

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Testing the Graduation Model in Ethiopia

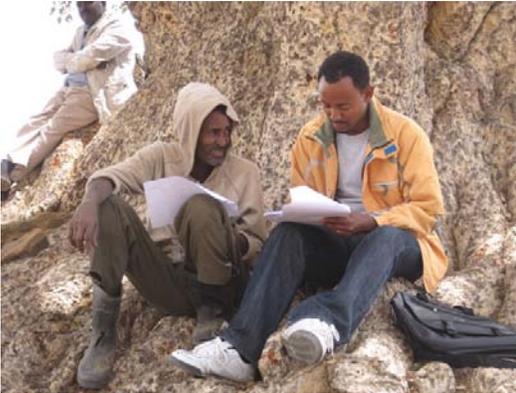


Photo credit — IPA

A supervisor pre-testing the household module during field test of questionnaires.



Photo credit — FHI 360

The enumerators reviewing their questionnaires before conducting the end-line survey.

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The [Relief Society of Tigray](#) (REST) is the largest NGO in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, where it implements a wide range of development programs that focus on food security and relief, environmental rehabilitation, gender equity, income diversification, and HIV/AIDS prevention. Established in 1978 during the civil war to serve the needs of the people in the liberated areas of Tigray, REST has since shifted from relief efforts towards development programming. REST implements projects that target household level livelihoods, improve health and education status, and promote the empowerment of women to enhance their participation in decision making processes and institutions.

Amongst its programs, REST implements the Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP) project, which seeks to determine whether it is possible to help the ultra poor graduate to a level of self-sufficiency, in particular to a level where they can benefit from microfinance services. The objective of the project, which follows the graduation model,¹ is to understand how safety nets, livelihoods support, and microfinance can be sequenced to create pathways for the poorest out of extreme poverty. The project serves 925 households within the Wukro district in the Tigray region.

Over a course of 24 months, the TUP project has provided a comprehensive support package to beneficiaries based on five core elements: asset transfer; consumption support; technical training in identified market-led livelihood options; intensive personal support from field officers for each household; and mandatory savings products tailored to clients who are far poorer than conventional microfinance clients to enable the poorest households to graduate to a level of self-sufficiency.

These supported households are members of the National Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), a country-wide program in Ethiopia aimed at reducing food insecurity. Beneficiaries receive food (through PSNP's food-for-work program), while TUP provides training, savings help, and assets (for bee-keeping, cattle or sheep and goats fattening, and petty trade).

Prior to the implementation of the TUP project, [Innovations for Poverty Action](#) (IPA), a nonprofit research organization, conducted a baseline study in 2010 to gather information from the households that will be used to assess the impact of the intervention. In July 2012, IPA began conducting the end-line survey for the TUP project. The data analyzed will determine what changes have occurred as a result of the program interventions, and whether these changes are graduating the ultra poor from extreme poverty, creating a stronger evidence base for effective poverty alleviation.

¹The graduation model targets the ultra poor—people who have no assets and are chronically food insecure. The graduation program combines support for immediate needs with longer term investments in training, financial services, and business development so that within two years ultra poor people are equipped to help themselves “graduate” out of extreme poverty. This approach was originally developed by BRAC in Bangladesh.