement shows that the program traps even those who have vision to change their lives. It also causes them to not be involved on activities that can change their lives drastically. As a result, only a few men left the program to either resettle or serve as daily laborers on road construction, which enabled them to earn better income.

Some farmers, however, are not aware of their dependence on the program. Their statements, however, imply their dependence. The following participant of group interview two has the following to say.

Hailay (Peasant man, age 38, Simret):

> I do not think I am dependent to the program. I am not exerting less effort to my farm land because of it. I produce insufficient food not because of the program but because of the small farm land and recurrent droughts. So, little change, as far as production is concerned, would happen even if I spend 24 hours on my private farm land. Of course, most of us would have resettled and those who resettled would not have come back if the program was stopped. So, be it positive or negative the only effect of this program is its role in saving our lives from dying of hunger.

As can be understood from the above extract, participants are not seriously considering the problem of their dependence to the program. This lack of awareness or disregarding a problem causes inaction against their dependence. Such problems could be minimized with the help of *social and/or community mobilization* as their main task is to help society identify a problem and alert it until it takes action. Nevertheless, the problem still continues because no body is acting on it.

The extract also shows that PWs program has mixed blessings. On the one hand, it has an indispensable role in closing the food gap of the chronically food insecure society to some extent, especially the elderly would have died of hunger since they are unable to find other ways with which to help themselves. On the other hand, however, the program is causing many others to depend on the small amount of income it provides when they would otherwise have worked to self-sustain. The 40 Birr per person per month payment that the program

provides is further diminished since it is shared among family members who are excluded from the program. The program was unable to include all family members of the entire poor in the study area as there is imbalance between the numbers of beneficiaries that need to be included in the program and the amount of budget. Beneficiaries also complain about the late arrivals of transfers due to the delay in implementation and low capacity for realizing payment procedures at the *woreda* and *tabia* level.

Despite all these problems, however, many people in the study area depend on the income that the program provides them with, instead of being involved in activities that can generate better income. Participants do not see the program as meant for self-sustainability but as their continual source of additional income. This was reflected in a meeting during the field observation. Development agents and the local people were discussing where to construct the terracing for the year. There were alternatives, but many participants were arguing to work on one hillside over the other. Finally, one idea got acceptance because most of them supported it. Later on, I asked some participants why they were choosing one location over the other. Their only reason was that they would have easy access to stones in the hillside they recommended. It was learned that participants always want to save their time and energy in constructing the terraces by recommending the areas with easy access to stones in order not to fetch stones from distance.

Another question, whether participants see the program as their constant source of income or as the means for transformation to better life, was asked to informants in the second group interview. Haddush (Peasant man, age 43, Simret) had the following to say:

> I work here for only small amount to earn my living for the day. Then, how can I accumulate wealth and transform to a better life with this little amount of income? So, I work and support myself as long as the program continues then I may take another solution to feed my family if it is terminated. For example, had it not been for this program, I would have gone to the nearby towns and worked as a daily laborer, which could earn me better payment than this. Or I might have lived in the resettlement area permanently. The reason why I prefer to work here is because the work is for my own environment. Besides, its proximity makes it preferable since I use the time left for personal activity and I do not spend money for house rent and food.

Zinab (family head peasant woman, age 33, Simret):

> I feed myself because of this program. Unlike men, I cannot leave my house and children behind and go to towns to work as daily laborer. So, if this program had not been providing me with the employment, my only choice would have been to resettle, and resettlement to the area is hard, especially for those of us who have kids because they are easily affected by malaria in the area.

The implied answer in the extracts is that participants are not using the income from the program to accumulate wealth that helps them to be self-reliant. In other words, the program is

discouraging them from taking other alternatives (e.g. resettlement) that help them become self-reliant.

The growing number of individuals claiming they deserve to benefit from Direct Support (DS) is also another indicator of the people's dependency on the program. Some individuals come to the cabinet members with medical certificate that declares the individual's health status does not allow him/her to be involved in hard work. Others nag at the cabinet members claiming that they are no less in age than some of the elderly DS beneficiaries. Hence, they demand the DS.

This shows that participants are concerned mainly with getting the payment with little effort on rehabilitating the seriously damaged areas. This in turn implies that participants see the program as nothing more than their source of income, which makes them work not to lose it.

5.2 Traditional practices and the public works

Concerned bodies hold harmful traditional practices and poor work ethics as responsible for farmers to lead miserable lives (FDRE 1994 E.C: 35)[8]. The work ethic of the Ethiopian people, in general and the youth, in particular is considered to be very poor (ibid). It is also often said that the youth see agricultural work as the source of backwardness and poverty because their direct experience assures them so, and the reason why they hate labor work is the courses that schools offer are not designed to make the youth see labor and agricultural works as respectful occupations (ibid).

One among the frequently mentioned traditional practices is the observance of various religious holidays in which farmers refrain from heavy labor. This practice is mentioned as contributing to the poor performance of agricultural work. According to Levine (1965: 60), on nearly half of the days on each month, heavy labor is not permitted–men may not plough or harvest, women may not grind or spin, though they can do activities that they consider as light work. The Synod of Ethiopian Orthodox Church has limited the number of monthly holidays into three or four depending on whether the saint or angel that the community's church is dedicated to is among those celebrated by all believers or not. These are listed as follows:

Date of the Month (E.C.)	Name of the holiday (saint/angel)	Meaning
12th	Mikael	St. Michael
21st	Beale Mariam	St. Mary's Festival
29th	Beale Egziabher/Weld	God's/Sons Festival

Farmers in the study area, as is the case with all devout Ethiopian believer farmers, never plough, weed, mow or thresh on these days whether their church is dedicated to the above mentioned holy figures or not. They even do not go to the public works. If a community has a

church dedicated to a saint or angel other than those listed above, it will have a fourth day in which its members refrain from the works mentioned earlier. Besides, weekends and annual holidays such as the founding of the true cross (Sept. 17th), or the birth of St. Mary (May 1st) are also celebrated in like manner. The monthly working days may vary depending on whether the saint's day falls by chance on a weekend or not.

Nonetheless, farmers in the study area have an additional eight saints' days to refrain from ploughing, weeding, mowing and threshing though they cannot go to Public Works and other private activities. These days are presented below:

Date of the Month (E.C.)	Name of the holiday (saint/angel)	Meaning
5th	Dabir (Gebre-menfes kiddus)	An Abyssinian saint
7th	Silassie	Trinity
14th	Abune Aregawi	One of the nine saints[9]
16th	Kidana Mihret	Covenant of Mercy (for Mary)
19th	Gebriel	St. Gabriel
23rd	Giyorgis	St. George
24th	Tekle-Haimanot	An Abyssinian saint
27	Medhine Alem	Savior of the World

In Ganta Afeshum, farmers go to the public works on the days other than those the Synod requires believers to celebrate, which the community considers as serious holidays. But they do not dare do the ploughing, weeding, mowing or threshing in their farm land.

Participants of focus groups were asked about their reactions in working on the PWs program on the holiday they refrain from working when it comes to their private farm land. Individuals from FGI1 and 3 explain the issue as follows.

Zaid (Schooled up to grade eight, soldier's wife, age 29, Bizet):

> We do not feel as if we have transgressed God's command when we work on PWs. We want the payment and we cannot get it unless we work on the days since it is hard to finish the works in days that are not dedicated to any of the saints' figures. After all, it is the government that is telling us to work on the days, and hence the saint of the day cannot hold us accountable for the transgression. The fact that our priests work with us also gives us confidence to work.

Arefaine Merha-tsion (priest farmer, age 55, Simret):

> We do not have a clear guide that helps us identify the kind of works that are allowed and those that are not. But as trend we do some kinds of activities other than ploughing, mowing, weeding or threshing on the holidays that the Holy Synod does not command believers to celebrate. We have also been using such days for communal work even before the start of the PSNP and other EGSs. For example, we construct church compound and prepare spring water. So, working in PWs program on these days is not a new thing. What is new is that our children in the resettlement area do all kinds of works, including ploughing, even on holidays that the Synod forbids believers to respect.

Berhe (peasant man, age 48, Simret):

> It is difficult to expect good harvest from a land that is sown, weeded or harvested on a holiday. We also feel uncomfortable to use grains harvested on holidays for offering to the church or to prepare religious festival. Such issues are out of question when it comes to the grains or cash that we get from the PWs program. We do not use grains that we get from the program for such purposes.

From the statements of the informants, we can understand that farmers have various reasons to refrain from working "heavy" work on their farm lands. But their main reason is not sin (punishment after death) but earthly punishment. They believe the reason for the recurrent drought, snow and flood is their transgression or disobediece to the rules of God. If, for example, the people in the study area weeded on the 23rd , and if snow falls the same day, they would conclude that it was the St. George who sent it to punish them for working on his day. That is the reason why the number of holidays is more during the rainy season than during the dry season.

So, farmers consider that the saint whose day is violated would react immediately and punish them by destroying their crops with snow, pest or drought. But they have nothing to fear for working on the saints' days (that they consider as not serious) in the public works because they think the saints cannot do anything to the income they receive from the PSNP.

Sometimes, individuals could refrain from being involved in heavy work if they think they were saved from a danger or accident by the power of the saint or angel dedicated to the day on which the accident occurred. Or, they could refrain from working if they think that they were cured from diseases after taking shower in the holy water dedicated to a saint or angel.

Abba Gorgorios (1991E.C: 119)[10] affirms the idea when he says that this was the way saints' days (other than those introduced by Zera Yaiqob) have began to be celebrated in Ethiopia.

According to him, though many of the holy figures' days, including the 33 days of the Saint Mary are introduced by Zera Yaqob in the 15th century (Kahsay 1998 E.C. 64)[11], some have started to be celebrated by ordinary individuals and have become holidays of many people (ibid). The way they were transferred from being holidays of individuals to becoming community holidays was: one individual personally refrains from heavy work on any of the Saints' days that are not celebrated by the society, his children follow his example, then his grand children, finally the community celebrate it and it will no more be seen as a working day (ibid). Gebretsadik (1998 E.C:54)[12] also seems to agree with Abba Gorgorios' idea when he says that as is the case in other countries, harmful traditional practices in Ethiopia were introduced by few individuals, got acceptance by many, then, gradually, they became part of the culture.

Though such saints' days were introduced, centuries back, the church has not taken any measures to stop the acts. The reason Birhanu (1998 E.C: 156-157)[13] gives is the leadership of Ethiopian Orthodox Church by Egyptian bishops for 1600 years. This prohibits it from ratifying the administrative and system changes made in other Christian Countries. Hence, though the church plays a very important role in the social (and of course religious) life of the people, it has been accused of not being prone to rapid change.

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The other traditional practice that was of great concern was the waste that farmers make in preparing huge feasts on occasions of weddings, christenings, memorial anniversaries and various religious holidays. The reason why they spend much of their wealth on such feasts is not because their religion necessitates them to do so, but because they do not want to be looked down by their neighbors Gebretsadik (1998 E.C:54)[14].

5.3 Communication strategy

The current government tried to deal with the issues raised above in the farmers' conferences. The government's media were also giving full coverage to such conferences. But no change was seen on this area. One reason may be the cadres that chair conferences about religious affairs, are considered by farmers as not the right persons for the issue. Moreover, communication barriers are created between political cadres and the people when cadres chair conferences without understanding the situation in the area's people they address.

Hadush (individual interview) had one incident to tell about the farmers' conferences in which he participated. In one conference, a cadre who only knows about how farmers in Southern Zone of Tigray prepare marriage or memorial feasts, but do not know how this was done in Eastern Zone of Tigray, was telling them how they can reduce the amount of resources they spend. To support his ideas with example, he told them that it is possible to prepare a wedding feast by butchering only one ox or cow instead of three or four. He was telling them this based on his experience in the place he knew well. But the people he was addressing do not butcher an ox or cow to prepare marriage feast. They do it by killing only a goat or two goats. One of the attendants of the conference told him that he was telling them to change things for the worst.

For these reasons such conferences can be fruitless. The people are still practicing the way they used to practice before. The only change that the interviewee (quoted above) observed was the one on the part of youngsters who work on almost all of the holidays in the resettlement area. This change may be resulted from the youngsters' learning that investors in the resettlement area harvest good yield while doing the agricultural activities on the holidays. Some youngsters labor on investors' farm lands as daily laborers on the holidays. This experience makes them to do the same on their own farm lands. But they cannot do the same in their birth place as they fear priests' excommunication and the society's stigmatization. So, changes are limited to the newly established resettlement areas.

The reason why the farmers in the study area did not show quick change despite the conference was stated by Molvaer as the Ethiopian's negative attitude towards change (1980:70). According to him, people assume the social order was created by God and "it is, therefore, the evil in rebellious human nature that wants to introduce changes in society." When new and strange things happen, it is a sign that the end of the world known as 'the eighth millennium', Sementennaw shi(h), has come near (ibid).

Hence, conferences are not able to change this belief of the society. What is bringing change on the youngsters' is their exposure to and placement in a different locality. Therefore, losing hope in the conferences, and considering the people's lack of access to mass media, the local administration in the study area seems to use experience sharing as a strategy to communicate with farmers non-verbally. Selected farmers are taken to a model work accomplished by the same program to inspire them do the same in their locality.

This strategy, albeit alone, seems to have been gaining effect. Birhane (priest farmer and former cabinet member, age 45, Simret), individual interview, had the following to say:

> The driving force for me to do good work is my observation of a good work done by other community members and when I see them benefiting from the work. The cadres' or agricultural experts' effort to persuade me means nothing. Nevertheless, I accomplish the tasks I am told to do simply for the sake of getting the payment. *Tabia* administrators and agricultural experts know this and they use the payment as an instrument to get their ideas accepted instead of wasting their time in trying to persuade people.

The extract above shows that it is not the communication, but the fear of penalty, besides the experience sharing that makes people get involved in activities of the program. Thus, the current emphasis on using penalty as an instrument to get things done has resulted from the failure to effectively employ appropriate communication strategies and genuine participatory approach. But penalty and supervision alone cannot make people commit to the work. Unless people are made to believe on the activities they do, they cannot do effective work. They may do a good work as long as the supervisors are with them, but they stop it when the supervisors leave. This was reflected in the plantation of seedlings.

One of the activities of the PWs program was to plant seedlings on hillsides during the rainy season. Sometimes participants travel long distance carrying seedlings from nurseries to the

plantation cites. Thousands of seedlings are planted during every rainy season. But the chance of survival of the plants, especially, before the area closure method was put into place, was very narrow as animals destroyed them before they grew. This created frustrations among participants. But they still continue doing the same in the same area, in order not to lose the payment. As a result, some youngsters start to throw away some seedlings they carried, or sometimes they get rid of the soils in the seedlings to lighten their load. This means that some people do the activities not because they believed in their importance, but for the payment. Besides the lack of appropriate communication strategies, the projects' failure to bring significant change also causes the lack of confidence in the projects.

A question about what they do to get people to feel the ownership of the activities, believe in them and become committed was asked to Asgele (Diploma graduate man, age 32, *tabia* Simret's agricultural agent). The extract below was taken from his statements:

> Communities are consulted on meetings about the location and the kind of work that needs to be done. We also take them to visit some best works so that they may be motivated and do the same. However, individuals may not work as quality work as they do in their private farm land. So, we try to solve this problem by assigning foremen that feel in the attendance after examining the work done and checking its quality. Similarly, we try to solve the problem of throwing away seedlings assigning foremen at the nursery and the plantation sites: one that gives counted seedlings and another that checks whether all the seedlings are reached.

Participants of the PWs program may be consulted about the location and the kind of work that need to be done. They may express their preference of one activity over the other or one location over the other. But the problem is, people's preference is not based on criteria such as giving priority to the most degraded land or to fruitful activities, but either on the place's proximity to their households or the availability of stones in the work site so that they do not have to travel long to collect stones to construct the terracing and get the payment.

However, the fruitful work, according to Hadush, especially in relation to the planting of seedlings would have been to divide uncultivated plots of the hillsides among community members and give them the responsibility to protect them and wisely use the trees after they grew up. Otherwise, communities do not expect to benefit from planting in a communal area as individuals may destroy them by sending animals unless the area is closed.

Such measure was taken in a *kushet* (village) known as Sibta in the study area and found to be fruitful as the hillside is covered by grown-up privately-owned trees. The process is: very small plots approximately 20 square meters in size were allocated to each household in the village and the households were expected to plant trees and provide good management. The penalty for not doing so was to lose access to the plot, and potentially to future plots that may be allocated as well. In contrast to the management of communal planting, private management has been highly intensive, with large labor investments in clearing rocks and constructing stone fences around the plots, and even hand irrigating the seedlings during critical dry periods. As a result, the survival rate of seedlings on the private plots has averaged about 80%, according to the village's residents, compared to as low as 10% in the communal

plants. Households are now beginning to harvest the mature eucalyptus trees planted during the first years, which are worth about 30 to 50 birr per tree. Visual observations suggest that each household has about 20 trees surviving, representing a substantial increment to household income and wealth. However, despite the success of the strategy in this village, the *tabia* has not yet done the same in other villages. The reason for Hadush is the focus of agricultural experts on writing quantity-based reports.

The Program Implementation Manual (PIM) of the PSNP has as a strategy that Public Works should be "labor intensive *community-based* activities" (FDRE 2006, *emphasis* added). The manual also considers community participation in decision-making process of the PW projects as an area of emphasis. Nevertheless, the manual does not have a communication strategy to contribute for succeeding the program's goals. Moreover, the program's full-time workers have rare direct contact with the participants to solve problems related to the program using communication strategies. Issues such as how to withdraw participants from dependency syndrome, and to empower and help them feel the ownership of the activities were left to be addressed by *tabia* administrators as the Public Works are integrated into *woreda* development plans.

Here is the response by Tigabu (Regional Public Works and Environmental Specialist, BA degree graduate man, 31, Mekelle) to the question about the availability of communication strategy/ies to be used in helping people feel the ownership of the PWs projects and withdraw from dependency syndrome.

> Our role in this office is to co-ordinate the Public Works' activities, to follow up whether things are functioning in order; whether works started on time, transfers made on schedule, etc. The other activities such as communicating with the participants are done by tabia administrators and tabia cabinet. The committee is formed from different sectors such as: the Natural Resource Management, Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development, Education, Health, etc., monitors and evaluates the activities. The transfer is made and audited by Bureau of Finance and Economic Development. So, it is a team work and the main actors are local authorities.

The statement above shows that developing communication strategy is not among the tasks of the regional bureau of the program. Similarly, the program at federal level seems not to take such an issue as its concern. The extract below from interview with Ato Zeleke, (Federal Safety Net and Household Asset Building Case Team M&E Expert, BA degree graduate man, 44, Addis Ababa), interview in Amharic, proves this.

> The mandate to run the activities of the PWs (including mobilizing the community) is given to woreda and kebelle administration. Thus, there are not works related to communication being done by the program at federal level.

According to this extract, the bureau is not involving in the activities directly related to the participants of the program, which creates distance between participants and the program's

administration. This, in turn, makes it hard for the program's managers to see the adverse effects that the program causes and could solve by designing, for example, appropriate communication strategies.

Employing multiple communication strategies, but especially social and community mobilizations, which seem appropriate to the Ethiopian context, can assist in alerting participants to the dangers of dependency, which projects such as the Public Works can cause. This lack of appropriate communication strategies has been causing participants in the study area to bear the consequences of adverse effect (dependency) of the PW program.

As a result, participants use the income from the PWs program and their other resources for preparing feasts such as wedding, memorial, christening, etc. instead of using them as a means to accumulate wealth and graduate from the program. They have been continuously working in the program starting from 2005 and few of them know that it is a five-year program that can be terminated if donors want to.

The manual seems to be concerned with communication models. It says Public Works projects should be participatory and the community should participate in the "selection, planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects" (ibid). But participants in the study area are consulted in selecting work sites and become less active in evaluation and monitoring as they are not empowered to play such a role.

5.3.1 The people's access to mass media

The Regional Food Security Coordination Bureau (RFSCB) being the umbrella office for the Safety Net Program (SNP) and Other Food Security Programs (OFSP) such as the Household Package and Credit Provision Program and Resettlement Program, uses communication channels such as brochures and a yearly magazine (both in Tigrigna) to disseminate information to the public. Moreover, it has agreements with the by-monthly, TPLF's organ, *Weyin* newspaper and the radio Voice of Revolutionary Tigray (VoRT).

The TPLF had been using these communication channels in the remote liberated areas of Tigray during the civil war. When the EPRDF took power, the newspaper made its head office in Addis Ababa while the radio stationed at Mekelle. A year ago, the newspaper's head office was moved to Mekelle. VoRT too used to be the organ of the party; nowadays, however, it is run by the Endowment Fund For the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT), a private limited company, to allow it to operate as an independent radio station while maintaining a loose connection with the TPLF party. These days, the radio seems to lose its audiences to a newly-established, region-wide FM radio station. The FM's loud and clear broadcast and its infotainment focused programs seem to attract many listeners. The circulation of the newspaper, on the other hand, is limited to the party's members. But it is the only Tigrigna newspaper to be read in remote rural areas.

According to the agreement between *Weyin* newspaper's administration and Regional Food Security Coordination Bureau, there is a regular column entitled *Dehay geter*, which, more or less, means information about rural areas. A journalist from the newspaper was assigned to

prepare this column. The column is all about messages that go in line with the bureau's strategies. Woldegebriel (Vice-Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper, Diploma graduate man, age 47, Mekelle) was asked whether it is possible for the office to effectively communicate with the participants of the SNP using a bi-monthly newspaper and whose circulation is limited to the party's members was asked to, The extract from his statement reads as follows:

> Participants are hoped to be reached indirectly through the party members. As the party's members live among the society, they tell their friends about what they read while chatting and those who listened pass the message to their other friends. So, the process of disseminating information goes on this way. Besides, though the newspaper's circulation is confined to the party members, other interested readers can access it by borrowing from those who have it. There are also instances where tabia cabinet members read some topics of the newspaper in social gatherings. The reason why we were not able to make it a weekly newspaper as before is the high cost of print. In order to print a newspaper of such size (8 or 10 pages), it requires three birr per copy. But we sell it for only one birr because it is subsidized by the party.

On the other hand, Birhane (individual interview) tells his observation about the newspaper.

> We see it coming and being distributed among leaders but its existence ends up in their hands. I do not think they read it. I see them having no better awareness of issues than us who do not have it. Earlier the newspaper was being read in meetings and sometimes around churches on Sundays, but this is not the case nowadays.

Desta (Diploma graduate, age 28, tabia Simret chairman) also says,

> We locate the topic of importance before the newspapers reach the members, particularly those who are cabinet members so that they may share the idea to others in their discussion with them or read the topic in group meetings or other social gatherings. Nevertheless, most of them are illiterate and hardly read. Besides, telling people to sit down and listen to what you are going to read is becoming difficult. People are tired of meetings and when you call them repeatedly, they tell you "so when are we going to work and get rich if you continue spending our time in meetings?"

The above extracts suggest that the bureau's effort to reach participants and communicate with them using the newspaper is unsuccessful. Participants of the PSNP are unable to get the messages and fully understand the nature and goal of the PWs program because of illiteracy, limited access to the newspaper, interval between dates of publication and other factors. They know nothing about the contents of the newspaper (except its existence in the area) let alone critically read and comment on the contents.

By the same token, the FSCB agreed with the radio Voice of Revolutionary Tigray to broadcast a program that talks about the activities and achievements of the bureau twice a

week for about 45 minutes after the news for the hour is read. According to the agreement, VoRT allocated air time and assigned a journalist that communicates with the office and produces the program.

Goitiom (BA degree graduate man, 27, Food Security Program producer, VoRT, Mekelle) explains how he makes sure whether beneficiaries listen to his program. He says:

> No audience analysis was carried out to help us know how many people are listening to the program. I discuss with the RFSCB what issues to cover, I go to the model tabias with the staff of the RFSCB, and then I produce the program that is broadcasted twice in a week after the editor of the medium house made the necessary corrections. But we also receive comments from listeners who are suggesting to us to see the failures too.

As is indicated in the extract above, going to model works and reporting about encouraging results is becoming the defining feature of the state-owned and party-affiliated media. The media are criticized for not playing their role in exposing failures and malpractices so that corrective measures can be taken.

On the other hand, the Tigray people are said to have special interest for radio and relatively advanced culture of listening to radio because of the VoRT during the civil war and aftermath (Birhane 1987 E.C: 616)[15]. Especially during the civil war and the war with Eritrea, it was common to see youngsters taking radio sets with them wherever they go. Solomon (2000), estimates the ownership of radio receivers in Tigray (between Oct. 1997 to Jan. 1998) to be 14%. Nevertheless, nowadays, the interest to listen to radio seems to have been declining in rural areas of Tigray because of the high cost of cell batteries and the noisy broadcast of the channel.

From the study area, most households in Bizet (a town with 24 hours of electric power) own radio receivers, which are bought primarily to play cassettes. Radio receiver owners are by far higher in Bizet than in the rural area Simret as the people in Bizet do not have to buy batteries. Households in rural areas either do not own receivers or they put them aside because they are unable to afford the high cost of the dry cell batteries. Consequently, few people are observed listening to the radio. Even those who listen to radio do not tune to the radio VoRT since it is not clearly heard from there. So, they prefer to listen to the radio Eritrea, which is loud and clear. Even in the town, people prefer playing cassettes to listening to the radio. But if they have to listen, they tune to the Eritrean radio because of its clarity. Currently, the FM radio transmitted from Mekelle is replacing the other radio stations. The Ethiopian radio, which used to be poorly heard, has now become clear because of the plantation of new transmitter in the regional capital, Mekelle. But the FM is the most favored one in the area for its being local and entertaining.

In Bizet there are some households that own television sets too. Households with TV sets can be identified from elevated place as the owners have erected antennas with long wood on top of their house's roof. The antennas enable them access the Eritrean Television (ERI-TV). The paradox is that Ethiopian Television (ETV) is not accessible with such antennas. Few hotels access it with the help of Satellite dish to enable their customers to watch foreign channels and

the ETV's Tigray program, which is transmitted daily for an hour. They do not watch the other programs of ETV because most residents hardly understand the Amharic language. Hence, those who have Satellite dish watch foreign channels or the ERI-TV, especially if the program is entertainment and those who do not have the dish use the ERI-TV as their source of information because they have no choice. Even the video houses in the town, as is the case in other towns of Tigray, are full of action or Eritrean drama cassettes. So, youngsters in the town and those who come from rural areas for education are being cultivated by the Eritrean television (made to develop a world outlook consistent with that of the ERI-TV).

The ETV's Tigray program produces programs about activities being carried out by the PWs program and by the household packages in the region. Nonetheless, participants in the study area are unable to know about what is going on out there neither from the mass media nor through a two-step flow of communication (from the media to opinion leaders and from opinion leaders to the public) as opinion leaders in the study area have limited access to mass media.

Participants get information about places beyond their direct contact when they contact people from different places in training centers, or when they travel to different locations for personal affairs. Sometimes, selected farmers share experience with participants in other *tabias* or *woredas* when their leaders invite them to visit the best works.

5.4 Farmer's participation and decision making power

Meetings under a tree among community members, chaired by elected members, known as *baitos* have a long history in Tigray. This was enhanced with the coming of the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) to the area. TPLF fighters during the civil war with the military government had regular meetings with the local community, which makes the people attach terms such as meetings, conferences, evaluation, etc. to the party. Communication to date seems to share the same approach that used to be practiced during wartime.

According to Markos (priest farmer, age 40, Simret), the discussions during the war times had the aim of persuading parents to send their sons to the war front, or to persuade the youngsters to decide to join the fighters. Conferences used to be extended until participants accepted the idea. But at this time, the situation is different and the participatory level of the local community in the local development activities is improving, though local authorities attached with the old approaches still try to dominate discussions and get their ideas accepted instead of considering others' ideas.

Hence, as far as the people's participatory level and decision-making power is concerned, the first focus group interview categorizes issues into two: those that are decided by the community and those that are not.

Birhane:

> If the issues are about the appropriateness of planting seedlings in a particular place; or about identifying the type of work to be done in a particular place in the area;

> community members have the decision-making power. But issues, like deciding on the number of days that a community has to provide free communal labor in a year are not for us to decide. We simply discuss the issues and are expected to agree on the idea decided from above.

The statement above shows that for some issues, community members are not allowed to practice genuine participation though there are issues in which the community has the right to participate at all levels of decision-making processes.

Letekiristos (peasant wife, age 41, Simret) form the same group had the following to say:

> It is not like the earlier times. Previously, development agents and our administrators were not considering our ideas. Consequently, some of the innovations happened to be disastrous for us. For example, the water harvesting holes, horeyes, claimed our children's lives. They also left our small farm land barren because the water dries up soon after the rainy season while causing problems during the rainy seasons. The way our administrators and agricultural agents told us to prepare the holes did not enable us to see the adverse effects. I think the problem would not have been created if detailed discussion about the nature and adverse effects of the project was made and agreement was reached. These days, our leaders seem to have learned from their previous mistakes, they began to listen to our suggestions.

The above extract indicates that participation level of communities in deciding community-based projects is getting better. The contribution that people's participation has in averting the adverse effects of development projects also seems to have understood by community members. As is mentioned in the Programme Implementation Manual of (FDRE 2006), there were experiences in other areas too where some projects, designed to protect or enhance the natural resource base, have ended up doing the opposite. Thus, the manual cautions that projects such as the PWs of the PSNP can have adverse impacts on human populations or the biophysical environment, particularly if their location or design does not follow good environmental practice (FDRE 2006).

When they are asked whether there are instances where community members challenged agricultural experts and able to implement the ideas they think are right, another group member, Gebrehiwot (peasant man, age 51, Simret) remembered one instance. According to him, in their discussion with an agricultural expert in the village, *Sibta*, they had to decide what types of seedlings to plant in the hillside, Gumui. The agricultural expert proposed the idea of planting eucalyptus seedlings as well. But residents of the village opposed it because they fear the plant would dry up their spring water located at the bottom of the hill. Then, the hill was planted with trees other than eucalyptus.

Farmers know from experience that nearby eucalyptus trees decrease the volume of streams if not dry them up. Agricultural experts may also understand the effect from training. The difference is that visiting agricultural experts are not as familiar with the area as the farmers. So, the above extract shows that because of their life long experience in their areas, farmers

have no less knowledge than the agricultural experts in their environment. Thus, the ideas they suggest can be helpful if administers and agricultural agents are willing to listen to them.

Concerning the way decisions about some issues are made, Birhane raises one example to depict the situation:

> Previously, we have been providing only 20 days of free communal labor per year, but from 2008/09 on, the government wants us to provide 40 days of free communal labor. Then, meetings at the local level are called on to get us agree on the idea. The chairman presented the issue and almost all the people, except those party members who are informed earlier oppose it proposing different alternatives and justifications. Some of us said it was not fair to jump from 20 to 40, instead we asked them to let us try it with 30 days, and we will decide later about the 40 days. Some admitted that the work was for their own benefit but the fact that they have nothing to eat is the thing that makes accepting the idea hard. So, they required payment for the additional 20 days. But nothing was changed since our local administrators have no choice but do what they are told to do. Meetings are called on simply because here we have the custom of getting people to discuss on issues decided from above and which they cannot modify in any way.

The statements above indicate that sometimes, communities are called on to attend meetings not to contribute ideas, to modify plans, but to accept decisions. That means the role of the community in such meetings is limited to listening to what was decided for them and to accept it.

Desta (chairman, tabia Simret) shares the assertion that the participants' ideas on decisions about some issues are not considered. He had the following to add taking the issue of 40 days communal labor as an example:

> The 40 days of free work was decided by the regional council at regional level. Thus, we do not consider the ideas forwarded by participants at meetings at *tabia* level because we have to implement the strategy of the government here too as the other tabias of the region. Such programs are meant to be applied throughout the region and our case cannot be different from the others. The reason why we call meetings is to persuade people why they should accept the idea not to let them decide otherwise. For example, there were tabias that resist the idea for long, but their administrators forced them to accept the idea for the reason that their case is not different from those tabias that accept it. Communities had to accept the idea even if they do not like it because they know they cannot be eligible for the payable Public Works program of the PSNP unless they do so. The people complain that we wasted their time for nothing, but it can't be helped.

The whole purpose of the meeting was to enable administrators to confidently say that the decision was made by the people. A problem arises when the people challenge the idea. The administrator extends the conferences to three or four days until many of those who were not happy with the idea feel they would get nothing out of the meeting except wasting their time

and changing their mind form opposing the idea. If the administrator insists the idea should be accepted, many tend to agree for they fear they would be regarded as causing stumbling blocks for development and be excluded from the employment program, credit and other benefits that the government provides.

From the statements of the group members it can be said that communication models employed in running the Public Works of the PSNP in the study area, are combinations of both participatory and diffusion of innovations. As noted in chapter two, the diffusion of innovation model follows a top-down approach and that was the case in implementing some projects in the study area. Previous studies show that the diffusion model has long been practiced in other parts of Tigray too, especially in agricultural extension programs. For example, Woldeab (2005: 264) described the way chemical fertilizers were sold to Tigrean farmers:

> Agricultural workers and local government officials were preoccupied with achieving the targets set for fertilizer sales to farmers and as a result, recommendations on fertilizer application to demonstrate plots were a one-size-fits-all solution. It is not uncommon to find extension staff distributing undifferentiated blanket recommendations to farmers, making no concession to their varied economic capacities and widely different farming systems.

The model brought a problem not a solution to the lives of the local people. For example, besides reducing the production of farmers by applying what Woldeab termed as "one- size-fits-all solution" (applying the same strategy for heterogeneous farming population), it did not consider the strategy of the local people "for solving the production and other problems they face" (Woldeab 2005: 264). Rather, what pervaded was the development agents' stereotype of farmers- as passive, pathetic and needing the know-how of the DAs, who in turn got their knowledge from training. These hinder the local people from developing their own innovations and lose confidence in them selves.

A study conducted in Southern zone of Tigray shows that farmers are afraid of rejecting their administrators' ideas to adopt agricultural innovations, such as chemical fertilizer. The study shows:

> Over two thirds of farmers purchased fertilizer through coercive persuasion, with the fear that they might be denied credit, food aid or employment opportunities in various construction works or with the threat of no access of dam water. Local government bureaucracies did not pay any attention to farmers' unwillingness to purchase fertilizer (Woldeab 2005:263).

The fact that the local officials (*tabia* chairperson and elected members of the community) are responsible for selecting beneficiary households, preparing the employment schemes, managing the program and distributing resources gives local authorities considerable power and influence over peasant farmers (Dessalegn 3008:203).

5.5 Independence of *tabia* administrators

As noted in the third chapter, *tabia* administration is constituted by a salaried diploma holder as a chairperson, assisted by unpaid *tabia* elected farmer administrator and *tabia* council, known as *tabia* cabinet. Nevertheless, community members complain about both the paid and unpaid administrators give priority to securing their salary or position rather than their people. Hadush (individual interview) answering the question about how independent their representatives are in voicing their concerns at meetings at *woreda* level says:

> I do not think our representatives (tabia cabinet and the chairperson) freely raise the concerns of the community in their meetings at woreda level. Our administrators ignore the concern of the people because they consider raising many problems in the presence of woreda administrators, who have the power to sack them, is the sign of an ineffective leader and resulted in power loss. Therefore, they prefer to ignore problems in their report for their lack of confidence that the problems may be counted against their weaknesses.

As principle, peasant *tabia* administrators are dismissed from power by the community that elected them to the position in the first place. But in practice, *woreda* administrators have the power to dismiss *tabia* chairman who does not suit them. An individual from the *woreda* administration can call on a meeting at *tabia* level, tells the people about the presence of problems with the existing administration and suggests that they elect another chairperson and it will be done immediately. But if the people want to change a chairperson, it takes them months if not years to do so. It is hard for them to get organized against the person and call meetings because some of them may be beneficiaries of the current contemporary administration, some others may be relatives to the chairperson, and still others may fear the consequences of doing so.

On the other hand, ignoring problems and talking about achievements is becoming the common trend in the study area in particular and the Tigray region in general. People in the study area assume that they have to tell what, for example, journalists want to hear instead of telling what exactly happened. This was reflected when groups of PWs participants make joke while working together in the PWs program. The joke was about a woman who told the truth to a journalist. The woman was among those individuals to whom a journalist asked about what they had done with the money they borrowed from Dedebit Credit and Saving Institution[16]. Then, one woman honestly told the journalist, who prepared to hear a different story using leading questions, that she used the money to buy a food she already consumed. On the other hand, other interviewees told a made-up story that fits the leading questions of the journalist though they used the money for a similar purpose as the woman. Later at work, those who told fabricated story to the journalist mock the woman for failing to understand the intention of the journalist, she, in turn, tells them that she does not lie unlike them. Hence, it is commonly held that individuals at all levels have to tell what they should tell (achievements, instead of problems) in order to fit with the existing system.

Desta, tabia Simret's chairman, expresses the unwillingness of *woreda* administrators to accept what is demanded by the people as the main cause for farmers' concerns not to be voiced at *woreda* level where most decisions are approved. He says:

> When you tell *woreda* authorities that the people do not accept the idea of, for example, 40 days of free communal labor, they tell you "it is because you are unable to persuade them." When you tell the people that "we voiced your concern but authorities at woreda could not accept our idea," they tell you "you simply accept what they told you because you do not labor in the field like us." So, when we fail to bring a solution to what the people raise as a problem, they think it is because we do not mention it at meetings, but that is not the case.

Woreda authorities' emphasis on accomplishing strategies as are designed by the regional government makes them restrict the participatory level of the community members so that they are not to be heard beyond *tabia*.

5.6 Participatory communication and the community's culture

At every level of communication, there are all sorts of domination. At family level, there is male dominance. At community level, there is dominance because of authority, educational level, exposure and social status. The communication flow at interpersonal level, for example, is inherently participatory. But it still faces male dominance in the Ethiopian culture.

5.6.1 Muted groups in interpersonal communication

Sometimes, a husband may not let his wife know what he planned to do even in issues related to buying or selling of livestock. The way husbands tell their wives when they want them to do something is also a command. They do not give them room to react. If wives express their disagreement on a husband's idea, what follows is not justification, but insult. Healthy two-way communication is said to be held in bed only. But even this rarely happens in the rural areas of the study area as most spouses have separate rooms to sleep: husbands with grown-up children in a guest room, known as *Adarash*, and wives with little children in a kitchen, known as, *Indanshti*, which literally means house of women.

FGI participants were asked about what the reaction of husbands would be when their wives oppose their ideas on issues such as the sale of livestock. From the third FGI, Gebre-meskel (peasant man, 58, Simret) and Letebrihan had the following to say:

Gebre-meskel:

> My wife has to accept my ideas or else I have to accept hers if she is the husband. Otherwise, no work is going to be done, especially when we disagree. So, for things to operate in order one of us has to be submissive and in most cases that is the wife.

Letebrihan:

> It depends upon the kind of husband you have. If he is respectful, he may calmly listen to what you say and may consider your idea when he find it convincing. But it is hard to find him consistently behaving like that. His relatives and friends influence his way of communication. Generally, most husbands depend on their thinking when they decide to do something instead of considering their wives ideas. Sometimes, the action they take without consulting their wives causes trouble in the house, which becomes the source of quarrel and sometimes results in divorce.

The lower social status given to men who consider their wives' ideas in their decision-making process makes them behave superior to their wives. As a result, a husband tries to impose his interests while communicating with his wife. But if he fails to do so and considers his wife's ideas in his decision, he has to face the insult, "You, who are ordered by your wife" when he quarrels with neighbors. Children too are muted groups among societies in the study area. Their parents do not allow them to respond while talking to them angrily. This, in turn, makes the children behave similarly when they become mature and assume the role of father or mother. These practices hinder free flow of ideas and emergence of new knowledge.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the main source of male dominance is the economical dependence of the females on their husbands. Most women want to tolerate their husbands' dominance because it is hard for them to plough the land and produce crops. As stated earlier in the third chapter, female-headed households have two choices: either to arrange share-cropping or miss the critical time of the rainy season until a relative or neighbor finishes his own and can plough theirs. Both resulted in low harvest.

But with the coming of the Productive Safety Net Program and previous Employment Generating Schemes, the problem of female economical dependence seems to have been improving. Husbands start to respect their wives when they generate income being employed in the PWs. Rigbe had the following to add:

> Saying "I did not prepare the meal for the day because I was busy with the other household chores" is not the same as saying "I did not prepare because I just arrived from the PWs" when a husband asks you why you have not prepared a meal. You have also the money with which to buy clothes for your children and sometimes for your husband, a thing that makes him love and respect you.

As it is implied in the extract, women themselves do not consider it appropriate to confidently say I took time because of the household chores. They are cultivated by the culture to believe that household chores are inferior. So, women themselves allow their husbands to dominate them to the extent of accepting everything that their husbands tell them. But they consider themselves as nearly equal to their husbands when they are involved in productive works like that of the Public Works. This attitude is important in enhancing equal amount of talking and listening between couples. Hence, the role of the PWs program in empowering women is immense. But the dependence of the people on the program for their income is the problem that the program causes.

In terms of payment, people prefer food to cash since the 8 birr they get per day does not have equal value in the market with the three kilos of wheat that they get per day when the payment is in kind, especially following the high price of food grains and inflation of money. The payment in food is especially to the advantage of women because women within the household are more likely to have control over the food received. Observation in the study area revealed that some men spend most of the money in *Inda mesheta* (places where local beers are served) for drink the day they received the it if they are paid in cash. The other advantage of the food payment is it frees up household income spent on food for other uses.

5.6.2 Privileged groups in group communication

Small group communication allows interaction though there may happen dominance in discussions. At least, there is non-verbal communication. But the problem in our culture is that feedback is not given due value. In meetings, the chairperson tries to persuade the participants to the idea he came up with rather than taking into account their views and making them part of the solution. Hence, authorities have the privilege of dominating group discussions and no one blames them for doing so as dominance because of authority is seen as common.

At churches priests take the talking from the start to the end without leaving room for believers to participate. Some priests use Ge'ez language as an instrument to dominate discussion as individuals do not dare to challenge ideas spoken in a language they do not understand. Even in their day-to-day interactions with the people, priests tend to dominate discussions by threatening those who disobey them with *excommunication*.

5.6.2 Participation in mass communications

In mass communication, online journalism, which allows interaction, is almost non-existent in Ethiopia. Even the traditional mass communication vehicles are not well developed to allow audience participation. Thus, feedback is delayed if it exists at all in Tigrigna broadcast media. This is worse in print media because there is no Tigrigna print medium that is published more than once in two weeks time. The fact that Tigrigna publications have few active readers also contributes for the lack of participation in the newspapers. Thus, the knowledge, wisdom, philosophy, or problems of people at the grassroots level remains untold by community members themselves though some issues deemed as newsworthy by visiting journalists are treated in the media. But the rural people are out of the reach of these media outlets let alone to participate and get their concerns voiced in those media.

Chapter six: Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This paper investigates whether the Productive Safety Net Program employs appropriate development communication to get people do effective work in the Public Works programs and maintain achievements. It also examines the participation level of the community

members in the Public Works' projects and their effects especially, whether the projects cause people to develop dependent attitude on them. In so doing, observation and interviews are employed as instruments for data collection. The observation is found to be important in helping me achieve information about the way *tabia* administrators and agricultural experts communicate with the participants of the Public Works program. The interviews are also of great value to the research in the sense that they help to see the impact of the Public Works program on the lives of the participants form the perspectives of community members.

My analysis of the documents of the program and the field research reveals that the program does not consider the issue of employing appropriate development communication strategies. Appropriate communication strategies would have been used to motivate community members to do effective work; make people feel the ownership of the activities and avoid dependent attitude on the program. However, the fact that the program is managed by the local authorities, who have other responsibilities to discharge, makes the office not to have direct contact with the participants, which in turn affects it not to find ways with which to effectively run the program and avoid problems such as the dependency syndrome. Local authorities, on the other hand, use monitoring and penalty as instruments for getting participants do the work instead of employing appropriate communication strategies that make people believe in the activities and do effective work. The food or cash transfer of the PSNP is found to be strengthening the power of local authorities further to suppress community members and hinder participatory approach.

My investigation into the phenomenon of the participation level of the society also reveals that the community's culture in the study area, which accepts dominance by authorities as normal, creates a favorable environment for individuals seeking to dominate discussions and impose their interest on the community. It is found out that there are muted groups (women and children) and privileged groups (men, priests, local authorities) in the society. Local authorities use this opportunity to dominate ideas and decide against the interest of the people. Besides, the people have limited participation to decide on issues related to the program as the power to select beneficiaries relies in the hands of local authorities. This power enables local officials to act against the will of community members in deciding on certain issues though community members are allowed to participate and decide on activities that need to be done in their locality.

The community members' dependence on the program is also described in terms of people's unwillingness to permanently resettle in the western low lands where they can produce enough food for their requirement for a year and even for more than that. The informants' statement that they would have resettled permanently had it not been for the program implies that the program is making them not to take action that enables them to be self-sufficient. Their focus on the payment rather than on the rehabilitation of the area is also made clear in participants' selection of work sites that require less effort to construct terraces (because of the availability of stones) than those badly degraded.

As the people in the study area have little access to mass media, the attempt that the Food Security Co-ordination Bureau (an umbrella bureau that encompasses the Productive Safety Net Program and Other Food Security Programs) makes to reach beneficiaries is unsuccessful.

Hence, people rely on the development agents for their information of the program. Therefore, the channels of communication for the communities in the study area are meetings, which are considered as routine and boring by the community members.

Though the program makes participants depend on it for their income, it has also positive effects in some ways. It makes farmers in the study area use some of the holidays for Public Works program. Indigenous trees in the hillsides closed from animal intervention are also observed regenerating; and catchments done by the program are making gullies fill with soil. Nevertheless, participants are as poor as they used to be before the start of the program. Participants are not using the income they get from involving in the program for other ends such as accumulating wealth with which to be self-sufficient. The income seems to be rather rescuing them from the "shame" that comes following the failure to prepare memorial feasts for their beloved ones or hold wedding feasts for their sons and daughters besides to using them as a means of survival. As the informants said, the low income they get from the program may not allow them to accumulate wealth. However, the main reason is participants take employment for granted as it continued providing them with income for five years now without break. Nevertheless, the administration of the program does not take any action to minimize the problem with the help of multiple and appropriate communication strategies.

6.2 Recommendations

Farmers are often more aware of the conditions of their land than is sometimes assumed by experts. Nevertheless, field agents' failure to understand this fact causes them to consider farmers as ignorant and passive. Field agents seem not to listen to the suggestion of the farmers (who are considered by them as uninformed) when they introduce them with agricultural innovations. As a result, this attitude of field agents remained bringing no significant change on the lives of the farmers in the study area if not causing other problems. Nevertheless, integrating indigenous knowledge with the introduced agricultural innovations would have gained them better result. Thus, the current move towards making projects participatory should be encouraged.

This paper finds out that Public Works' participants as developing dependent attitudes on the program but not considering it as the main problem. However, communication strategies, such as social mobilization, are helpful in enabling communities identify a problem and alert them until they take action. Helping communities to own the projects intended to be done by them and to participate at all levels of decision-making process has the potential of helping society withdraw from dependency. This means, conducting studies on the real situation of a society's communication method and the people's attitudes, and developing communication strategy that considers the situation in the ground before implementing projects is extremely important. Thus, it is my recommendation that future studies such as the kinds of mine to conduct their research on assessing the existing communication system of the Ethiopian society and delineate communication theory and strategy for projects to bring about positive effect.

Moreover, this study is confined to focusing on the dependency effect of Public Works program on participants and the role that making Public Works' projects participatory and communication strategies appropriate has in averting the problem. Therefore, using

communication strategies to promote the resettlement program, to identify the problems of household packages and react on them are left for future researchers.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Thematic questions

I. Communication strategies and the public works program

1. How does the public works program operate in the study area?
2. Does the program employ development communication strategies?
3. Are the communication strategies (if any) appropriate to the program?
4. What is their contribution to the success of the projects of the program?
5. Do the strategies help people feel the ownership of the activities by the program?

II. The community's attitude towards the program

1. What is the attitude of the people towards the program?
2. Do they see it as their constant source of income?
3. Do they consider it as a means of to transform to self-sufficiency?
4. Is there any gap in understanding between those who run the program and the public?
5. What does the office of the PSNP do to help participants have an attitude consistent with the strategy?

III. Dependency and the public works program

1. Does the program cause participants develop dependent attitude to it?

2. How does dependent attitude affect the work?
3. What are the signs of dependency?
4. What are the PSNP and /or local authorities doing to get people withdraw from dependent attitude that may be created by the program?

IV. The community's participation and decision on activities of the program

1. Does the program make its Public Works participatory?
2. How can the participation level of the society on the Public Works be described?
3. Do the people decide about the activities?
4. Does the society's culture hinder participation?
5. What is being done by the program to help people become participants and decide on the activities?

V. Communication and the community's access to mass media

1. Which method of communication is being frequently used to exchange messages about Public Works activities in the study area? (interpersonal, group, or mass)
2. Why is one method preferable over another
3. Where do community members exchange messages about the program?
4. Do the community members have access to mass media?
5. To which of the mass media do the people have better access?

Appendix II: Interview guides

Interview guide for tabia Simret's chairman, and another cabinet member

1. Can you kindly tell me your name, age, educational level and your daily responsibilities in relation to this program?
2. Since when has this program started in this area?
3. What changes (on participants' lives or on the environment) have you observed since the start of this program?

4. How do you communicate with the participants?
5. What negative impacts does the program have on the lives of the participants?
6. What do you do to alleviate the negative impacts?
7. What efforts do you do to help people feel the ownership of the activities by the program?
8. What do you do when people fail to act according to the strategy of the program?
9. Is there communication strategy employed in the program?
10. Who decides on issues related to the Public Works activities?

Thank you very much for your time

VI. Interview guide for individual in-depth interview

1. Would you kindly tell me your name and why you participate in the program?
2. What is the public works program for you?
3. Is it functioning the way you like it to be?
4. How long would like it to stay?
5. What would you do if it were terminated?
6. Do you think you have developed dependent attitude to the program?
7. How does the public works program go with your farm activities?
8. Do you have access to mass media?
9. What do you think the goal of the program is?
10. Do you exert as equal effort as equal effort as you do in your private farm?

Thank you very much for your time

III. Interview guide for the tabia's agricultural expert and another environmental specialist

1. Would you kindly tell me your name, age, educational level and your responsibilities in the program?
2. What are the major activities done by the public works?
3. How effective are they in changing the environment?
4. Do participants work with interest?
5. Do the participants come with a different perspective from what you suggest to be done?
6. Do you consider their ideas?

Thank you very much for you time

IV. Interview guide for individuals working in the office of the SNP at regional and federal level

1. Would you kindly tell me your name, age, educational level and your responsibility in this program?

2. What are the different sectors operating with you?
3. How do you run the Public Works program?
4. Do you employ communication strategies to run the program?
5. What negative impacts do you think the program can have on participants?
6. What measures do you take to alleviate the impacts?
7. How do you evaluate the results achieved so for?

Thank you very much for your time

V. Interview guide for journalists

1. Can you kindly tell me your name, age, educational level and your responsibilities in this medium house?
2. Where do you get the contents for the Food Security Co-ordination Bureau's program?
3. How often do you publicize or air the program?
4. How do you deal with the office in preparing a program about the FSCB's activities?
5. Do you report about the Public Works program in your coverage about the FSCB?
6. How do know whether the messages reach the beneficiaries in rural areas or not?
7. What objectives do you try to achieve in disseminating the messages?
8. What do people say about the programs?

Thank you very much for your time

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name Mengistu Gebremedhin

Signature _____

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Place of submission: Addis Ababa University