

Speaker Summary Note

Session: Improving Resilience to Shocks in Regional Contexts: Building Resilience to Drought in the Horn of Africa

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Irish Aid is the Government of Ireland's official development assistance programme to address poverty and hunger.

The top priority of Irish Aid's international development policy is to reduce hunger and vulnerability and build people's resilience to stresses and shocks.

In this short intervention, I would like to set out how Irish Aid in Ethiopia is responding to the theme of this session—*building resilience to drought in the Horn of Africa*.

As we have heard over the last few days, there are many definitions of resilience. It can mean different things to different people.

We would say that being resilient means you are better prepared, better able to cope, and better placed to recover when setbacks occur.

In designing our Country Programme here in Ethiopia we had to be clear on what our contribution to resilience could be: where could we add value?

My main message this afternoon is to focus on the linkages between:

1. Social protection mechanisms to ensure food insecure rural people have access to predictable and accountable social transfers;
2. Climate smart agriculture, which is nutrition sensitive – to strengthen the livelihoods of the poorest, particularly women, to respond to drought and climate change;
3. Improving nutrition of children, adolescent girls, and women to build resilience of families to drought.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

There is a strong, well established link in Ethiopia between social protection and reducing vulnerability. By providing cash or food support to 6–8 million transitory and chronically food insecure people annually, programmes such as the Productive Safety Nets can build community assets, reduce vulnerability and provide the platform from which poor people can benefit and participate in economic growth.

The PSNP has been hugely successful in many regards: Key findings of a recent impact evaluation for the highland areas included:

- The PSNP increased clients' food security from 8.4 months on average in 2006 to 10.1 months in 2012.
- Beneficiaries participating in public works increased their food security by 1.48 months between 2010 and 2012.
- Participation in public works increased non-food expenditures by €1.75 per month relative to comparison groups.

The PSNP is also a model of how partners can work together under the principles of aid effectiveness. Currently the programme is supported by 10 partners who work with one budget, one report, one co-ordination structure, under the leadership and ownership of the Government of Ethiopia.

This year, under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture, the programme is being redesigned: Key issues include:

- How best to support a transition to a social protection system which is fit for purpose for a country on its way to middle income status. This means moving towards one integrated system and working with the Government to increase domestic financing of the system;
- Increased emphasis on graduation from the programme by supporting tailor made livelihoods programmes for the poorest in three main areas: Crop and livestock; off-farm income generation and employment;
- Increase in the value of the transfer: to allow for improved levels of consumption and reduce malnutrition;
- Recognise the greater needs of the most vulnerable households and provide them with the longer term support they need;
- And finally, to strengthen the continuum of response to allow the programme to scale up in response to both localized and more wide-spread stresses and shocks, such as drought, through greater decentralisation of decision making and clear triggers and mechanisms.

CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE

Social protection based safety net mechanisms can serve as a foundation for building assets and resilience. However additional targeted pro-poor agriculture and natural resource programming is required for the most vulnerable to build drought resilient livelihoods and participate in the ongoing economic development of Ethiopia.

A combination of interventions we believe will build drought resilience at the community level:

- Support the economic empowerment of poor farmers, especially women, through specific climate smart value chains. This will allow farmers to build assets and diversify risk;
- Increase the supply of biomass through reforestation of water catchments and homestead woodlots and improve the efficiency of how biomass is used through access to fuel efficient cook- stoves;
- Encourage and facilitate regional Government collaboration, exchange and learning with NGOs on issues such as improved seed systems and viable value chains;
- Invest in research into climate resilient crops and improved research-into-use approaches including the use of meteorological data;
- As the areas we focus on in are prone to drought, we ask our partners to include in their risk analysis – humanitarian response and make provisions to respond should the need arise.

NUTRITION

Resilience to drought at the household level means that families are strong, have reserves and can cope under pressure.

Every year almost two million children are born in Ethiopia. If we invest, together, in proven, affordable nutrition interventions for these children, they will grow into women and men who will be more productive, have healthier children, put less demand on the health system and contribute to economic growth. Better nourished girls grow taller, learn more easily, marry later, have fewer children, experience less risk in pregnancy and childbirth and are more likely to give birth to a well nourished baby, thus breaking the intergenerational cycle of poor nutrition and vulnerability.

Practically, this means:

- Supporting the health extension workers to roll out community-based platforms for nutrition education and promotion;
- Supporting micronutrient supplementation and de-worming including provision of folic acid, iron and other vitamin supplementation for pregnant women, and Vitamin A and Zinc for children;
- Promoting breastfeeding, dietary diversity and complementary feeding;
- Working to ensure lessons are documented and disseminated, with a view to informing practice and policy.

IN SUM

There is much discussion on the definition of resilience and what needs to happen to build it. For a partner like Irish Aid in Ethiopia we believe that we can make a contribution through facilitating and supporting partners and making the linkages between:

1. Social protection – to help build the assets of the poorest and reduce vulnerability;
2. Climate smart livelihoods – that is, livelihoods which are sustainable in 30 years time when the temperature has risen 3 degrees;
3. Better nutrition of households, particularly young children and adolescent girls to break that cycle of poverty and under nutrition so that when crisis occurs families are better able to cope and to recover.