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Food security in Ethiopia: A social systems approach

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Statement of the Problem: Ethiopia has widespread food insecurity perpetuated by persisting poverty, recurrent droughts and heavy reliance on nature. More than 35 million people in Ethiopia live in extreme poverty, while 12 million are chronically food insecure. This represents 92% of rural inhabitants (OPHI, 2017). Households which depend on agriculture have been found to be highly poverty elastic. An estimated 10.1 million people in the 2015 agricultural season were found in a state of need for emergency food assistance following the el Niño induced drought (EHRD, 2016). Evidence from a wealth of research suggests that rural non-farm enterprises (NFE) increase and stabilize household income, thereby providing financial security and economic wellbeing. However, some households still face constraints in establishing NFEs. The aim of this study is to contextualize the factors that affect participation. Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: This study used the Living Standards Measurement Study panel data, that is, Ethiopia Rural Socioeconomic Survey (ERSS1) and Ethiopia Socioeconomic Survey (ESS2 and ESS3) from the periods 2011/12, 2013/14 and 2015/16 respectively. A social systems approach to development framework was used to analyze the context within which these constraints are faced. Findings: Initial endowments, skills set and aspirations have a bearing on the potential of NFEs in ensuring food security. Conclusion & Significance: Many households want to participate in NFE activities; however, they are limited by the public resources at their disposal. It is recommended that instead of investing in projects that lack longevity, improvements in infrastructure be made. The infrastructure includes credit markets, output markets, transportation systems and electricity.

Biography

Precious M. Tshabalala's areas of interest are agricultural policy analysis and, more broadly, rural development. She is currently in the second year of her PhD studies at University Putra Malaysia, under the supervision of Associate Professor Shaufique F. Sidique. Her thesis focuses on the effect of non-farm enterprises on the economic wellbeing of rural households. Previously, her research efforts have focused mainly on investigating the impact of governmental interventions (policy and investments in agricultural research) on agricultural productivity as well as farmer welfare. She is an Organization for Women in Science for the Developing world (OWSD) Fellow.

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